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## TEDPIX notches record high of half million points

**TEHRAN** — TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), posted a record high on Monday when it climbed 4,831 points to 503,735, IRNA reported.

As reported, over 6.354 billion securities worth 49.299 trillion rials (about \$1.1 billion) were traded at TSE. The first market's index rose 3,003 points and the second market's index went up 12,098 points.

TEDPIX went up 19,675 points to 478,754 in the past Iranian calendar week (ended on Friday), which was the last week of Iran's eleventh calendar month of Bahman.

As previously reported, TSE witnessed the highest ever weekly rise of its main index in the Iranian calendar week ended on January 17, which was the last week of Iran's tenth calendar month of Dey. **→4**

## Iran's airspace safe for domestic, international flights: air defense chief

**TEHRAN** — The deputy chief of the Khatam ol-Anbia Air Defense Base (the central headquarters of Iran's Air Defense) said on Monday that Iran's airspace is safe and secure for both domestic and international flights.

"The country's airspace is completely safe. We will severely respond to any aggression against

our airspace," Brigadier General Ghader Rahimzadeh said while paying a visit to the air defense units deployed in the northeastern part of the country.

"The Khatam ol-Anbia Air Defense Base is now at the highest level of defense power to counter foreign military threats," he added. **→2**

## Palestinian rockets fired into Israel following Gaza border clash

Israeli jets have bombed several locations across the Gaza Strip after Palestinian resistance groups fired rockets towards Israel in retaliation for the murder of a Palestinian earlier in the day.

The Palestinian Information Center reported early on Monday that strikes happened north, west and east of the enclave.

Positions belonging to the Palestin-

ian resistance were also targeted west of Khan Yunis and in the Rafah area in southern Gaza.

According to initial reports, at least half a dozen Palestinians were wounded in the strikes.

The bombings happened as the Israeli military announced on Twitter that it was targeting the Palestinian Islamic Jihad resistance movement in Gaza. **→10**

## Russia urges against talk of disaster with Turkey over Idlib

Russia to conduct surveillance flight over Turkey

Russian-Turkish relations should not be depicted as in crisis even after an escalation in political tensions over Syria's last rebel-held enclave of Idlib, Presidential Spokesman Dmitry Peskov said, according to TASS news agency.

A renewed military campaign by the Syrian government, backed by Russian airpower, against rebels in Idlib has raised tensions between Ankara and Moscow, which back opposing sides in the conflict.

"Certainly, we would not like to plunge into this gloomy mood and in fact to make extremely negative scenarios, but the week has really happened to be absolutely restless," Peskov said in a televised interview, TASS reported.

Syrian government began a fresh military push into Idlib in December, saying a 2018 de-escalation

agreement between Turkey and Russia had failed to drive extremist fighters from the province.

Sixteen Turkish military personnel have been killed in shelling by Syrian government forces over the past two weeks, prompting Turkey to tell Russia to "stand aside" while its forces bombard dozens of Syrian army targets in retaliation.

Moscow has warned Ankara to fulfil pledges made to disarm Islamist fighters it depicts as terrorists. The two sides held talks in the Russian capital last week to help diffuse tensions.

### ■ Surveillance flight

Meanwhile, the Russian Defense Ministry announced on Monday that the country will conduct a surveillance flight over Turkey on Feb. 25-28 in accordance with the Open Skies Treaty.

"According to the head of Russia's National Nuclear Risk Reduction Center, Sergei Ryzhkov, the Russian Federation plans to carry out an observation flight on Russia's TU-154M-LK-1 observation plane over the territory of the Republic of Turkey under the Open Skies Treaty," Russia-based Sputnik news agency quoted the statement as saying.

The flight is expected to start from Eskisehir Open Skies airfield with a flight range of up to 1,900 kilometers.

Signed in 1992, in Helsinki, the treaty enables all 35 participant states to have short-notice, unarmed, reconnaissance flights over the others' territories with an aim to collect data on military forces and activities.

(Source: agencies)

## Malaysia's Mahathir resigns but is asked to stay as interim PM

Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad has announced his resignation but was asked to stay on as interim leader by the country's monarch.

Mahathir said in a two-line statement that he had informed the country's king of his resignation at 1pm Kuala Lumpur time (05:00 GMT) on Monday.

Mahathir also reportedly resigned from his own party, Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia, according to Reuters news agency, citing three sources. Mahathir's party also announced that it was quitting the ruling government coalition, Pakatan Harapan (Alliance of Hope), casting doubt on the future of the partnership.

Mahathir's decision follows a weekend of political wrangling, after it was reported on Sunday

night that his party was planning to form a new government that would exclude his anointed successor, Anwar Ibrahim.

The king accepted Mahathir's resignation after meeting with him later on Monday, Chief Secretary Mohd Zuki Ali said in a statement.

"However, His Highness has given his assent to appoint Mahathir Mohamad as interim prime minister, while waiting for the appointment of the new prime minister. Hence until then, (Mahathir) will manage the country's affairs until a new prime minister and cabinet are appointed," Mohd Zuki said.

Anwar also said that Mahathir has no plans to join with anyone from the previous ruling

coalition he defeated to try to form a new government.

When asked if Mahathir was responsible for the current political turmoil, Anwar blamed "those within my party and outside using his name."

"And he [Mahathir] reiterated what he had said to me earlier, he played no part in it. He made it very clear, that in no way would he work with those associated with the previous regime."

### ■ Collapse of coalition

On Sunday night, allies of Mahathir, some renegade members of Anwar's People's Justice Party (PKR), and a slew of other Parliament members, including those from the opposition, UMNO, held talks in the outskirts of the capital, Kuala Lumpur. **→10**



**ARTICLE**  
**Ramin Hossein Abadian**  
Mehr News Agency  
journalist

## Trump seeks to dominate Syria's oil route

The U.S. government's moves to seize Syria's oil and gas resources and deprive Damascus of its revenues have increased as Syrians have confronted U.S. troops.

American moves in Syria has recently intensified, and Washington appears to be pursuing its dreams, especially in terms of seizing Syria's resources and wealth. Recent remarks by the U.S. president on the sending new troops to Syria to protect the oil fields in the outskirts of Deir ez-Zor indicate Washington's intention for plundering Syria's oil. U.S. troops began building a new military base in Al-Hasakah Governorate earlier this month to prevent Russian forces from reaching the Rmelan oil field.

### ■ The Syrian oil and gas resources and Trump's greed

During a news conference, U.S. President Donald Trump recently revealed his intention to plunder Syrian oil and gas resources, specifically those that are located east of Deir ez-Zor, and said, "What I intend to do, perhaps, is make a deal with an ExxonMobil or one of our great companies to go in there and do it properly...and spread out the wealth".

Meanwhile, U.S. Defense Secretary Mark Esper made a ridiculous claim without mentioning U.S. obvious role in the creation of the Takfiri terrorist group and ISIS, saying "Our mission in Syria today remains the same as when we began operations in 2014: to enable the enduring defeat of ISIS" he added, "We are now taking some actions ... to strengthen our position at Deir ez-Zor to ensure that we can deny the -- deny ISIS access to the oil fields"

Esper threatened Syrian and Russian forces that would face a "decisive" response by the U.S. if they approached the oil fields.

The remarks by U.S. officials indicate that Washington has taken steps this time on the pretext of preventing ISIS control over Syria's oil fields and will remain in Syria to seize them. **→10**



**ARTICLE**  
**Mohammad Homaeifar**  
Tehran Times journalist

## The Guardian should not silence my voice on Iran, says Guardian journalist

Saeed Kamali Dehghan, a Guardian journalist who used to cover Iran, has leveled strong criticism against the Guardian, saying the top British newspaper "should not silence my voice on Iran."

"A decision by the Guardian to impose a defacto ban on me writing about Iran has led to my current severe mental health status," Kamali Dehghan said at the beginning of a series of tweets on Monday.

Back in November 2018, Kamali Dehghan revealed that Jamal Khashoggi — who was murdered on October 2, 2018 at the Saudi consulate in Istanbul — lost his life because of disclosing Saudi Arabia's funding of an anti-Iran TV channel.

"I can confirm that Jamal Khashoggi was killed because of speaking to me on the phone from Istanbul in the morning on 26 September, revealing that London-based Iran International TV was funded by Mohammad bin Salman and Saud al-Qahtani," he tweeted on November 9, 2018.

The journalist later suggested he felt threatened by his revelation.

"My request to all family and friends is not to contact me at this moment, except very trusted one. My mum knows how to contact me. I trust my mum and a few people here," he said in another tweet.

However, the tweets were deleted soon afterwards. Then, there were no new articles by Kamali Dehghan on the Guardian for months. Finally, he resumed his activities in the daily on April 26, 2019, however, he has not covered Iran ever since. But now he says the Guardian has been insisting to "keep a gag on me writing on Iran."

On Saturday, Kamali Dehghan disclosed for the first time after the Khashoggi revelation that he was in Nightingale hospital after experiencing serious mental health problems.

"I busy myself reading Quran and Hafez - both have replaced a long list of 'friends' who deserted me and abandoned me over the past two years when I needed them most. Quran & Hafez have proved loyal," he said in a tweet. **→3**



© IRNA/ Mona Hoohehr

## Schools being disinfected against COVID-19

Schools in the city of Tehran are being disinfected in order to curb the outbreak of the novel coronavirus, known as COVID-19.

As a preventive measure, authorities have ordered a week-long closure of educational and cultural institutions across 14 provinces as of Sunday.

Spokesman for Tehran's Department of Education, Masoud Saqafi, said the decision was made to "prepare schools" which have to be disinfected and sanitized.



## Coronavirus outbreak should not be politicized: government

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Ali Rabiei, the government spokesman, condemned any move to politicize outbreak of COVID-19, calling on political groups, parties and media outlets to refrain from accusing baselessly the country's Health Ministry officials.

Rabiei pointed out that outbreak of coronavirus is a health issue and "we must trust the physicians."



He added, "I have called on the entire political parties, groups and media outlets to refrain from politicizing coronavirus outbreak."

He said people should help the health sector more than ever and observe Health Ministry's instructions in their daily life and social activities.

Touching upon the government's firm will to control and root out coronavirus in the country, Rabiei said, "The session of anti-coronavirus headquarters, presided by President Hassan Rouhani, will be held on Tuesday."

Coronavirus, known officially known as COVID-19, appeared first in the Chinese city of Wuhan in December and has since spread globally. The World Health Organization has declared it a global health emergency.

By Sunday, the number of people diagnosed with the novel coronavirus in Iran increased to 61, of whom 12 have so far lost their lives.

## Sanctions hampering Iran's access to coronavirus test kits: Businessman

**(Press TV)** — Growing economic pressure on Iran has hampered the country's efforts to confront an outbreak of coronavirus as health bodies face restrictions importing test kits to detect the infection.

A board member at Iran's Association of Medical Equipment Importers said on Sunday that US sanctions as well as restrictions newly imposed on Iran by a global money laundering watchdog have made it increasingly difficult to access highly-needed test kits for coronavirus.

"Multiple international companies are ready to supply Iran with corona (virus) test kits but we can't send the money to them," Ramin Fallah told the ILNA news agency.

Under mounting pressure from Washington, the Paris-based Financial Action Task Force (FATF) decided on Friday to place Iran on its blacklist, making it more difficult for Iranian banks to settle payments with foreign counterparts.

Fallah said the FATF decision had caused more problems for the Iranian health sector as the country struggles to contain a coronavirus that has caused deaths for eight people while infecting dozens more across the country since earlier this week.

However, the businessman said that Iran would find a way to get round the new bans and have the test kits imported into the country in the upcoming two weeks.

The United States has repeatedly claimed that its unilateral sanctions on Iran, which began two years ago following Washington's withdrawal from a major nuclear deal with the country, have had no impact at all on Tehran's access to food and medicine.

However, recurrent reports have suggested that Iranian patients have suffered as a result of restrictions imposed by the US on export of certain medication into Iran.

Washington was even forced to issue a special authorization for the Swiss government last month to launch a financial channel with Iran that could settle payments related to humanitarian items.

## Iranian, Turkish top diplomats discuss coronavirus epidemic

**TEHRAN (Tasnim)** — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and his Turkish counterpart, Mevlut Cavusoglu, in a phone conversation on Monday talked about a host of issues, including the latest efforts to control the coronavirus outbreak.

Zarif and Cavusoglu exchanged views about the outbreak of the infectious disease in the Islamic Republic.

The two top diplomats also discussed the deadly earthquake that hit an area near the common borders between Iran and Turkey on Sunday.

The magnitude 5.7 earthquake in northwestern Iran on Sunday killed nine people, including children, in neighboring Turkey and injured dozens on both sides of the border, authorities said.

Iranian Health Minister Saeed Namaki on Monday said the number of people who have died from the coronavirus in the country has risen to 12 and the total number of confirmed cases to 47, according to an MP.

In an interview with Tasnim, the spokesman for the Iranian parliament's presiding board said the Health Minister has announced in a closed-door session of the parliament on Monday that the number of cases admitted to the hospital for COVID-19 infection has reached 47 and the death toll has risen to 12.

The minister has also noted that two coronavirus cases have been detected in capital Tehran, both of whom had traveled to the city of Qom, where the first cases of coronavirus were reported in Iran, Asadollah Abbasi said.

The lawmaker said families in the province of Qom are being given free packages including masks and detergents.

The Health Ministry says the source of contagion in Iran were the individuals returning to Iran from Pakistan, Afghanistan, and China, some of whom have crossed the border illegally, the MP added.

China had 150 new confirmed coronavirus deaths on Sunday, the National Health Commission announced on Monday, pushing the death toll nationwide to 2,592.

# Iran does not deserve to be blacklisted by FATF: Rouhani

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — President Hassan Rouhani said on Sunday that Iran has been a forerunner in fighting money laundering and did not deserve to be blacklisted by the FATF (the Financial Action Task Force).

"The great Iranian people and the Islamic Republic of Iran did not and do not deserve to be placed on an international body's countermeasures list while it [the country] is forerunner in fighting terrorism and money laundering," he said during a cabinet meeting.

He added, "We made efforts to prevent being introduced by the United States and the Zionist regime as violator of these measures while we are forerunner in fighting terrorism and money laundering."

Being blacklisted by the FATF is against the Iranian people's interests, the president remarked.

"As it was expected, it made the United States happy and will justify intensification of cruel and inhumane sanctions. Now, those who gave pretext to the United States must be accountable for their unprofessional position," Rouhani asserted.

The FATF on Friday placed Iran on its blacklist after Iran refused to comply with the all requirements of the body.

According to Reuters, the FATF appeared to leave the door ajar for Iran saying "countries should also be able to apply countermeasures independently of any call by the FATF to do so."

Diako Hosseini, director of the World Studies Program at the presidential Centre for Strategic Studies, told IRNA in an interview published on Monday that opponents of joining the FATF must now



be held accountable.

"Those who impeded procedure of joining the FATF must be accountable for pressure and the future situation and be responsible for being blacklisted," he said.

Kouroush Ahmadi, an expert on international affairs, has said that the way to get removed from the FATF blacklist is open to Iran.

"Removal from the FATF blacklist is open for Iran. It is not necessary to start everything from the beginning. We can just continue the job from where it was stopped. One case is joining the CFT and the Palermo bill," he told IRNA in an interview published on Sunday.

He noted, "The FATF has mentioned six points to remove Iran from blacklist and one of them is joining the CFT and the Palermo bill. Other points includes technical and legal issues with which Iran has no problem."

Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said on Friday that the blacklisting of Iran is "politically motivated".

"Unfortunately, what happened is politically motivated which exists in the international mechanisms by the United States, Saudi Arabia and the Zionist regime of Israel. They have influence on these mechanisms and make efforts to politicize them," Mousavi said.

He noted that Iran can never be labeled with money laundering and financing of terrorism.

The U.S., the Zionist regime and Saudi Arabia had made great efforts to pressure the international body to blacklist Iran.

Abdolnasser Hemmati, Iran's central bank governor, said the move by the FATF will not affect the Iranian foreign trade and stability in foreign exchange market.

"The performance of the central bank over the last year has given this assurance to the people that such events will not create problems for Iran's foreign trade and stability in foreign exchange market," Hemmati wrote on his Instagram page.

Hemmati said such "political and unprofessional" behaviors toward Iran has been continuing against Iran since the summer of 2016.

He said the representatives of the U.S. and its allies at the FATF had been focused on undermining expert reports about the great steps taken by Iran in line with the FATF requirements.

The FATF said in October 2019 that it has given Iran a final deadline of February 2020 to tighten its laws against money laundering in compliance with the global watchdog's financial standards.

"If before February 2020, Iran does not enact the Palermo and Terrorist Financing Conventions in line with the FATF Standards, then the FATF will fully lift the suspension of counter-measures and call on its members and urge all jurisdictions to apply effective counter-measures, in line with recommendation 19," the FATF said in a statement.

In November 2019, Gholamreza Mesbahi-Moghadam, a cleric member of the Expediency Council trained in economy, said, "In a situation in which the country is under the most severe sanctions, joining such conventions is (synonymous with) self-inflicted sanctions. In the situation in which the United States seeks to limit the country's financial relations, it is not beneficial to join institutions like the FATF."

## Larijani says EU just keeps talking about preserving nuclear deal

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Iranian Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani has criticized Europe for failure to take practical actions to save the 2015 nuclear deal, saying the European Union just keeps talking about preserving the agreement, officially known as the JCPOA.

"The situation around the JCPOA shows that Europe has just kept talking for about one year but Iran's economic benefits in the nuclear deal have not been safeguarded," he said during a meeting with Austrian Foreign Minister Alexander Schallenberg in Tehran on Sunday.

Larijani also said that the Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges (INSTEX) is ineffective and useless. Schallenberg, for his part, said that any effort must be made to keep the nuclear deal alive.

INSTEX has been designed by the European Union to facilitate legitimate trade with Tehran. It was introduced on January 31, 2019, by France, Germany, and Britain, the three countries party to the nuclear deal.

INSTEX is supposed to be a financial channel and a special mechanism for transferring money in spite of U.S. sanctions on Iran. Its objective is to facilitate Iran's transactions with European companies.

In late November 2019, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden issued a joint statement announcing becoming shareholders of INSTEX.

"In light of the continuous European support for the agreement and the ongoing efforts to implement the economic part of it and to facilitate legitimate trade between Europe and Iran, we are now in the process of becoming shareholders of the Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges (INSTEX) subject to completion of national procedures. INSTEX was established by France,



Germany and the United Kingdom in January 2019," read the statement, published by the Foreign Ministry of Finland.

Iran has likened INSTEX to a beautiful car which has no gasoline.

In an article published by The New York Times on February 10, it is said that INSTEX is a prime example of the futility of Europe's struggle for strategic autonomy from the United States

Ever since U.S. President Donald Trump withdrew from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action in May 2018, European countries have struggled to come up with an appropriate response, says the article.

The European Union, including Germany, has pledged to uphold its commitment to trading with Iran, it added. "But Europe has had a hard time living up to this promise," the paper said.

It also said, "The enormous impact of America's secondary sanctions comes not just from the market

power of the United States, but also from the power of the dollar and America's capacity to legally or factually control financial transaction systems."

"One key, then, to Europe obtaining 'strategic autonomy' in international relations, is obtaining a capacity for independent financial transactions. Which brings us back to INSTEX," it added.

"INSTEX — stay with me here! — is part of a barter system that is intended to avoid payments being exchanged directly between European and Iranian companies when they do business with one another, in order to avoid setting off American sanctions. Under this barter system, money doesn't have to 'cross' the invisible line between Europe and Iran: INSTEX and its Iranian counterpart record the value of shipments from Europe to Iran, and vice versa, and organize the exchange of the appropriate amount of funds among exporters and importers on the same side of the line."

"Sound complicated? It is. And while it works on paper, it's proved extremely hard to realize in the real world. Policymakers in Berlin admit freely today under the condition of anonymity that they had underestimated the technical difficulties," the article said.

On May 8, 2019, exactly one year after President Trump abrogated the JCPOA, Iran said its "strategic patience" is over and started to gradually reduce its commitment to the JCPOA at bi-monthly interval. Finally, on January 5 Iran took the last and final step in reducing its commitments to the JCPOA.

However, Iran has insisted that it will reverse its decisions if the EU abides by its obligations under the multilateral pact.

## Iran's airspace safe, secure for domestic, international flights: air defense chief

**1 →** The commander further said his visit was aimed at reinvigorating coordination between air defense sites of the Army and the IRGC.

"Creation of an impenetrable safe airspace via a united coordinated defense network is the main mission of the base," Rahimzadeh underscored.

In November 2019, the Army's Air Defense Force commander warned that enemies must not even think of attack on Iran, asserting that Tehran's harsh response would make invaders to regret their action.



Brigadier General Alireza Sabahifard made the remarks on the sidelines of an air defense drill in the central province of Semnan.

"As we have successfully materialized our objectives during the ongoing military drill, if the enemies are mulling over a dream (attack on our country) we will make them regret in the battlefield too," the general stated.

He further said the enemies were well aware that they might enter the Iranian airspace, but their exit won't be done in the

same way and it was air defense which would definitely determine the fate of intruders.

Iran has conducted major military drills in recent years to enhance its defense capabilities and to test modern military tactics and state-of-the-art equipment.

Each year, the country inaugurates a host of new military projects and hardware developed with reliance on domestic capabilities. The Islamic Republic maintains that its defense power is based on deterrence and poses no threat to any other country.

## Iran calls on Pakistan to detain and hand over Sistan attackers

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Chief of Iran's Border Guard Qassem Rezaei, in a press conference on Monday, called on the relevant Pakistani bodies to arrest and hand over those who were involved in killing two Iranian soldiers in the southeastern part of Iran.

"We have managed good relations with Pakistan. Some Pakistani units have also been deployed in border region, but we are witnessing terrorist operations (in the region)," Rezaei told reporters in Sanandaj in western Iran.

"In addition to providing security for the elections in the recent days, our guards countered terrorist attacks at the borders. Our guards inflicted casualties on the terrorists and unfortunately two of our soldiers were killed too," the commander added.

"According to our new investigations, the assailants had used new U.S.-made weapons in their attack against our border guards," Rezaei went on to say.

The border guards were killed in clashes with members of a terror outfit in the border province of Sistan-Balouchestan.

According to police, the border guards noticed several terrorists who had advanced towards Iran seeking to attack border units on Friday night.

The police said the border guards immediately countered the terrorists' heavy fire and made them flee to the neighboring country.

The counterattack caused fatalities among members of the terrorist outfit.

Sergeant Major Ahmad Rahmani-Fard and Private Ahmad Tavakoli were killed in the clashes.

Elsewhere in the press conference, Rezaei pointed to carrying goods from borders with neighboring countries by regional porters and said, "A porter who is piggybacking goods via legal paths is supported by our forces, but, the one who moves along valleys (illegal routes) has committed a crime; if he carries a weapon he has committed another crime; if he carries illegal goods he has committed another crime and will be considered as a smuggler."

High level of joblessness has led to the dismal job market in Kurdistan province, forcing the citizens to resort to such hazardous jobs such as carrying heavy



loads on their backs in mountainous regions.

In the Sardasht-Piranshahr region between 8 to 10 thousands households make their living by working as porters.



# Iran sustains military spending in face of U.S. ‘maximum pressure’: general

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Former defense Minister Brigadier General Hossein Dehqan has rejected claims by the Trump administration that Tehran had cut its defense budget due to the United States’ “maximum pressure” policy against Iran.

Iran has sustained its military spending in the face of debilitating U.S. sanctions, Dehqan said in an interview with the Financial Times published on Monday.

Over the past years, Iran has made major breakthroughs in its defense sector and attained self-sufficiency in producing military equipment and hardware despite sanctions and economic pressures on the country.

The Islamic Republic maintains that its military power poses no threat to other countries and is based on its military doctrine of deterrence.

“Militarily, today we are definitely in a better situation than three years ago when Mr. Trump came to power, in all aspects — from staff, organization to equipment. And we will be better in five years if Mr. Trump is re-elected,” said General Dehqan.

“In the region, since the formation of ISIS and the rise of insecurity, we have used all our capacity to organize, train and consult our allies.”

Trump administration officials have claimed one of their key successes has been to force Tehran to reduce Iran’s military spending by almost 30 percent, including cuts to the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC)’s budgets.

The standoff between Iran and the U.S. began after Trump unilaterally withdrew from the 2015 nuclear deal that Tehran sealed with world powers, and imposed the most severe sanctions ever on the Islamic Republic. Iran and the U.S. came close to war



last month after Qassem Soleimani, Iran’s most powerful commander, was killed in an American drone strike. Soleimani’s Quds Force, the wing of the guards responsible for overseas operations, has led Iran’s fight against ISIS.

General Dehqan hinted at Tehran’s survival strategy: No retreat from sponsoring regional resistance groups or developing its missile program; no talks with Washington but avoid all-out war; and a bet that Mr. Trump’s policies will ultimately serve Iran by fueling anti-American sentiment

and empowering its allies.

The U.S. strategy “is costing them and it costs us. But who is the winner now? Today, we believe our influence in the region has increased despite all this pressure,” said General Dehqan. “We will never abandon our regional allies...? We are not players, we are revolutionaries.”

On Iran’s retaliatory measures against the U.S. for Soleimani’s assassination, the former defense chief said “complimentary blows will happen over time” with the aim of driving U.S. forces from the region.

But he added that Tehran would not stage attacks against the U.S. “unless America does [against Iran]”.

General Dehqan reiterated that Iran did not want a “full-blown war” with the U.S., but said negotiations would be pointless. “The U.S. thinks we are in a weak position and need to negotiate,” he said. “The U.S. wants to negotiate with us to say ‘why do you have missiles, why are you present in the region and why do you have military capabilities?’ What kind of negotiations are these?”

## Closure of border crossings with neighboring countries is temporary: Iran

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — The Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman announced on Monday that closure of border crossings has been coordinated with the neighbors to narrow down the possibility of coronavirus outbreak, noting such moves are normal in such situations.

“The World Health Organization issues normally an emergency situation in certain regions (to control outbreak of diseases), accordingly, anti-coronavirus measures should also be pursued collectively,” Abbas Mousavi stated.

“The measure (closure of border crossings to Iran by the neighboring countries) has been carried out as a pre-cautionary action which is also temporary. Also Iran is mulling reduction of issuing visa for foreigners,” Mousavi explained.

“The Foreign Ministry has started to contact with senior officials in the neighboring countries to assure them that no healthily-concerning person will not be allowed to cross the borders,” he added.

Ali Rabiei, the government spokesman, on Monday condemned any move to politicize outbreak of coronavirus, named COVID-19, calling on political groups, parties and media outlets to refrain from making baseless accusations against the country’s Health Ministry officials.

Rabiei pointed out that outbreak of coronavirus is a health issue and “we must trust the physicians.”

He added, “I have called on the entire political parties, groups and media outlets to refrain from politicizing coronavirus outbreak.”

He said people should help the health sector more than ever and observe Health Ministry’s instructions in their daily life and social activities.

Touching upon the government’s firm will to control and root out coronavirus in the country, Rabiei said, “The session of anti-coronavirus headquarters, presided by President Hassan Rouhani, will be held on Tuesday.”

Coronavirus, known officially known as COVID-19, appeared first in the Chinese city of Wuhan in December and has since spread globally. The World Health Organization has declared it a global health emergency.

By Sunday, the number of people diagnosed with the novel coronavirus in Iran increased to 61, of whom 13 have so far lost their lives.

## JCPOA Joint Commission to meet in Vienna on February 26

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) will hold a meeting in Vienna on February 26.

“A meeting of the Joint Commission of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) will take place in Vienna on 26 February. The Joint Commission will be chaired on behalf of the EU High Representative Josep Borrell Fontelles by EEAS Secretary General Helga Maria Schmid and will be attended by representatives of China, France, Germany, Russia, United Kingdom and Iran,” the official website of the European Union said in a statement.

The previous meeting of the commission was held in December 2019.

“All participants emphasized the key importance of full and effective implementation by all sides as well as their determination to pursue all efforts to preserve the agreement,” read the statement published on the European Union official website after the meeting of the JCPOA joint commission.

U.S. President Donald Trump quit the nuclear deal, known as the JCPOA, in May 2018 and introduced the harshest ever



sanctions on Iran.

EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said on February 16 that he will remain committed to keep the JCPOA alive.

“As coordinator I remain committed to listen to all sides and keep the #NuclearDeal alive,” he said in a tweet.

In May 2019 Iran started to reduce its

commitments to the JCPOA at bi-monthly intervals in response to the abrogation of the pact by the U.S. coupled with the European Union’s inaction to shield Iran’s economy from sanctions.

Zarif said on February 14 that Iran’s decisions to reduce JCPOA commitments are reversible if Europe takes “meaningful”

steps in preserving the JCPOA.

Tehran’s moves to ramp-up its nuclear program in the past few months are reversible “providing that Europe takes steps that are meaningful,” Zarif told reporters on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference, according to AP.

Borrell has said that Europe must ensure Iran’s benefits from the nuclear deal if it wants the deal to survive.

“If we want the Iran nuclear deal to survive, we need to ensure that Iran benefits if it returns to full compliance,” he wrote in an article in the Project Syndicate published on February 8.

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

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

“There is an agreement that more time is needed due to the complexity of the issues involved. The timeline is therefore extended,” Borrell said in a statement on January 24.

## The Guardian should not silence my voice on Iran, says Guardian journalist

### Years of covering Iran for the Guardian finally took its toll: Saeed Kamali Dehghan

**1→** On Sunday, he posted a photo of his medications, saying, “To be able to sleep, I have to take all these at night here at Nightingale hospital. Years of covering Iran for the Guardian finally took its toll.”

Back in October 2018, Kamali Dehghan revealed for the first time that Iran International, an anti-Iran television channel, was being funded through a secretive offshore entity and a company whose director is a Saudi Arabian businessman with close links to Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

He cited a source — which he would later claim to be

**“Over past year the Guardian has exacerbated my mental health status rather than helping me by insisting to keep a gag on me writing on Iran,” the Guardian journalist lamented.**

Jamal Khashoggi — as saying that the Saudi prince is the force behind Iran International.

He said Khashoggi had told the Guardian that Saud al-Qahtani, who served as media adviser to Mohammad bin Salman and was among several senior officials removed in connection with Khashoggi’s murder, was involved in the funding of Iran International.

“It is money coming from the royal court,” he quoted Khashoggi as saying, referring to the Saudi crown prince.

In his Monday Twitter thread, Kamali Dehghan said, “I’ll ask NUJ colleagues for support when I’m discharged from Nightingale Hospital.”

“Just to clarify, I am still a staff journalist with Guardian and an NUJ member but over past year the Guardian has exacerbated my mental health status rather than helping me by insisting to keep a gag on me writing on Iran. It’s time Guardian management reviewed its wrong policy.

I raise my voice because I care about the Guardian’s reputation on the eve of its 200 years history and I thank @KathViner for her support for me at all times but not everything at the Guardian is decided by the very good editor it has. In fact I am a big fan of Kath’s editorship.

I am particularly upset by a long list of colleagues in the newsroom whom I considered as family in my prolonged life in exile but except one or two none cared about the agony I went through over the past two years and have been largely silent about the newspaper silencing me.

The moment of truth has come for the Guardian, its management and its NUJ structure on the eve of its 200 years anniversary to see who stands up in ‘free London’ over silencing of a journalist and his voice on Iran at a very critical time in the Middle East.”

**None of my colleagues “cared about the agony I went through over the past two years and have been largely silent about the newspaper silencing me,” says Kamali Dehghan.**

## All Islamic Republic bodies elected by people: government

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Government spokesman Ali Rabiei lauds people’s participation in the Friday parliamentary elections, saying all of the Islamic Republic’s bodies are directly or indirectly elected by the people.

“Given the elections that were held, it is necessary to say that the government and the Majlis are for all Iranian people,” Rabiei said on Monday, according to Mehr.



“The government made every effort so that the elections would be held in a healthy and secure state,” he added.

The nationwide votes for the parliament and the midterm elections of the Assembly of Experts officially were held on Friday.

A total of 7,148 candidates, including dozens of religious minorities, ran for the 29-seat parliament.

In capital Tehran, 1,453 candidates competed for 30 seats. Runoff elections will be held on April 17.

On Sunday Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei thanked Iranian nation, who responded positively to the call for participation in the parliamentary elections.

Addressing a session of advanced Islamic Jurisprudence (kharej-e Fiqh), Ayatollah Khamenei expressed gratitude to the Iranians for their high turnout in the elections, describing it as another great victory for the nation and another failure for the enemies.

Referring to the widespread negative propaganda campaigns by the enemies that were aimed to disappoint people and discourage them from taking part in the elections, the Leader said such propaganda had started a few months ago, and the foreign media increased their negative propaganda in the past days under the pretext of the outbreak of a new virus.

Leader added, “The God Almighty has determined to make the Iranian nation victorious despite all those vicious efforts.”

## People are winners of elections: Judiciary chief

**TEHRAN (Tasnim)** — Iran’s Judiciary Chief Hojatoleslam Ebrahim Raisi praised the presence of the people in the Friday elections and said they were the real winners of the polls.

“The winners of the elections were the great nation of Iran, not a particular faction or party,” Hojatoleslam Raisi said, addressing a meeting of the supreme council of the Judiciary in Tehran on Monday.

The top official further emphasized that now, it is the elected candidates’ turn to take action to resolve the people’s problems.

The final result of the parliamentary elections was announced on Sunday, showing that principlists, the main rivals of the reformists, had won the polls.

The nationwide votes for the parliament and the midterm elections of the Assembly of Experts officially began in Iran on Friday morning and closed at midnight.

Voting hours were extended four times. The deadline was initially set at 6 p.m. but finally, voting was prolonged until 12 a.m.

Having gone through a formal qualification process by Iran’s Guardian Council, a total of 7,148 candidates, including dozens of Iranians from the religious minorities, ran for the parliament.

There were 290 seats in the parliament up for grabs. The lawmakers are elected for a 4-year term, with no limitation for the incumbent or former parliamentarians to run again.

## IRGC says ready to help fight coronavirus outbreak

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) is ready to cooperate with the Health Ministry to combat and prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus, IRGC Commander Hossein Salami said in a phone conversation with Health Minister Saeed Namaki on Monday.

According to Mehr, Salami pointed to the role of Basij forces in polio vaccination across the country as a successful experience.



Salami went on to say that all the medical facilities and staff of the IRGC are ready to provide medical services to citizens.

According to the latest report by the Health Ministry, by late Monday 61 people in the country had been diagnosed with coronavirus and the death toll stood at 13.

On Monday Namaki reacted to fake resignation letter posted on social media, saying, “How is it possible to leave the government and the dear Iranian people alone in difficult days.”



STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	503736.0
IFX	6552.42

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	45,447 rials
GBP	54,338 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$55.56b
WTI	\$51.22/b
OPEC Basket	\$58.94/b
Gold	\$1,681.55/oz
Silver	\$18.82/oz
Platinum	\$970.60/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

TEDPIX notches record high of half a million points

**1 →** On Monday, Iran’s over-the-counter (OTC) market, known as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB), witnessed its main index, IFX, climbing 90 points to 6,552, as 2.606 billion securities valued at 26.926 trillion rials (about \$641 million) were traded at this market.



IFB is one of the four major stock markets of Iran, the other three markets are Tehran Stock Exchange, Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME), and Iran Energy Exchange (IRENEX).

Global stocks hammered as coronavirus cases surge in South Korea and Italy

Stock markets are falling around the world after the number of coronavirus cases surged in Italy and South Korea, putting two more major economies at risk from a virus that has already caused widespread disruption in China.

South Korea’s Kospi (KOSPI) index closed down nearly 3.9% on Monday, its worst day since October 2018, after coronavirus cases in the country surged past 800. In Italy, the main market index was down more than 4% in early trading after the number of cases there topped 150 and authorities started shutting down schools and museums in parts of the country.

U.S. stocks were poised to open sharply lower. Dow (INDU) futures were down more than 800 points, or more than 2.7%. S&P 500 (SPX) futures declined 2.7%, and Nasdaq (COMP) futures were off 3.3%. The Dow closed 228 points lower on Friday, and all three indexes recorded a weekly loss.

A growing number of companies are warning that the coronavirus will prevent them from meeting sales or profit targets for the first three months of the year. Reduced demand for goods and services, and factory closures in China, are also expected to knock the global economy and weigh on trade at a time when Japan and Germany are already teetering on the brink of recession.

■ The stock market reaction

The stock market reaction to the outbreak had so far been muted. But the spike in the number of cases in Italy and South Korea, the world’s eighth and twelfth largest economies, raises fears of a pandemic and ups the stakes for investors. Italy reported its fourth death from coronavirus on Monday.

Investors across much of the developed world sold stocks and rushed into safe haven assets such as gold. The United Kingdom’s FTSE 100 (UKX) dropped 3.3% in early trading and Germany’s DAX (DAX) shed more than 3.5%. In France, the CAC 40 (CAC40) dipped 3.7%.

In Asia, Hong Kong’s Hang Seng (HSI) dropped 1.8%, while China’s Shanghai Composite (SHCOMP) fell 0.3%.

Oil prices tumbled, too, on fears that reduced economic activity will hit demand for energy. U.S. futures fell 3.6% to trade at \$51.47 per barrel. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, also lost about 3.6% and was last trading at \$56.37 per barrel. Shanghai crude futures, China’s oil benchmark, sank 4% to 400 yuan (\$56.91) per barrel.

Investors meanwhile piled into gold, sending prices up 2.6%. The Swiss franc, another traditional safe haven, strengthened against the U.S. dollar.

Coronavirus-related deaths have risen to 2,465 worldwide, with 23 outside of mainland China. There are at least 78,800 confirmed cases globally.

Italian authorities have announced sweeping closures in the country’s north as they scramble to contain Europe’s biggest outbreak. Italy’s confirmed cases surged from three on Friday morning to more than 150 on Sunday. The outbreak is the biggest so far outside Asia.

(Source: edition.cnn.com)

Facilities provided to advanced industries up over 50% in 11 months

**ECONOMY DESK** **TEHRAN** – The facilities provided by the Advanced Industries Research and Development Fund (AIRDF) of Iran to the country’s advanced industries has increased by 52 percent in the first 11 months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2019-February 19, 2020) year on year.

Based on the data released by the Industry, Mining and Trade Ministry, AIRDF provided a total of 58 loans worth 491.28 billion rials (about \$11 million) to the advanced industries in the mentioned period, compared to the last year’s 323.43 billion rials (about \$7.7 million), IRNA reported.

According to the data, 16 of the mentioned facilities, worth 163.75 billion rials (about \$3.9 million) was provided to the information and communications technology (ICT) sector, 14 loans, worth 73.45 billion rials (about \$1.7 million) were paid to basic industries, automation and precision instruments, while four facilities were provided for the field of medicine and medical treatment and another four were given to the auto industry.

As of the February 19, the mentioned fund has also supported 60 companies and 170 projects through guarantees at the value of 649.240 billion rials (about \$15.45 million).



The value of the issued guarantees increase by 25 percent in the mentioned period compared to the figure for the last year’s same time span.

AIRDF holding is a subsidiary of Iran’s industry, mining and trade ministry. The industry ministry has been following

several programs for promoting domestic production and increasing exports in the current Iranian calendar year.

Coming under seven major axes, the ministry’s programs mainly focus on developing and supporting domestic production in various industrial sectors.

Majlis rejects general outlines of budget bill

**ECONOMY DESK** **TEHRAN** – The Iranian Parliament (Majlis) on Monday rejected general outlines of the national budget bill for the next Iranian calendar year 1399, which starts on March 20, ISNA reported.

The bill was rejected during the open session of the parliament with 67 votes in favor, 114 votes against and 3 abstentions.

On December 8, President Hassan Rouhani submitted the administration’s draft of the national budget bill for the next Iranian calendar year to the Majlis.

The proposed budget amounted to about 19.88 quadrillion rials (about \$473.3 billion at the official



rate of 42,000 rials), with a 14-percent rise from the current year’s approved budget.

The bill has estimated the government’s budget at 5.63 quadrillion rials (about \$134.04 billion), 8.2 percent higher than the figure in the present year’s budget.

According to the submitted bill, revenues from exporting oil, gas and gas condensate are estimated at 454.9 trillion rials (about \$10.83 billion), down 66 percent from 1.37 quadrillion rials (about \$32.61 billion) approved in the current year’s budget.

The government has envisioned various strategies for compensating the next year’s budget deficit due to the fall in oil revenues.

Iran-Syria Joint Chamber of Commerce’s board members selected

**ECONOMY DESK** **TEHRAN** — During a session of the establishment assembly of Iran-Syria Joint Chamber of Commerce on Sunday, the new board members of the chamber were selected.

During the session, which was held at the place of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA), Keyvan Kassefi was reinstated as the chairman of the board, ICCIMA website published.

On January 20, Iran’s Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) held the first meeting of its Commodity-Country Desk on trade with Syria, Farzad Piltan, the director general of TPO’s Office of Arabian and African Countries.

The official said that the meeting was participated by the representatives from related governmental and private

organizations aiming at investigating the hurdles in the way of exporting constructional materials, plastic products, and minerals to Syria and finding the ways to boost exports to the Syrian market.

The participants explored the latest status of trade between Iran and Syria, mentioned the extant problems and it was decided that the related organizations take necessary follow-up measures to remove the discussed barriers.

Iran and Syria have been taking major steps for expansion of their mutual trade ties. The two sides have exchanged numerous trade delegations in the past few months and Iranian private companies are investing in various fields of Syrian economy like providing construction materials especially cement and working on several reconstruction projects.

Back in November 2019, Syrian ambassador to Tehran expressed his country’s readiness for providing facilities to Iranian companies which contribute to Syria’s reconstruction.

“The country is fully prepared to provide facilities for Iranian state-run and private companies to participate in reconstruction of Syria and also in other joint venture projects,” Adnan Hassan Mahmoud said in a seminar on Iran-Syria’s business opportunities in Tehran hosted by TPO.

Currently, the condition is ripe for the presence of Iranian state-run and private companies to carry out joint venture projects all across Syria, Mahmoud said.

Mentioning the long-term strategic cooperation agreement which was signed between the two countries in 2018, the

official said there are many working and investments opportunities for Iranians in Syria, including building housing units, infrastructure, rebuilding the Syrian factories as well as providing raw materials to them.

Addressing the same seminar, chairman of Iran-Syria Joint Economic Committee delivered his speech in which he noted that considering the two sides’ determination, reaching \$500 million - \$1 billion of trade turnover within the next two years is completely plausible.

“Over the past year, more than 10 economic delegations have been exchanged between Iran and Syria, however lacking enough information and knowledge about the other side’s market is one of the biggest problems for Iranian economic activists,” Keyvan Kassefi said.

G20 finance heads eye impact of coronavirus outbreak on growth, see modest pickup

By Marwa Rashad, Francesco Canepa

Finance chiefs of the world’s top 20 economies vowed to monitor the impact of the coronavirus outbreak on global growth and act if needed, as they said loose monetary policy and easing trade tensions would prompt a pick-up in 2020 and 2021.

The Group of 20 (G20) finance ministers and central bank heads faced a sober presentation by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which predicted the epidemic would shave 0.1 percentage points off global growth.

“We will enhance global risk monitoring, including of the recent outbreak of COVID-19. We stand ready to take further action to address these risks,” the statement from the financial leaders said, using the medical acronym for the disease caused by the new coronavirus.

“Global growth is expected to pick up modestly in 2020 and 2021,” they predicted. The “recovery is supported by the continuation of accommodative financial conditions and some signs of easing trade tensions.”

U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said central bankers would look at options to respond to the epidemic if needed, while Bank of Japan governor Haruhiko Kuroda said he was ready to ease policy if necessary.

■ The G20 meeting and China

China was represented at the G20 meeting by its ambassador to Saudi Arabia, as senior officials stayed away due to the growing crisis over the virus.

Chinese state television quoted China’s President Xi Jinping as saying on Sunday Beijing would step up policy adjustments to help cushion the blow on the economy from the outbreak.

The “outbreak of novel coronavirus pneumonia will inevitably have a relatively big impact on the economy and society,” Xi said, though he added the effects would be short-term and controllable.

Saudi Finance Minister Mohammed al-Jadaan told a news conference at the meeting: “We have discussed the outbreak of coronavirus in China and other countries and all the G20 countries agreed collectively on being ready to intervene with necessary policies.”

The epidemic, which originated in China, has since spread to nearly 30 countries and territories.

South Korea raised its infectious disease alert to its highest level on Sunday but the European Union saw “no need to panic” over an outbreak in Italy.

“In our current baseline scenario, announced policies are implemented and China’s economy would return to normal in the second quarter,” IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said on Saturday.

“As a result, the impact on the world economy would be relatively minor and short-lived.”

■ Growth consequences more protracted

“But we are also looking at more dire scenarios where the spread of the virus continues for longer and more globally, and the growth consequences are more protracted,” she added.

The ministers and central bankers also encouraged further work by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) on global rules to tax digital giants like Google, Amazon and Facebook.

Intergovernmental group the OECD is to prepare technical assumptions by July that would allow governments to tax digital companies where they do business, rather than where they are registered for tax purposes.

The group’s efforts were stalled late last year by last-minute changes demanded by Washington, including a proposed “safe harbor” regime which critics say would let multinationals choose whether to abide by the new set of rules or stick to existing regulations.

“I told my counterparts that Japan is very concerned about the ‘safe harbor’ proposal,” Japan’s Finance Minister Taro Aso told reporters, joining a chorus of criticism by France and other nations over the U.S. proposal.

“It would extremely diminish the regulatory effect of what we’re trying to do. That is a view expressed by various countries,” he said.

Mnuchin warned, however, that he opposed discriminatory taxes on digital services, the providers of which are mostly from the United States.

(Source: reuters.com)

Actual UK construction GDP is “almost double” official measure, report says

The latest report from the Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB) puts the economic influence of the UK construction sector at almost double that of the officially recorded figures by the Office of National Statistics (ONS).

The report, Real Face of Construction 2020, sets out the sector’s giant reach into the economy, which officially accounts for about 6% of economic output of the UK and provides employment for 2.3 million people.

However, the narrow ONS definition of the industry ignores the work of architects, engineers, and quantity surveyors as well as manufacturers dedicated to the sector and many other firms that support construction, such as builders’ merchants and plant hire providers.

Caroline Gumble, Chief Executive of the CIOB, said: The “quality of our built environment affects every member of society; our work influences productivity and wellbeing at home and at work. It is both far reaching and life-shaping. Our purpose for this report is to help educate policymakers about the true value of the built environment and the need to work in closer partnership with the industry to realize its full potential, particularly at a regional level where it can rebalance local economies and offer people a quality career unlike many others.”

The regional economy is important for any sector, and the CIOB report breaks down the value construction has on a regional level. It demonstrates the wide variations in regional performance and output that have occurred since 2013, indicating the need for careful, integrated policymaking at a local, regional and national level.

The report includes regional data examining the number of construction businesses, output from the industry, stock of buildings, number of people employed by sector, annual earnings and key projects, demonstrating construction’s

importance as an employer and driver of prosperity in each area.

■ The UK construction industry

The CIOB is calling for a better measure of the construction industry that includes all aspects of the design and construction process, not just the assembly on site. The report also draws on brand new research that gauges the public’s attitude towards the industry and their aspirations for the built environment. It makes the point that the UK construction industry has not reached its full potential and will only do so if it operates in an environment with a clear vision, with an understanding of different regional needs, and with a focus from policymakers armed with good quality data and information about this economically important sector.

The report argues that by including all aspects of the design and construction process, construction GDP could be close to double in size. Understanding the data is crucial, because if policymakers and experts do not have access to the full picture then bad decisions and, in turn, bad policy based on incomplete data is likely to be made. By showcasing the true reach of the industry this should also lead to greater attention from policymakers.

Sir James Wates CBE, Chairman of Wates Group and chairman of the CBI Construction Council welcomed the report and said: “We in the built environment sector know that we have a broader and more profound impact than we’re often given credit for. We are a network of contractors, architects, engineers, quantity surveyors, specialists, facility managers, and many others – all working as a team to create spaces, infrastructure and buildings that improve people’s lives and make the economy work better.”

We’re economic multipliers, and this new CIOB report helps us to articulate just how that’s so.”

(Source: globalconstructionreview.com)



# 3rd platform of South Pars phase 13 installed on offshore spot

**E N E R G Y** **TEHRAN** — Platform 13A, the third platform of phase 13 of Iran's South Pars gas field's development project was installed on its designated offshore spot on Monday, Public Relations Department of Pars Oil and Gas Company, which is in charge of developing the gas field, announced.

Earlier this month, this platform, along with Platform 13C, was loaded at Sadra yard in the southwestern province of Bushehr to be shipped toward their designated offshore place.

Payam Motamed, the operator of phase 13 of developing South Pars, put the physical progress of the nearly 2,500-ton structure at more than 98 percent, saying that the mentioned platform was designed and built totally by Iranian experts and the major parts and equipment have been supplied by domestic producers.

The official noted, "The operations for



transferring and installation of the platform's side structures, including the flare jacket and bridges, will begin soon." "After the installation of the equipment,

operations related to the connection of the platform to the well (hook up) would be the last steps to be taken for the platform to go operational," he added.

The first platform of phase 13 (namely 13B) was installed on its designated offshore spot in early December 2018 and the mentioned platform along with the second one (13D) became operational in late January 2019.

Phase 13 of the South Pars field is aimed at the production of 56 mcm of gas, 75,000 barrels of gas condensate and 400 tons of sulfur per day in addition to one million tons of ethane and one million tons of propane and butane per annum.

South Pars gas field, which Iran shares with Qatar in the Persian Gulf, covers an area of 9,700 square kilometers, 3,700 square kilometers of which, called South Pars, are in Iran's territorial waters. The remaining 6,000 square kilometers, called North Dome, are situated in Qatar's territorial waters.

## Daily gas supply to power plants at 120 mcm

**E N E R G Y** **TEHRAN** — National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC) Dispatching Director Mehdi Jamshidi Dana says NIGC is currently supplying 120 million cubic meters (mcm) of natural gas to the country's power plants on a daily basis and there is no problem in this regard.

"The national gas grid's pressure is at an all-time high, and gas supply to power plants now has reached 120 million cubic meters per day," Jamshidi Dana told IRNA.

Mentioning the recent surges in the country's domestic gas consumption, the official said: "since the gas consumption by the households reached 600 mcm due to the extreme cold weather, gas supply to the power plants was reduced to 40 million cubic meters just for two days."

The national gas network is in optimal condition and NIGC is prepared for facing any critical situation, he said.

According to Jamshidi Dana, some 80 mcm/day of



gas has been supplied, on average, to the country's power plants during the previous Iranian calendar month of Bahman (January 21-February 19).

In late January, Iran's daily natural gas consumption

had hit a record high of 592 mcm a day due to heavy snowfall across the country.

Iran is currently producing over 810 mcm of natural gas on a daily basis which is mostly used inside the country for the domestic sector and also as fuel for the power plants and a small portion is also exported to the neighboring countries like Iraq.

Currently, about 30,000 villages with 4.6 million households as well as 1,148 cities with over 18 million households are connected to the national gas network in Iran.

Back in January 2019, the NIGC's managing director had announced that 93.6 percent of Iran's population enjoy natural gas.

Gas is supplied to 97 percent of people in the urban areas and 82 percent of people in the rural regions, according to Hassan Montazer Torbati.

## Booming Australian gas exports countering efforts to cut emissions in Australia and globally

By Jack Snape

Australia's booming gas sector is becoming a drag on efforts to cut greenhouse gas emissions.

Three of the five largest-emitting sectors — electricity, agriculture and transport — all recorded reductions in carbon emissions in the year to September 2019.

The other two, known as "stationary energy", which includes industrial and residential uses, and "fugitive emissions", which includes leakages from fossil fuel production, both recorded increases.

The Department of Industry's quarterly update on greenhouse gas emissions linked increases in both to the booming LNG sector.

Overall, emissions were flat in the year to September 2019, and 13 percent below emissions in 2005.

Energy Minister Angus Taylor described the performance as a "very strong result".

"When you take out our exports, take out our farming exports for instance as well as our LNG exports, domestic emissions are dropping by over 2 percent."

Labor's energy spokesman Mark Butler said Mr. Taylor had "washed his hands" of responsibility to reduce Australia's emissions, citing rising emissions linked to growing LNG production.

The "only reduction we've seen has been driven by the effect of the drought and the final investment to meet Labor's Renewable Energy Target."

The federal government has pledged to reduce emissions by 26 percent on the 2005 level by 2030.

The Labor Party wants to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050, but it is yet to confirm a 2030 target.

### Increases in LNG exports

The quarterly update found "emissions from total export industries increased by 3.5 percent, mainly reflecting the increases in LNG exports".



The "increases in LNG exports contributed 1.4 million tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (Mt CO<sub>2</sub>-e) to the 2.6 Mt CO<sub>2</sub>-e increase in stationary energy (excluding electricity) emissions and 3.7 Mt CO<sub>2</sub>-e to fugitive emissions due to flaring and the venting and leakage of methane and carbon dioxide."

LNG exports have grown rapidly since 2015, and reached a new record high in September. They are now worth around \$50 billion annually.

Japan is the largest LNG purchaser for both Australia and the world.

Mr. Taylor argues that whatever the increase is in emissions locally, the use of Australian gas overseas is bringing global emissions down.

"Our LNG (liquefied natural gas) exports are reducing global emissions by displacing more emissions-intensive fuels overseas," he said.

A report in June last year from the office of the chief economist noted that "LNG is expected to face increasing competition in the electricity generation sector from both nuclear and renewable power generation" in Japan.

Australia has reduced fugitive emissions associated with coal production (orange in the chart below), but the reduction is dwarfed by the growth in the LNG sector (blue).

(Source: abc.net.au)

## Why renewable energy is a technical reality but an economic disaster

By Salvatore Babones

2020 may turn out to be the year of the battery. The Trump administration has made grid-level battery backup a focus of its Energy Storage Grand Challenge -- an effort to create an all-American supply chain for advanced battery technologies.

Meanwhile, Texas, which is the only state to run its own electricity grid, is offering up to \$9000 a megawatt-hour for peak summer battery power. And on the other side of the world in South Australia, Tesla has been asked to up the capacity of its mammoth battery in the desert to 193.5 megawatt-hours, or about double the storage capacity of the entire Texas state grid.

Why are utilities and governments sinking so much money into giant batteries? In two words: wind and solar. Renewable energy sources like wind and solar are notoriously fickle. Back when they contributed only a tiny percentage of the total power available on a grid, that wasn't so much of a problem.

But when a state gets half of its electricity from renewables, as South Australia does, intermittency becomes a real problem. Before Elon Musk was called in to build its desert battery bank, South Australia suffered a statewide blackout triggered by a storm-induced failure of wind farms gone wild.

Thanks to the batteries, South Australia now has more reliable power, but at a price: it has the most expensive power in the country, costing roughly twice as much as the U.S. national average for 2019. This, in a country that is (by far) the world's largest exporter of coal and tied with Qatar as the world's biggest exporter of liquefied natural gas.

The problem for South Australia (and other aspiring renewables powerhouses) is that the economics of renewable energy get worse and worse as you scale them up. That's the opposite of traditional economics

of scale.

With a coal-fired power plant, as you build bigger, your power gets cheaper, smoother, and more reliable. With wind or solar, it's exactly the opposite: the bigger you build, the more expensive, more volatile, and more unreliable your power supply becomes. No one ever heard of battery backup for coal-fired baseload power.

### Replacing gas and diesel models

Renewables need batteries, and lots of them. But from a technical as well as from an economic standpoint, it makes no sense to pour resources into giant batteries that might only be needed a few days a year. And if grids are already under pressure from intermittent renewables, how will they cope when millions of electric cars replace gas and diesel models over the next decade?

You can think of the electric car as a power-guzzling mobile monster that has the potential to break the grid. But if you turn things around to look on the bright side, you can see it as a roving battery on wheels that can plug into tomorrow's 5G smart grid at a moment's notice, whether to pick up power that the grid needs to shed for pennies a kilowatt-hour or to give back power at exorbitant rates at moments of peak demand. That's right, your car could soon be playing the energy markets, Tesla-style.

It all comes down to automation, the 5G internet of things, and the smart grid. Install a stationary back-up battery, and most of the time it just sits there, a stationary sunk cost. Take advantage of the widely distributed batteries in an autonomous electric vehicle ecosystem, and you can have your battery and use it, too.

Right now, renewable energy is a technical reality but an economic disaster. Couple it with distributed batteries, and you get a technological ecosystem that can go head-to-head with coal on both price and reliability.

(Source: nationalinterest.org)

## NIDC digs 100 oil, gas wells in 10 months

**E N E R G Y** **TEHRAN**— National Iranian Drilling Company (NIDC) dug and completed digging operation of 100 oil and gas wells during the first ten months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2019-February 19, 2020), the company's deputy head for drilling operation announced.

Hamidreza Khoshayand said the drilled wells consisted of two exploration wells and 35 development/appraisal wells as well as 63 workover ones.



NIDC has dug 124 oil and gas wells across the country during the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20, 2019).

The drilled wells consisted of one exploration well, 52 appraisal/development wells and 70 workover/completion wells.

Some 170,270 meters of digging has been conducted for the mentioned onshore and offshore wells.

NIDC, a subsidiary of National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC), undertakes most drilling operations across the country and has drilled 4,489 onshore and offshore oil and gas wells in the past four decades after the victory of the Islamic Revolution.

Holding 70 onshore and offshore drilling rigs as well as equipment and facilities for offering integrated technical and engineering services, the company accounts for a major part of drilling exploration as well as appraisal/development wells in the country.

## UAE's latest natural gas discovery is a game changer

By Vanand Meliksetian

The Persian Gulf is, without doubt, the most prominent oil and gas production area in the world. After decades of intensive exploration and production, the region still amaze persistent explorers. Even well-explored countries such as the UAE still hold surprises.

The Emirates are already one of the world's largest producer and exporter of oil. In 2019 on average 2.9 million barrels per day were extracted, which generates approximately 30 percent of the country's GDP.

Despite its impressive production capacity, the UAE remains strongly dependent on imported natural gas to meet domestic demand. A third of the country's gas is provided by neighboring Qatar. The majority is exported through the Dolphin pipeline.

The fraught political relations between Qatar and the UAE due the latter's support of the Saudi-led blockade create an awkward commercial relationship.

Therefore, the discovery of a massive gas field on the border of Dubai and Abu Dhabi could become a significant game-changer. Becoming self-sufficient improves the country's energy security and potentially transforms the regional geopolitical environment.

At the start of this month, the UAE announced the discovery of the largest single gas field since 2005.

### Dependent on imported natural gas

According to the authorities, the Jebel Ali field contains 80 trillion standard cubic feet of gas. It has the potential of making the Emirates self-sufficient. However, the gas field's development could take years during which the UAE is dependent on imported natural gas (both piped and LNG).

Even though they're on track to achieving self-sufficiency somewhere in the middle of the 2020s, the UAE is contractually obliged to keep buying natural gas from neighbor Qatar.

The Emirates signed an export deal with the Qataris before tension rose due to the Saudi-led blockade. However, that could become an advantage if the UAE decides to enter the global LNG market.

According to Samer Mosis, a senior analyst with S&P Global Platts Analytics, "while the discovery has the potential to bring the UAE one step closer to gas self-sufficiency, significant unknowns remain around development costs and volumes." This could mean that self-sufficiency is more difficult and expensive to achieve than currently anticipated.

Although Qatar has remained a reliable exporter despite the blockade, energy dependency is not sustainable and desired even among friendly nations. Therefore, the Emirates have been pursuing a diversification policy. The goal is to develop alternative sources of energy production such as renewables and nuclear.

### Doubling the number of projects

According to ADNOC CEO Sultan al-Jaber, the UAE are on track to double the number of renewable energy projects until 2030. During the previous 10 years, the renewable energy portfolio already grew by more than 400 percent.

Also, the Emirates have ordered the construction of the Arab world's first nuclear power plant built by Korea Electric Power Corporation (KEPCO).

The Barakah plant is a massive undertaking which should generate 5.6 GW when it's completed. The facility was originally due to open in 2017, but delays have extended its opening and therefore also the UAE's dependence on gas imports.

Assuming that the Emirates' energy policy bears fruit and the intended goals are reached by the end of this decade, the massive gas field could be redundant for domestic purposes. When that happens, the gas could be employed for other purposes such as export.

Currently, the majority of the UAE's income is derived from oil exports. Electrification of vehicles is a significant threat to oil-exporting countries. The UAE acknowledges the threat imposed by the changing attitudes towards oil production which has led to an ambitious economic diversification plan.

Natural gas could become an important pillar of growth in the short and medium long term.

While the consumption of oil is slated to peak somewhere around 2030, natural gas's share will remain growing. Therefore, a domestic LNG industry could become an important part of the UAE's energy portfolio.

Regardless of the possible financial windfall, the Emirates need to double down on their diversification policy to improve energy security and reduce dependence.

(Source: oilprice.com)

## Oil prices slide on demand concerns as virus spreads globally

Oil prices tumbled by 3% on Monday, as the rapid spread of a coronavirus in several countries outside China left investors fretting about a hit to demand.

Brent crude was down \$1.78, or 3%, to \$56.72 a barrel by 0755 GMT, after falling to an intraday low of \$56.53 earlier. U.S. crude futures fell by \$1.53, or 2.9%, to \$51.85.

"Demand destruction for crude is likely to intensify as travel restrictions will likely increase as the coronavirus outbreak becomes a global threat and not just contained to China," said Edward Moya, senior market analyst at OANDA.

"Oil prices will remain vulnerable here as energy traders were not pricing in the coronavirus becoming a pandemic.

"While some parts of China are seeing

improving statistics with the coronavirus, financial markets will remain on edge until we start seeing the situation improve in Iran, Italy, South Korea and Japan."

South Korea's fourth-largest city, Daegu, grew increasingly isolated as the number of infections there rose rapidly, with some airlines suspending flights to the city until March 9 and March 28 respectively. The country reported its seventh death after raising its infectious disease alert to its highest level.

In Paris, French Health Minister Olivier Veran said he would talk with European counterparts soon on how best to tackle a possible epidemic, after Italy reported a third death from the flu-like virus and 150 infections, versus just three before Friday.

Iran said it had confirmed 43 cases and

eight deaths, with most of the infections in the Shi'ite Muslim holy city of Qom. Afghanistan, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Turkey imposed travel and immigration curbs on the Islamic Republic.

"We should not underestimate the economic disruption as a super spreader could trigger a massive drop in business activity around the globe of proportions the world has never dealt with before," Stephen Innes, chief market strategist at AxiCorp, said in a note on Monday.

Oil prices received some support after local health officials in China said on Monday that four provinces - Yunnan, Guangdong, Shanxi and Guizhou - had lowered their virus emergency response measures.

Chinese President Xi Jinping said on Sunday the world's largest energy consumer will



adjust policy to help cushion the blow to the economy from the virus outbreak.

In the United States, the oil rig count, an indicator of future production, rose for a third straight week. Drillers added one oil rig last week, bringing the total count to 679, the highest since the week of Dec. 20, energy services firm Baker Hughes Co said.

(Source: reuters.com)



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Security Printing and Minting Organization (SPMO) of Central Bank of I.R. of Iran intends to purchase 100 pieces of numbering boxes for banknote numbering machine through a public tender from eligible companies, according to the specifications and conditions stated in the tender documents.

**A: Required documents:**

- 1- Bid Bond Guarantee will be issued by participants, according to the received documents in favor of SPMO, marked as Tender Guarantee.
- 2- The bidders are requested to submit their company profile, articles of association, turn over including list of supplied goods, client list, etc. for the last three years.
- 3- It should be noted that the priority for bidders is given to the domestic participants in equal conditions.

For receiving tender documents, please contact us via the following address, fax or e-mail till March 30, 2020.

Head of Foreign Commercial Dept.

Security Printing & Minting Organization

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**Oil min. holds phone talk with Russia's energy min. on reducing oil output**

TEHRAN, Feb. 20 (MNA) -- Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh held a phone conversation with the Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak on Thu. with regards to the cooperation of the two countries within the framework of OPEC Plus.

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TEHRAN, Feb. 20 (MNA) -- Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh held a phone

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- Senior Iranian officials cast vote in ballot box
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- CAO rejects rumors on continuation of Iran-China flights
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**First Announcement**

**Call for public tender (First/Second publish)**

**One- Stages (semi compressed) tender**



**National Iranian Drilling Company**

**Subject of Tender: P/F: CPT-N4 CEMENTING TRAISKERS HYDRAULIC SYSTEM**

**Tender descriptions:**

The Tender holder	Registration No. through national electronic tendering system	Tender No. /Ident No.	Estimated value (Rial/Euro)
National Iranian Drilling Company	3/229/837	Tender No.: P/P/20-98/191 Ident No.: 08-22-9845079	66.000.000.000

**• Qualitative evaluation of tenderers**

Method	
	R Based on minimum scoring (50) made in award criterion reflected in the tenderers pre-qualification forms.

**• Purchasing & Submitting**

Tender Document Distribution by Company	
Distribution Place	Hall No.113, 1 <sup>st</sup> floor, Foreign Procurement Dept., National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN 061-34148707 -  Room No. 431, 4 <sup>th</sup> floor, /Oil central building No.8,Yaghma alley, Jomhori Islami st., Tehran – Iran
Submitting Method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• :Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt in the amount of 190,000 Iranian Rials under account number 400114004020491( Shaba No. IR 52010000400114004020491) in name of "NIDC Incomes Centralized Fund" issued by I.R. of Iran Central Bank.</li> <li>• :Submitting format Request for the purpose of receiving Tender Documents.</li> </ul>
Closing date	• :14 Days after the last time of Purchasing.
Documents Receiving Method	Address Hall No. 107, 1 <sup>st</sup> floor, Tender Committee, Operation building, National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN.  Tel: +98-61-34148580 +98-61-34148569


**• Tender Guarantee**

Value of guarantee	
	3,288,000,000 Rial / 24,243 Euro
Type of guarantee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓:Bank guarantees or guarantees issued by non-bank institutions that obtain activity license from the central bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran.</li> <li>✓:Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt under account number 400114006376636 ( Shaba No. IR 35010000400114006376636) in name of "NIDC saving account" by the central bank of Islamic Republic of Iran.</li> </ul>
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)**

More of this & other tenders are accessible by click on: [www.nidc.ir](http://www.nidc.ir) [http://sapp.ir/nidc\\_pr](http://sapp.ir/nidc_pr)

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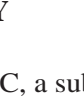


**INVITATION TO A RENEWAL OF ONE STEP INTERNATIONAL TENDER**

**SECOND ANNOUNCEMENT**

**55/98/29787**

**25/02/2020**



Ministry of Jihad-e-Agriculture

**AGRICULTURAL SUPPORT SERVICES COMPANY**

Agricultural Support Services Company, hereinafter will be referred as ASSC, a subsidiary of the Ministry of Agricultural Jihad of I.R. of Iran, is considering the purchase of  $5 \times 40000 \pm 5\%$  MTS of Granular Triple Super Phosphate (GTSP) in bulk through renewal of one step international tender.

All of the qualified and interested companies are invited to receive tender documents from Monday dated 24/02/2020 until Tuesday dated 03/03/2020 (7 working days) from our purchasing committee (located at the 9<sup>th</sup> floor, no. 1, fourth alley, Gandhi st., Tehran, Iran). The bidders are requested to submit their letters of introduction, along with remittance bill of I.Rials 1,200,000 to ASSC's account no. 4001039704005791 with SHEBA no. IR250100004001039704005791 at the Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran through payment order of SATNA or PAYA with the 30 character identification code of 358039782263500650000000000000.


The bidders are required to submit their sealed and stamped envelopes containing offers latest on Wednesday dated 15/04/2020 (during official working hours) to our security office, located on the 8<sup>th</sup> floor. Meanwhile the meeting for the opening of the envelopes will be on Saturday dated 18/04/2020 at 2:00 PM with the presence of bidders' representatives in our purchasing committee (9<sup>th</sup> floor, no. 1, fourth alley, Gandhi St., Tehran, Iran).

The bid bond value should be € **309697** or in equal value of that in any other foreign currencies, except US dollars, based on exchange rate of CBI on 19/2/ 2020 for each lot of 40000 MT  $\pm 5\%$  in bank guarantee.

- The bidders are permitted to submit the bid bond in Iranian Rial. Therefore, the value of bid bond for each lot of 40000 MT  $\pm 5\%$  will be IR **14046000000**, which must be only submitted by the bidders.
- After approval of ASSC 's Financial Manager, the bidders are permitted to use their previous and definite outstanding claims as bid bond.

**For more information, you may refer to our website [www.assc.ir](http://www.assc.ir), and <http://iets.mporg.ir> or contact us by phone no. 00982188776325.**

**PR & Intel Affairs Dept. of Agricultural Support Services Company (ASSC)**




AGRICULTURAL SUPPORT SERVICES COMPANY

**INVITATION TO A RENEWAL OF ONE STEP INTERNATIONAL TENDER**

**SECOND ANNOUNCEMENT**

**55/98/29787**

**25/02/2020**



Ministry of Jihad-e-Agriculture

**AGRICULTURAL SUPPORT SERVICES COMPANY**

Agricultural Support Services Company, hereinafter will be referred as ASSC, a subsidiary of the Ministry of Agricultural Jihad of I.R. of Iran, is considering the purchase of  $3 \times 35000 \pm 5\%$  MTS of Granular Potassium Sulphate (GSOP) in bulk through renewal of one step international tender.

All of the qualified and interested companies are invited to receive tender documents from Monday dated 24/02/2020 until Tuesday dated 03/03/2020 (7 working days) from our purchasing committee (located at the 9<sup>th</sup> floor, no. 1, fourth alley, Gandhi st., Tehran, Iran). The bidders are requested to submit their letters of introduction, along with remittance bill of I.Rials 1,200,000 to ASSC's account no. 4001039704005791 with SHEBA no. IR250100004001039704005791 at the Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran through payment order of SATNA or PAYA with the 30 character identification code of 3580397822635006500000000000006.

The bidders are required to submit their sealed and stamped envelopes containing offers latest on Monday dated 20/04/2020 (during official working hours) to our security office, located on the 8<sup>th</sup> floor. Meanwhile the meeting for the opening of the envelopes will be on Tuesday dated 21/04/2020 at 2:00 PM with the presence of bidders' representatives in our purchasing committee (9<sup>th</sup> floor, no. 1, fourth alley, Gandhi St., Tehran, Iran).

The bid bond value should be € **362109** or in equal value of that in any other foreign currencies, except US dollars, based on exchange rate of CBI on 19/02/ 2020 for each lot of 35000 MT  $\pm 5\%$  in bank guarantee.

- The bidders are permitted to submit the bid bond in Iranian Rial. Therefore, the value of bid bond for each lot of 35000 MT  $\pm 5\%$  will be IR **16423000000**, which must be only submitted by the bidders.
- After approval of ASSC 's Financial Manager, the bidders are permitted to use their previous and definite outstanding claims as bid bond.

**For more information, you may refer to our website [www.assc.ir](http://www.assc.ir), and <http://iets.mporg.ir> or contact us by phone no. 00982188776325.**

**PR & Intel Affairs Dept. of Agricultural Support Services Company (ASSC)**



## Travel sentiment for European destinations on the rise

The European Travel Commission (ETC), the European Tourism Association (ETOA), Eurail B.V. and the European Commission, have released the latest Long-Haul Travel Barometer (LHTB), which indicates that the sentiment for travel to Europe between January-April 2020 is positive in six key overseas markets - Brazil, China, India, Japan, Russia and the US.

The barometer provides the European tourism sector with early indications of the travel interest in these markets and sheds light on potential travelers' preferences, motivations and barriers related to holidays in Europe in the short-term. Insights are based on data collected in December 2019.

Europe's vastly rich history, gastronomic culture and natural scenery are sparking the travel interest of many Brazilians who plan to visit Europe this year. Roughly a third of Brazilian respondents (34%) say they estimate to spend more than 200 euros per day on these activities, while about a quarter estimate to spend between 100-200 euros or 50-100 euros.

Half of the Brazilians intend to spend between 7 to 14 nights in Europe, and prefer to visit less countries, an average of 2.3 countries. Portugal remains high on the destination priority list with 44% of respondents intending to visit the country.

As for travelers from the U.S., respondents indicated that France (36%), Italy (30%), Germany (19%), the UK (18%) and Spain (15%) make up their top five destinations of choice to experience Europe's history, culture and natural scenery. Most Americans intend to spend up to two weeks in Europe with 63% of travelers planning to explore an average of 2.4 countries. In terms of expenditure, 62% anticipate that they will spend between 50-200 euros per day.

Russian respondents show a growing interest in getting immersed in a destination's local lifestyle, favoring "slow" adventure experiences that will allow them to explore remote places in Europe. According to respondents, the vast majority (70%) of Russian trips to Europe in the next four months are likely to last between 7 to 14 days and include visits to 2 European countries. The anticipated daily budget varies, with 32% of respondents intending to spend between 50-100 euros per day, 27% expecting to spend more than €200 per day, and 21% planning to spend between 100-200 euros per day.

This winter/spring season, Indian travelers are planning to head to destinations famous for nature and winter sports activities. Based on these interests, Austria (40%), Germany (33%), France (32%), Italy (20%) and Switzerland (16%) top their destination wish list. Another strong motivation to visit Europe is the possibility to undertake a multi-country trip. Over the next four months, most Indian respondents (67%) plan to spend up to 2 weeks in Europe and visit an average of 3 countries. Nearly half of the respondents (47%) intend to spend between 100-200 euros per day, including accommodation, dining and leisure activities.

Famous for their own unique cuisine, it is no surprise that Japanese tourists have indicated their interest in European culinary experiences. The cultural and historical heritage, natural landscapes and city life are also among Europe's best assets in the eyes of travelers from Japan. About half (48%) of the respondents who intend to visit Europe in the next four months, plan to stay for up to 14 nights, while 43% expect to stay less than 7 nights. On average, Japanese tourists are considering visiting 2 European destinations during their trip. As to their daily budget, 39% foresee spending between 100-200 euros, 28% 50-100 euros, and 21% plan to spend more than 200 euros. The most popular destinations to visit are Germany, Italy, Austria and the UK. (Source: Travel Daily News)



## ROUND THE GLOBE

### The Trulli of Alberobello

The trulli, typical limestone dwellings of Alberobello in the southern Italian region of Puglia, are remarkable examples of corbelled dry-stone construction, a prehistoric building technique still in use in this region.

These structures, dating from as early as the mid-14th century, characteristically feature pyramidal, domed, or conical roofs built up of corbelled limestone slabs.



Although rural trulli can be found all along the Itria Valley, their highest concentration and best preserved examples of this architectural form are in the town of Alberobello, where there are over 1500 structures in the quarters of Rione Monti and Aja Piccola.

The property comprises six land parcels extending over an area of 11 hectares. The land parcels comprise two districts of the city (quarters or Rione Monti with 1,030 trulli; Rione Aia Piccola with 590 trulli) and four specific locations (Casa d'Amore; Piazza del Mercato; Museo Storico; Trullo Sovrano).

The extent and homogeneity of those areas, the persistence of traditional building techniques, together with the fact that trulli are still inhabited make this property an exceptional Historic Urban Landscape.

Trulli (singular, trullo) are traditional dry stone huts with a corbelled roof. Their style of construction is specific to the Itria Valley in the region of Puglia. Trulli were generally constructed as temporary field shelters and storehouses or as permanent dwellings by small-scale landowners or agricultural laborers.

The trulli of Alberobello represent a dry-stone building tradition, several thousand years old, found across the Mediterranean region.

(Source: UNESCO)

# Iran-Turkmenistan border crossing to host Noruz celebration

**HERITAGE** **TEHRAN** – Iran and Turkmenistan **d e s k** are scheduled to celebrate Noruz, the Persian New Year traditions shared between the two nations, during a joint event at their border crossing on March 27, CHTN reported.

Iran and Turkmenistan are scheduled to celebrate Noruz at one of their border crossings, [which is situated in Razavi Khorasan province], provincial tourism chief Abolfazl Mokaramifar said on Sunday, CHTN reported.

The neighbors will cherish the occasion in order to deepen friendship and cultural commonalities long been existed between the two, the official said.

Noruz, which usually falls on March 21st every year, marks the beginning of spring across a vast geographical area. The feast was initially registered on the UNESCO List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2009, as a common tradition for Iran, Azerbaijan, India, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Turkey, and Uzbekistan. However, the five other countries put in requests officially to be added to the list during a meeting held in Tehran in January 2014.

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

Noruz, according to UNESCO, promotes the values of peace and solidarity between generations and within families, as well as reconciliation and neighborliness, thus contributing to cultural diversity and friendship among peoples and various communities.

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



Colorful yurts at Noruz (Nowruz) festival

## Arts of ancient Iran: Chlorite tableware in the 3rd millennium BC

**HERITAGE** **TEHRAN** – Being kept at the Louver **d e s k** museum in Paris, this double cylindrical vase is typical of the chlorite tableware made in eastern Iran in the 3rd millennium BC. Chlorite quarries have been found in the province of Kerman.

The two parts are decorated differently. One side of the vase is sculpted with a wickerwork motif, the other features architectural motifs. Although a number of these vases have been found in Mesopotamia, they are of Iranian origin, and are an indication of the complex commercial exchanges between these two regions, according to Louver website.

### ■ Chlorite tableware

Chlorite is a soft, green stone that is easy to work. It was at times replaced by serpentine. The objects made in this material were luxury items. The craftsmen were semi-nomadic Iranian sculptors. A number of their workshops have been explored at Tepe Yahya in southeastern Iran, where chlorite quarries have been discovered. Several examples were recently brought



to light in the region of Jiroft.

### ■ Architectural motifs

The low relief decoration covering much of its surface places this vase among the "old" series of these works. Each pot is decorated in a specific manner: one is covered with wickerwork motifs, the other with

architectural motifs, apparently a house with windows and doors with concave lintels. Architecture appears to have been one of the major sources of inspiration for craftsmen working with chlorite. This form of decoration is sometimes combined with decorative motifs such as loops, braids, scales and cabling. Some of these vases are also decorated with a "brick" pattern. The vases found at Susa rarely feature an animal decor. The double form of the vessel is also very rare.

### ■ Vases found in Iran and Mesopotamia

These objects were long thought to be of Mesopotamian origin, since the first specimens were found at Tello, Ur and even Mari. They represent an exotic, apparently trans-Elamite culture, that is to say, one that originated in regions beyond Elam. This importation of this object shows that complex exchanges between the various regions of Iran and even with Mesopotamia had been established. The particularity of Susa is to have copied this craft in chlorite by transposing it to a local material, bitumen mastic.

## Sets of enameled pottery on display at Tehran exhibit

**HERITAGE** **TEHRAN** – Sets of **d e s k** enameled pottery, handcrafted by Iranian artisans in Hamedan province, have been put on show at the headquarters of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism in Tehran.

The exhibit, which will be running through February 26, features some 500 pieces produced under supervision of sisters Sara and Maryam Khalaj who have held several domestic exhibits in the country and abroad, CHTN reported.

The entrepreneurs have employed some 120 people in their two workshops both located in Hamedan, west-central Iran.



Their innovative works have so far been displayed in Iraq and Armenia as well as several shows in Tehran, Isfahan and Shiraz, the report added.

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

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

## Traditional skills of carpet weaving in Kashan astonish all

Traditional skills of carpet weaving in Kashan is one of the most fabulous Iranian fine arts. UNESCO has inscribed this skill representing the symbol of "city weaving style and Persian weaving style" as an intangible cultural heritage of Iran in 2010.

From an artistic point of view, the people of Kashan have been famous for carpet weaving, Qelyabkeshi (dissolving silk resin) and silk weaving. These expressions are originally from Kashan although they are known all over the world today. Foreign art lovers and handicraft enthusiasts are mesmerized by natural dyeing, special and breathtaking Persian weaving texture and unique design of the carpet presented in different sizes.

### ■ Sialk historical mound, the origin of traditional skills of carpet weaving in Kashan

The historical monuments of this region have revealed that Sialk mounds date back to Hammurabi era. First, people living in the region were known as Kaso or Kasho, which were later changed to Kasyan and Kashan. Some historians believe that Harun al-Rashid's wife, Zubaidah bint Ja'afar ibn-e Mansur ordered to build Kashan which is now famous for its traditional skills of carpet weaving.

### ■ Kashan, from the viewpoint of the tourists

The great world travelers of all time who have traveled to this region have noticed that Kashan had been the center for the production of precious fabrics and cloth. Sir John Chardin and Anthony Shirley stated the inhabitant of Kashan weave some specific fabrics and cloth including plain silk fabrics, damask silk fabrics, or silk mixed with gold and silver.

In 1600, Cartwright praised carpet and rug weaving in Kashan and called this region the trading place for such

goods. Writings and books in the 17th and 18th centuries showed that the traditional skills of carpet weaving in Kashan had been specialized for royal carpet initially ordered by Shah Abbas. The oldest Kashan carpets remained till today date back to the 17th century. It's kept in Carpet Museum of Iran.

### ■ Persian carpets in museums all over the world

In fact, one can say this intangible cultural heritage of Iran is the related to the arts and skills of producing textiles, braid, taffeta, velvet making and atlas fabric making that have gained the reputation as "Hormozi materials" all over the world for many years.

Today, some examples of "hunting-design carpet" are available at the Carpet Museum of Iran and the Metropolitan Museum of America. Nevertheless, there is no exact information whether these carpets were woven in Kashan, Isfahan or Tabriz.

Some researchers have reached the conclusion that a number of old Polish carpets are also woven in this region. The well-known carpet of Sheikh Safi Mausoleum has been a master of Kashan carpet weaving. This carpet known as Ardebil Carpet is now kept at the Victoria and Albert Museum. Also "Shah Abbasi carpet" embellished by coarse Shah Abbasi flowers is produced in this period.

### ■ The skill of interweaving warp and weft for "Persian weaving"

Carpet weavers generally make the warp and weft of Kashan carpet out of cotton, and silk is only used in very fine and delicate carpets. They use particular Kashan yarns called "urban" and "Esfahani" cotton threads for under-weft which is thicker than on-weft. At the first sight, one can notice the delicate and short wool and the



An Iranian woman weaves a carpet with keeping an eye on a pattern attached in her carpet loom in Kashan

velvety texture of Merino wool in the design of the carpet. In addition to Australian Merino wool, Kashan carpet weavers also use Khorasan, Kermanshah, Azerbaijan and Tehran wool threads.

Before weaving starts, the designers prepare some patterns comprising branches, flowers, leaves, animal hunting grounds and historical battle scenes. Then, the weavers start creating the Persian carpets using dyed yarn and silk. Persian weaving style, also known as the "asymmetric knot", is a knot which has a distinct twist. One can see its equal knots on the back of the carpet.

(Source: Destination Iran)



# Iran allocates \$125m to counter COVID-19 outbreak

SOCIETY  
d e s k

**TEHRAN** — The Plan and Budget Organization has allocated 3.5 trillion rials (nearly \$125 million at the official rate of 42,000 rials) to the Ministry of Health in order to prevent and combat COVID-19.

Mohammad Baqer Nobakht, head of the Plan and Budget Organization, wrote on his Twitter account on Sunday that after coordinating with Health Minister Saeed Namaki and the chancellors of Qom, Gilan and Shahid Beheshti universities of medical sciences, a total of 3.5 trillion rials (nearly \$125 million) has been allocated to the Ministry of Health for preventing and confronting the novel coronavirus, ISNA reported.

Asadollah Abbassi, spokesman of the Majlis (Iranian parliament)'s presiding board, quoted the health minister as saying that 47 people in the country have been infected with the virus, of whom 12 died so far.

Previously, Namaki said effective meas-



ures have been taken and comprehensive plans are underway to get rid of the virus in the country.

The country has put in place a set of contingency plans, including the temporary shutdown of schools, universities and cultural centers, in an effort to curb a coronavirus outbreak that has already claimed eight lives in the country.

"With regard to the past experience, I say that we will defeat the coronavirus before long," the minister stressed.

"As a veteran soldier in the Iranian health front, I have taken the responsibility of removing measles, tetanus, and polio which astonished the World Health Organization as the country is grappling with sanctions with no international support. So, I [definitely] say that we will defeat the coronavirus."

He went on to say that the nation has been mobilized against the virus and "we will announce its defeat soon."

## Fossil fuels' impact on planet 'vastly underestimated'

The oil, gas and coal industries are emitting "vastly" more of the potent greenhouse gas methane than was previously thought, and curbing these emissions could provide rapid benefits to the planet, a study has found.

After carbon dioxide, methane is the second biggest contributor to global warming, and levels in the atmosphere have increased by about 150 per cent since the industrial revolution.

Though there is less of it than CO<sub>2</sub>, methane's greenhouse effect is around 80 times more potent. And unlike CO<sub>2</sub>, which can remain in the Earth's atmosphere for around a century after it is emitted, methane lasts for less than a decade, meaning the impacts of reduction could be felt relatively quickly.

"If we stopped emitting all carbon dioxide today, high carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere would still persist for a long time," said University of Rochester researcher Benjamin Hmiel.

"Methane is important to study because if we make changes to our current methane emissions, it's going to reflect more quickly."

Levels of methane in the atmosphere are still rising, but until now it has been difficult to determine exactly where the emissions are coming from as methane can be emitted in two distinct ways.

These are: through biological activity on the surface of the planet — such as agriculture, from wetlands, from paddyfields and landfill — and it is also produced by industrial burning of fossil fuels.

The new research has allowed scientists to unpick the difference between the methane produced by burning fossil fuels, and the methane produced biologically, allowing us to see for the first time the extent to which fossil fuels are to blame for introducing damagingly high levels of methane into the atmosphere.

The research has considerable implications.

"Placing stricter methane emission regulations on

the fossil fuel industry will have the potential to reduce future global warming to a larger extent than previously thought," said Dr Hmiel.

The contribution of biological methane in the atmosphere can be detected by a chemical signature — the presence of carbon-14 — a rare radioactive isotope.

But in fossil fuels, the hydrocarbons required to leave this signature have all broken down — as the organic matter has spent millions of years underground, so no carbon-14 isotopes are left.

While scientists are able to accurately measure total amounts of methane in the atmosphere, the carbon-14 signature, or lack thereof, provides an indication as to how much methane is coming from fossil fuel extraction.

In order to more accurately separate the natural and anthropogenic components, Dr Hmiel and his colleagues turned to the past, by drilling and collecting ice cores from Greenland.

The ice core samples act like time capsules, containing bubbles with small quantities of ancient air trapped inside.

The researchers used a melting chamber to extract



the ancient air from the bubbles in order to study its chemical composition.

The researchers focused on measuring the composition of air from the early 18th century — before the start of the Industrial Revolution — to the present day.

Humans did not begin using fossil fuels in significant amounts until the mid-19th century.

Measuring emission levels before this time period allows researchers to identify the natural emissions present at the time without the fossil fuels in today's atmosphere.

There is no evidence to suggest natural fossil methane emissions can vary over the course of a few centuries.

By measuring the carbon-14 isotopes in air from more than 200 years ago, the researchers found that almost all of the methane emitted to the atmosphere was biological in nature until about 1870.

At this point the fossil fuel methane component began to rise rapidly. The timing coincides with a sharp increase in the use of fossil fuels.

The researchers said their findings indicate levels of biologically released fossil methane — by natural processes such as venting — are about 10 times lower than previous research reported.

Meanwhile the burning of fossil fuels by humans is contributing between 25 — 40 per cent more methane than previously reported.

The research indicates the energy sector is failing to account for the levels of the colourless, odourless gas it is pumping into the atmosphere, helping to heat the planet. Dr Hmiel said the findings were positive.

"I don't want to get too hopeless on this because my data does have a positive implication: most of the methane emissions are anthropogenic, so we have more control. If we can reduce our emissions, it's going to have more of an impact."

(Source: The Independent)

## G20 sounds alarm over climate emergency despite U.S. objections

The G20 group of the world's wealthiest nations have agreed for the first time to collectively sound the alarm over the threat to the financial system posed by the climate emergency.

Overcoming objections from Donald Trump's U.S. administration, G20 finance ministers and central bank governors meeting in Saudi Arabia over the weekend agreed to issue their first ever communique with references to climate change, according to reports from Reuters.

Sources told the news agency that the state-

ment of priorities included the importance of examining the implications of global heating for financial stability, as part of the work of the G20's Financial stability Board, the steering group for international banking industry rules.

The language represented a compromise to overcome opposition from U.S. officials at the first major meeting of Saudi Arabia's year-long presidency of the G20, according to the sources. An attempt to include references to the downside risks for global growth posed

by the climate crisis was dropped.

Concerns about the economic damage from rising global temperatures and extreme weather events have risen up the agenda among world leaders, central bankers and financiers in recent years. The financial system continues to fund activities that are inconsistent with meeting climate targets, paving the way for trillions of pounds of financial losses in the future and catastrophic environmental consequences should the world

economy fail to adapt.

The International Monetary Fund included climate-related disasters in a list of the risks facing a highly fragile recovery in the global economy this year. However, the increasing focus comes as U.S. officials resist naming global heating as an economic risk, following Trump's move at the outset of his presidency to withdraw the world's largest economy from the Paris climate accords.

(Source: The Guardian)

### ENGLISH IN USE

#### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → ع

### Families with multiple births to receive monthly allowances

In line with population growth policies, families with triplets or more will receive monthly allowances of up to 5 million rials (nearly \$120 at the official rate of 42,000 rials), head of Welfare Organization has announced. The allowances would be paid when the children are born till the age of 6, IRNA quoted Vahid Ghobadi Dana as saying on Saturday.

Some 17,000 households with three or above births will receive the government support across the country, he stated.

He went on to say that since the Iranian calendar year 1393 (March 2014-March 2015) till 1397 (March 2018-March 2019), nearly 1.5 million births were registered in the country per year, 3 percent of which have been twins and 0.5 percent triplets or more.

### خانواده‌های دارای چندقلو کمک ماهانه معیشتی می‌گیرند

در راستای سیاست‌های افزایش جمعیت، به خانواده‌های دارای سه قلو به بالا ۵۰۰ هزار تومان به صورت ماهانه به عنوان کمک هزینه معیشتی پرداخت می‌شود.

به گزارش ایرنا، وحید قبادی دانا، رئیس سازمان بهزیستی روز جمعه با بیان این که کمک هزینه از ابتدای تولد تا ۶ سالگی پرداخت می‌شود، ادامه داد: تعداد خانواده‌های دارای فرزند سه قلو به بالا نیارمند کمک معیشتی دولت، ۱۷ هزار خانوار در کل کشور هستند.

قبادی دانا اظهارداشت از سال ۹۳ تا ۹۷ هر سال تقریباً یک میلیون و ۵۰۰ هزار نفر تولد ثبت شد، و بیش از ۳ درصد این تولدها دوقلو به بالا و حدود نیم درصد از آن سه قلو به بالاتر بود.

### PREFIX/SUFFIX

#### “amphi-”

■ **Meaning:** both or around

■ **For example:** A good museum in the castle is stuffed with antiques, while a Roman **amphitheater** overlooks all.

### PHRASAL VERB

#### Think something out

■ **Meaning:** to think about all the parts of something carefully before deciding or planning exactly what to do

■ **For example:** He went for a walk to think things out.

### IDIOM

#### Cut to the chase

■ **Explanation:** to reach the most important points quickly

■ **For example:** Come on, cut to the chase already—what exactly are you trying to ask me?

## Urinals, proposed by Iran, added to UN global wildlife agreement

ENVIRONMENT d e s k

**TEHRAN** — The Thirteenth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS COP13) has approved Iran's proposal to include urinals in the United Nation's list of endangered animals.

The CMS COP13 was held February 15 - 22 in Gandhinagar, India, with resolutions and decisions adopted to help conserve migratory species globally.



The meeting approved a proposal submitted by Iran, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan to include urinals in the United Nation's list of top ten endangered animals for conservation, IRNA reported on Sunday.

In addition to Asian elephants, jaguars and great Indian bustards, all slated to receive the strictest protection under Appendix I, Bengal floricans, little bustards, antipodean albatrosses and oceanic white-tip sharks also made the cut.

Meanwhile, urials along with smooth hammerhead and tope sharks were listed as migratory species that would benefit from enhanced international cooperation and conservation actions.

Maintaining and restoring ecological connectivity is a top CMS priority, especially in managing migratory species and their habitats — as evidenced by the newly adopted Gandhinagar Declaration, which was affirmed by 130 party countries.

The Declaration calls for migratory species and the concept of "ecological connectivity" to be integrated and prioritized in the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, which is expected to be adopted at the UN Biodiversity Conference in October.

The urial (*Ovis orientalis vignei*), also known as the arkars or shapo, is a subspecies group of the wild sheep *Ovis orientalis*. Noticeable features are the reddish-brown long fur that fades during winter; males are characterized by a black ruff stretching from the neck to the chest and large horns.

The urial is found in western central Asia from northeastern Iran and western Kazakhstan to Pakistan's Balochistan and Chitral, and in Ladakh, India. To the east it is replaced by the bigger argali and to the southwest by the Asiatic mouflon. Its habitat consists of grassy slopes below the timberline.

The conservation status of the urial is threatened as their habitat is perfectly suitable for human development; however, the urial population has been recovering in recent years.

## WORDS IN THE NEWS

### Mystery illness

(March 17, 2003)

Health authorities all over the world have been warned about a mysterious form of pneumonia. It is believed that the illness may have killed around ten people in the last few weeks, but the cause of the disease is still unknown. This report from our science correspondent, Richard Black:

The World Health Organization **does not issue global health alerts lightly**, and its warning, issued at the weekend, that this mystery illness presents a worldwide threat, is being taken seriously by health authorities.

In terms of the number of people affected, the disease, named Severe Acute **Respiratory** Syndrome or SARS, isn't yet serious - a couple of hundred people ill, possibly ten dead. But what's worrying doctors and scientists is that the cause is still unknown.

Disease-causing **organisms** entirely new to science are rare, but they do occasionally turn up. In recent times both HIV and the **prions** which cause **mad cow disease** are examples. A much more likely explanation for SARS is that it's caused by a new form of a well-known organism, such as the influenza virus or one of the **bacteria** which commonly cause pneumonia.

Patients are now being treated with both **anti-bacterial and anti-viral drugs**, and some hospitals report that the treatment seems to be working. But **paradoxically** this may be hindering the search for a cause. If you give a patient ten different drugs, you can't tell which one is curing the infection. Laboratories in Japan and the US continue to examine samples from the affected.

■ **Words**  
**does not issue [...] lightly:** if you do not issue something lightly, you publish it only after very careful thought  
**global health alerts:** emergency warnings about dangerous situations that might affect the health of people anywhere in the world

**respiratory:** related to breathing — a scientific word  
**organisms:** very small living things

**prions:** small protein molecules found in some animals including cows, which can, in some circumstances, cause disease  
**mad cow disease:** informal, non-scientific name for a disease called Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy, which affects the brain of some cows

**virus:** a kind of germ that can cause disease  
**bacteria:** very small organisms that can cause disease. Bacteria can exist in isolation, but viruses need a host body in order to live

**anti-bacterial and anti-viral drugs:** drugs that can be used to destroy bacteria and viruses

**paradoxically:** you describe a situation as paradoxical when it involves two facts and you would not expect it to be possible for both of them to be true

(Source: BBC)



!Be kind to me



## Palestinian rockets fired into Israel following Gaza border clash

→ 1 The bombings come after Israeli media reported up to three rounds of Palestinian retaliatory rocket attacks targeting localities and cities close to the Gaza Strip, notably Ashkelon and Sderot city.

According to a statement published by the Islamic Jihad, the rocket strikes were in response to the murder of Islamic Jihad member Mohammed al-Naem, 27, who was shot dead along the fence east of Khan Yunis by Israeli forces, earlier in the day.

Viral images from the incident showed an Israeli bulldozer speeding towards the scene and preventing other Palestinians from retrieving Naem's body before crushing and taking away the corpse.

The Palestinians were forced to withdraw after coming under fire from Israeli soldiers. Four Palestinians were injured from gunshot wounds during the incident, according to the International Middle East Media Center (IMEMC).

Images from the scene aroused much anger in Gaza. The Palestinian Hamas resistance movement later issued a statement describing retaliatory Palestinian rocket fire as a "natural result of the continued crimes of the occupation and its violations against our besieged people and the people of Gaza".  
*(Source: agencies)*

## Malaysia's Mahathir resigns but is asked to stay as interim PM

→ 1 The meeting fuelled speculation of an impending collapse of the coalition government, and a political realignment in Malaysia.

The intrigue hanging over Mahathir, 94, and Anwar, 72, is the latest chapter in a long-running political saga between two of the country's most prominent political figures.

Anwar and Mahathir united ahead of the 2018 election to drive out the UMNO-dominated Barisan Nasional coalition that had ruled the Southeast Asian country for six decades in a surprise victory that led to the removal of then-Prime Minister Najib Razak.

Mahathir has also repeatedly promised to hand over power to his former foe.

But tensions between the two in their Pakatan Harapan alliance had been growing, as Mahathir resisted setting a specific timetable for keeping his promise to hand power to Anwar.

The coalition's political fortunes have been waning with defeat in five recent by-elections.

In a side development, Anwar also had a split with party mate, Mohamed Azmin Ali, the economic affairs minister, who was among those who joined the meeting on Sunday night. On Monday, Anwar's PKR announced the expulsion of Azmin as a member.

For his part, Azmin announced that he had quit Anwar's party, taking with him 10 renegade members of PKR, which until Monday was the dominant partner of the ruling coalition.

At least 112 votes from members of the 222-seat parliament are necessary to form a new government.

Anwar was Mahathir's deputy when the latter was prime minister during his first stint from 1981 to 2003. But Mahathir sacked him in 1998 after they disagreed on how to handle the country's financial crisis.

Soon afterwards, Anwar was jailed for sodomy, charges he says were trumped up.

They later reunited in 2018 in a political alliance that ousted Najib.

*(Source: al Jazeera)*

## Trump seeks to dominate Syria's oil route

→ 1 Russian reaction to U.S. movement

"Since the beginning of 2020, 13 military convoys have arrived from Iraq to Syria, which included over 80 armored vehicles and more than 300 trucks loaded with various types of weapons, ammunition and materiel", Rear Adm. Oleg Zhuravlev said in a daily briefing, according to Sputnik News Agency.

At the same time, Sputnik also reported that despite U.S. claims over the gradual withdrawal of its troops from Syria, the country had recently sent a convoy of armored vehicles from Iraq to the oil-rich Al-Hasakah province in northeastern Syria. The news source quoted some posts on Facebook as saying that at least 55 armored vehicles, tanks and engineering equipment had left Iraq for al-Hasakah province.

Russia's Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu slammed the US for occupying Syrian oilfields, calling it a major obstacle to the reconstruction of the country after the conflict. The Russian defense minister said, "The oil fields... are controlled by the US. There is shameless, impudent pillage of the wealth that belongs to Syria and the Syrian people taking place".

Bashar Jaafari Syrian Permanent Representative to the UN, said earlier that the U.S. has occupied Syria's oil wells and is looting oil renews in the shadow of the Security Council's silence.

■ **Brokers who buy land for Americans to build a military base**

Al-Akhbar newspaper wrote U.S. moves aim at seizing oil wells in Syria and daily transfers between Al-Hasakah and Deir ez-Zor, as well as the transfer of equipment from Iraq to Syria are carrying for this purpose. According to information that Al-Akhbar has received, Washington is buying land in Tell Brak in northeastern Syria through local brokers to build a military base. The brokers are taking steps in favor of the U.S. and find land in the towns of Tel Hamees and Al-Hawl to Americans can build their military base there.

The Lebanese source stated that the U.S. is trying to gain lands in Tell Brak, Tel Hamees and Al-Hawl because of the connection of these areas to Ash Shaddadi and the northeastern outskirts of Deir ez Zor. The sources related to Syrian opposition said that Saudi-American talks is carrying out in Al-Hasakah with the aim of financial support by Riyadh for Washington-backed groups.

Saudi Arabia has agreed with backing Al-Sanadi Forces and armed group led by former President of the Syrian National Coalition Ahmad Jarba. The American security company will also take charge of training the two groups and encourages Arab youth to join them.

It is obvious that Washington is seeking to steal Syrian oil. Due to the blows dealt by terrorist groups to the Syrian infrastructure, Damascus is in severe need of oil revenues to reconstruct and develop the country. The Americans, who are well aware of this issue, are attempting to prevent Syria from achieving this revenue and occupy its oil fields. In fact, ISIS had previously occupied oil fields and now Washington is stealing Syrian oil. On the other hand, the U.S. describes the protection of Syrian oil fields from ISIS as a reason for its military presence, while the Syrian army is able to protect its oil and gas resources.

# One country, two governments: Ghani & Abdullah – who will first swear in President?

INTERNATIONAL TEHAN — As Afghanistan incumbent president Ashraf Ghani announced will swear as new president in coming days Abdullah Abdullah announced he will swear on same day too.

A perennially acrimonious rivalry over a controversial presidency has just aggravated after the incumbent president Ashraf Ghani and the self-proclaimed Abdullah Abdullah both announced their plans on Sunday for a victorious oath-taking ceremony before weekend.

President Ghani would take oath of office within the next five days, an official who did not want to be named said.

Moreover, Abdulla is preparing to shape his government with his teammates saying that he would be sworn in soon.

Last week, the Independent Election Commission unveiled the final results from the September 2019 presidential polls after delays due to rigging claims.

Abdullah failed to secure enough votes of the last year's presidential polls and his rival and incumbent Ashraf Ghani was announced



as the winner of election by the Independent Election Commission.

Abdullah rejected the commission's announcement, threatening to form a

parallel government.

Sources close to Abdullah said Sunday that a commission was appointed to hold the swearing in ceremony.

## Trump covetous of Indian dollars

INTERNATIONAL TEHRAN — Donald Trump, who has come under severe criticism by the public and Democratic figures for his unwise foreign policy decisions, is trying to present a better image of himself in the remaining time to the November presidential elections.

President Trump, who had bet his reputation on stopping the flow of Chinese goods to the U.S. in campaign trails, finally started a trade war with China.

And in line with this policy, Trump visited India on Monday for talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi to reinforce his anti-China stance first by signing lucrative arms contracts with New Delhi as a rival to Beijing and then taste India dollars after Arab petrodollars.

At the start of his two-day state visit to India, Trump said the U.S. will sign military deals worth more than \$3 billion with India on Tuesday.

"We make the greatest weapons ever made. Airplanes. Missiles. Rockets. Ships. We make the best and we're dealing now with India. But this includes advanced air-defense systems and armed and unarmed aerial vehicles," Trump told a crowd at the western Indian city of Ahmedabad as he shared the stage with Prime Minister



Modi, Bloomberg reported.

"I believe the United States should be India's premier defense partner, and that's the way it's working out," Trump said, according to nbcnews.com.

Trump also said, "America loves India. America respects India, and America will always be faithful and loyal friends

to the Indian people," al Jazeera reported.

Trump was welcomed with a hug from Prime Minister Modi.

Last week, India's cabinet cleared \$2.6 billion purchase from Lockheed Martin Corp. of 24 multi-role MH-60R Seahawk maritime helicopters to Indian navy.

The State Department has also approved a potential sale to India of \$1.8 billion in arms, including air-defense radars and missiles, rifles and other equipment, the U.S. Defense Security Cooperation Agency announced.

In a commentary published on Feb. 20, the Wall Street Journal said when Trump makes his first visit to India as president, there will be one thing keeping U.S.-India relations on track: China.

Bipartisan support for India has weakened in the U.S. Congress since the Modi government's hardline Hindu nationalist turn last year, and trade squabbles between Washington and New Delhi continue. But geopolitics still binds the U.S. and India together even as economics and human rights threaten to drive them apart, the WSJ said.

The Financial Times said Trump extols U.S.-India ties as counterweight to China.

## Syrian air defenses confront Israeli missile attack



Syrian air defenses have intercepted Israeli missiles targeting the capital city of Damascus.

Syria's official news agency SANA reported that Israeli warplanes launched the attack from above the occupied Golan Heights shortly before midnight on Sunday.

"Most of the enemy missiles were shot down before reaching their targets," SANA quoted a military source as saying.

The report added that the military was still verifying possible outcomes of the Israeli attacks.

The Israeli military also released a statement claiming that its fighter jets struck targets belonging to the Palestinian Islamic Jihad movement south of Damascus.

"In the Adeliyah region, outside of Damascus, an Islamic Jihad compound was struck, used as a hub of Islamic Jihad's activity in Syria," it said.

A few hours later, Islamic Jihad released a statement saying that two of its members had been killed in the airstrikes.

Israel has frequently launched airstrikes against Syria while the country has been preoccupied with fighting a nearly nine-year foreign-backed militancy which had once swept over large parts of the country.

Tel Aviv has long despised the Syrian government, led by President Bashar al-Assad, for its support for Palestinian and Lebanese resistance groups countering Israel.

The missile attacks against Damascus come as Israel also launched multiple airstrikes against what it claimed were Islamic Jihad positions in Gaza early on Monday.

At least half a dozen Palestinians were reportedly injured in the attacks.

*(Source: Press TV)*

## South Korea seeks 'speedy resumption' of U.S.-N. Korea nuclear talks



South Korea's foreign minister called on Monday for a quick resumption of stalled U.S.-North Korean nuclear talks, adding that her government stood ready to engage with Pyongyang to facilitate dialogue.

Kang Kyung-wha, addressing the U.N.-sponsored Conference on Disarmament, said the goal remained complete denuclearisation on the divided Korean peninsula.

"A speedy resumption of the U.S.-DPRK negotiations is critical so that all stakeholders maintain and build upon the hard-won momentum for dialogue. We stand ready to engage with the North in a way that facilitates and accelerates the U.S.-DPRK dialogue," Kang told the Geneva forum.

South Korea was promoting projects with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, she said, using the formal name of the isolated country.

"And we will do so adhering faithfully to the international sanctions regime on the DPRK," Kang added.

North Korea has been subjected to U.N. sanctions since 2006. They have been strengthened by the Security Council over the years in a bid to cut off funding for Pyongyang's nuclear and ballistic missile programs.

North Korea continued to enhance its nuclear and ballistic missile programs last year in breach of United Nations sanctions, according to a confidential U.N. report seen by Reuters in New York this month.

North Korea told the Geneva talks last month that as the United States had ignored its year-end deadline for nuclear talks, it no longer felt bound by commitments, which included a halt to its nuclear testing and the firing of inter-continental ballistic missiles.

*(Source: Reuters)*

## Yemen says Saudi Arabia tried to eliminate pilots of downed jet

A senior Houthi official says Yemen will reveal "in due course" information about the fate of two Saudi pilots whose Britain-made Tornado was shot down in Sa'ada province earlier this month.

A statement carried by the Saudi state news agency SPA after the downing said that the kingdom had conducted a special operation to evacuate the pilots who allegedly survived the incident, but no more information has emerged since then.

On Sunday, Houthi politburo member Mohammed al-Bukhaiti revealed in an interview with London-based al-Mayadeen TV that the Saudi air force had tried to eliminate the two pilots after their aircraft was shot down on Feb. 14.

"The Saudis intended to kill the pilots with their airstrikes on the wreckage of the downed fighter jet," he said.

"Saudi fighters targeted every movement in the area where the aircraft had been shot down, which resulted in the martyrdom of dozens of Yemeni civilians," Bukhaiti added.

According to the United Nations, 31 civilians were killed in Saudi airstrikes that hit al-Hayjah area in al-Jawf province. Yemeni officials said the bombings took place as local people gathered to have a look at the wreckage of the downed plane.

Saudi Arabia conceded the "possibility of collateral dam-

age" during a "search and rescue operation" at the site of the downing, which left the fate of its crew uncertain.

Yemen's Houthis released footage of what they called the launch of their "advanced surface-to-air missile" and the moment it struck the warplane in the night sky, sending it crashing down in a ball of flames.

"The downing of a Tornado in the sky above al-Jawf is a major blow to the enemy and an indication of remarkable growth in Yemeni air defense capabilities," Houthi spokesman Mohammed Abdelsalam tweeted.

The downing of the Saudi warplane marks another setback to a military alliance known for its air supremacy and signals Yemen's increasingly potent military arsenal.

On Sunday, Yemen's armed forces unveiled four domestically-built long-range, surface-to-air missile defense systems in what is seen as a game changer in the war.

Head of Yemen's Supreme Political Council and commander-in-chief of the armed forces Mahdi al-Mashat identified the systems as Fater-1 (Innovator-1), Thaqib-1 (Piercer-1), Thaqib-2 and Thaqib-3. The systems have entered service following successful tests, he said.

"The new defense systems will change the course of the battle against the coalition of aggression, and pave the ground

for the introduction of more sophisticated systems in order to engage enemy targets," Mashat said.

Bukhaiti said Sunday, "Each time we have tested a new system, we have announced it in order to highlight Yemen's defensive capabilities in deterring the enemy."

Back in January 2018, Yemen's missile defense units shot down a Tornado and a U.S.-made F-15 belonging to the so-called Saudi-led coalition. The Yemeni forces have also shot down numerous combat and surveillance drones as well as a number of helicopters so far.

Saudi Arabia launched its war on Yemen in March 2015, with the goal of bringing back to power the government of former president Abd Rabbuh Mansour Hadi and crushing the Houthi movement.

The U.S.-based Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), a nonprofit conflict-research organization, estimates that the Saudi war has claimed more than 100,000 lives over almost five years.

The UN says over 24 million Yemenis are in dire need of humanitarian aid, including 10 million suffering from extreme levels of hunger.

*(Source: Press TV)*



# Iran still have two direct slots in 2021 ACL

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — According to the latest Asian Football Confederation (AFC) club competitions ranking, Iran will have two direct slots in the group stage and two others in the preliminary rounds for the next season of the AFC Champions League.

The AFC Club Competitions Ranking is a ranking system launched by the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) in 2014. The ranking is based on the results of teams participating in the last four years of the AFC Champions League and the AFC Cup, as well as the member associations' FIFA ranking. The ranking is used for example to decide who play who in the Asian Champions League preliminary rounds.

The two top member associations in both East and West zones of Asia get three direct slots in the group stage of the AFC Champions League plus one slot in the play-off rounds of the competition which will have 40 clubs in 2021, with an increase from the previous 32.

Iran, dropping down one place, stand 6th overall and third in West Zone with 81.724 total points in the latest club competitions ranking issued by AFC. Qatar and Saudi Arabia ranked first and second in West Asia, respectively.

The 2021 AFC Champions League will be the 40th edition of Asia's premier club football tournament organized by the AFC, and the 19th under the current AFC Champions League (ACL) title. The 47 AFC member associations are ranked based on their clubs' performance over the last four years in AFC competitions (their national



team's FIFA World Rankings no longer considered).

Persian Gulf Pro League champions and Hazfi Cup winners will take Iran's two direct

slots in group stages of the AFC Champions League and the second and third teams represent Iran in the preliminary rounds of the ACL.

Persepolis, Esteghlal, Sepahan, and Shahr Khodro are four Iranian teams competing in the group stage of the current season of ACL.

## Iran men's team sabre qualify for Olympics



**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Iran men's team sabre booked a place at the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo.

The Persians came fifth in the International Fencing Federation (FIE) World Cup on Sunday.

In the men's team sabre competition in Varsovie in Poland, seventh seeds France caused a surprise as they won gold by beating top seeds South Korea 45-43.

Germany won the bronze medal after defeating Italy 45-38, with Iran taking fifth ahead of Hungary and Russia defeating China in a tight match 45-44 to secure seventh place.

This is for the first time Iran's team sabre advance to the Olympics.

The sabre is one of the three disciplines of modern fencing. The sabre weapon is for thrusting and cutting with both the cutting edge and the back of the blade.

## Iran suspends football matches over coronavirus fears



**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — A top official of the Iran Football Federation said that the matches in the country's league have been canceled for the next 10 days due to coronavirus.

Hedayatollah Mombeini, a member of the Football Federation Islamic Republic of Iran, said on Monday that the league's matches have been postponed in the next 10 days.

Authorities in Iran had previously suspended all sports competitions except football

matches but Mombeini says that there will be no football matches in the next 10 days.

On orders from the Ministry of Sport and Youth, an emergency committee was formed on Saturday to deal with coronavirus in sports in Iran.

Iran's Health Ministry said the total number of infections have risen to 61 while deaths stood at 12.

On Sunday, two matches were held behind closed doors.

## Athletes leave Iran for Karate 1-Premier League – Salzburg

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Iran sent nine karatekas to Austria for third stop of the season of Karate 1-Premier League.

The competition will be held in Salzburg from February 28 to March 01. The participants aim at earning the points at stake to take the top positions in Karate's Olympic standings.

The first Karate athletes will win the qualification for Tokyo 2020 on April 6, 2020. The top four-ranked karatekas in each one of the Olympic categories will earn the ticket to the Olympic Games. As the anticipated date nears, the competitors travel to Salzburg to make their Olympic dreams come true.

Additionally, the Karate 1-Premier League Salzburg will be another opportunity for karatekas to take a step forward in the quest to become the new Grand Winners. After two events, stars such as Sandra Sanchez of Spain, Serap Ozcelik Arapoglu of Turkey and Steven Dacosta of France are



becoming the big names of the tournament this year thus far since the three current Grand Winners have won the two first events of the season. All eyes will be posed on the three stars to see if they can claim a third consecutive crown.

Over 600 competitors from 88 countries are registered to compete at the 2020 Karate 1-Premier League Salzburg. This tally represents a considerable increase with the previous event since 513 competitors from 79 countries took part in the Karate 1-Premier League Dubai.

Salzburg hosted a Karate 1-Premier League event for the last time in 2016. With nearly 600 athletes from 51 participating at the event, Japan topped the medal table of event with 10 medals and 5 golds. Hosts of Austria and Serbia also registered successful performances in Salzburg.

The tournament starts on Friday, February 28 at 09:00 (local time). The finals are scheduled on Sunday, March 1 from 14:30 (local time).

## Coronavirus hits Italian sport hard

Sport in Italy is being heavily disrupted by a surge in the number of new coronavirus cases but Napoli's Champions League match against Barcelona in the south of the country on Tuesday is not at risk.

Italy reported its fifth death from the virus on Monday and it has the most confirmed cases in Europe.

A surge in infections at the weekend forced the postponement of four Serie A football matches in the north of the country where the outbreak is concentrated in two regions.

The game between Torino and Parma in Turin was called off as well as the matches between title-chasing Inter Milan and Sampdoria, Atalanta and Sassuolo, and Hellas Verona and Cagliari.

AC Milan also announced the postponement of their women's team's match against Fiorentina on Sunday.

The government announced on Sunday that all sporting events in two northern regions would be suspended, with Sports

Minister Vincenzo Spadafora saying the government had "a duty to be prudent and responsible".

Napoli's last 16 Champions League match against Lionel Messi's Barcelona side will go ahead on Tuesday as southern Italy is currently unaffected.

European football body UEFA said they were monitoring any change in that situation. "UEFA is following the situation closely and is contact with the clubs and the authorities concerned," a spokesman said.

A medical taskforce met at the Italian Football Federation's headquarters in Rome on Monday to plot a way forward, but it seems likely that the high-profile Serie A clash between Juventus and Inter on Sunday will be played behind closed doors.

Inter's home Europa League match scheduled for Thursday against Bulgarian club Ludogorets could also be played in an empty stadium, according to reports.

A planned get-together of Italy's under-19

national football team, which was to feature the coach of the senior team, Roberto Mancini, was postponed on Monday.

In the latest development, two Pro 14 rugby union matches due to be played this weekend have been rescheduled.

They are Zebre's clash with Welsh club Ospreys in Parma, and Irish side Ulster's visit to Treviso-based side Benetton.

That followed the postponement of the women's Six Nations rugby clash between Italy and Scotland, that had been scheduled to take place in Legnano, north of Milan, on Sunday.

"To ensure the safety of our players and spectators PRO14 Rugby fully supports the preventative measures taken in Italy and will adhere to the directives from the World Health Organisation (WHO) and local authorities," a statement on the Pro 14 website said.

Other sports were also hit with the Italian Olympic Committee (CONI) confirming that in line with government instructions, all



events in the Lombardy and Veneto regions would be postponed.

"We agree and align with the government's provisions," said CONI president Giovanni Malago.

"I believe that at this moment the world of sport should not go its own way. Health is the primary concern."

Eleven towns -- 10 in Lombardy and one in neighboring Veneto -- are under lockdown, with some 50,000 residents prohibited from leaving.

(Source: AFP)

## Ex-Iran coach Bauermann appointed head coach of Tunisia

Tunisia on Saturday introduced Dirk Bauermann as the head coach of their men's national team.

The 62-year-old German takes over from Mario Palma, whose contract expired in December 2019. Palma re-joined former Tunisian champions Club Africain.

Bauermann has a long history in international basketball, having coached his country at three editions of the FIBA Basketball World Cup (1994, 2006 and 2010), he also masterminded Germany at four straight EuroBaskets from 2005 to 2011, he coached Poland at EuroBasket 2013 and his most recent national team job was at the helm of Iran in 2015.

The German play-caller arrived in Tunis Saturday, and is expected to lead the reigning African champions at the upcoming FIBA Olympic Qualifying Tournament in Split, Croatia, where they have been drawn in Group B against the host country and Brazil.

Talking to the local media, Bauermann expressed his gratitude for the opportunity: "I feel really honored by the offer. It's always a great privilege to be the national team coach of a country because it's more than just about basketball. You represent the country with the team that you're coaching. To be the head coach of a great country of Tunisia is just a wonderful honor."

"I have watched a number of games, winning the African Championships, qualifying for big international tournaments like the Olympics in 2012 and the World Cup last year.

"We all know how difficult that will be... African basketball is getting stronger and stronger. When you have won medals before everybody wants to beat you. It's going to be challenging but I am looking forward to it."

Later in the year, Tunisia will open their qualification campaign for a place at next year's FIBA AfroBasket in Kigali, Rwanda.

(Source: FIBA)

## American Gauff breaks into top 50 at the age of 15

American teenage sensation Coco Gauff made her top 50 debut in the updated WTA rankings released on Monday, becoming the first 15-year-old in 15 years to achieve the feat.

Gauff, who continued her dramatic rise by reaching the fourth round on her Australian Open debut before losing to eventual champion Sofia Kenin, emulates Bulgarian Sesil Karatantcheva, who made the top 50 at the same age in Aug. 2005.

Florida-based Gauff has enjoyed a sensational run on the professional circuit since July last year when she reached the fourth round of Wimbledon in her first major championship appearance.

She also advanced to the U.S. Open third round before lifting her first WTA title in Linz, Austria at the end of the 2019 season.

(Source: Reuters)



## Real Madrid lose Hazard for season

Real Madrid winger Eden Hazard will be sidelined for the remainder of the La Liga season, Belgium national team coach Robert Martinez has said.

Hazard, who returned on Feb. 16 from an ankle injury that had kept him out of action since November, suffered a fracture to his right distal fibula during Real Madrid's 1-0 loss at Levante on Saturday.

Madrid have not commented on how long Hazard will be out for, but when asked about the Belgium captain's latest injury, Martinez told reporters: "We are very sad, because this injury will leave him out of action for at least three months."

"A footballer like Eden should always be on the pitch. We have an excellent communication with Real Madrid's medical staff and we are anxious about Eden."

"It's a shame, because it has also happened before an important game as that of Manchester City."

Injuries have limited Hazard to only 15 games in all competitions since joining Los Blancos from Chelsea in a £150 million move last summer.

Madrid host City in a Champions League round-of-16 first leg on Wednesday.

(Source: ESPN)

## South Korea suspend domestic league over coronavirus fears

South Korean football authorities have indefinitely postponed the start of the 2020 domestic season, due to fears over the coronavirus outbreak.

The K League made the announcement after an emergency meeting in Seoul on Monday as the country grapples with the viral outbreak that began in China and has infected more than 79,000 people globally. The number of reported cases in South Korea reached 833 on Monday, including seven deaths. Mainland China has reported 2,592 deaths among 77,150 cases.

While the majority of infections in South Korea have been recorded in the southeastern city of Daegu, there are concerns the virus could spread nationwide.

On Friday, the K League postponed the opening games of the season for Daegu FC and nearby Pohang Steelers, scheduled to be held this Saturday, but now all games will be suspended until further notice.

(Source: AP)



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GUIDE TO  
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING



God has set the reward for him who is able to show devotion to Him, and punishment for him who sins.

Imam Ali (AS)

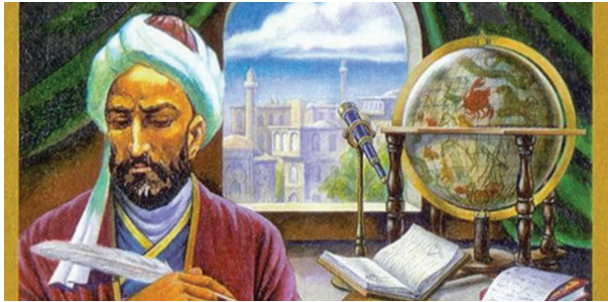
## IRIB to make series on Persian polymath Nasir ad-Din Tusi

**A R T d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) plans to produce a TV series on the Persian philosopher, physician and astronomer Abu Jafar Mohammad Tusi, better known as Nasir ad-Din Tusi, IRIB's Public Relations Office announced on Monday.

The members of the crew haven't been selected yet, but the script will be ready in late March.

Nasir ad-Din Tusi (1201-1274) had a wide range of interests, in which he was encouraged to indulge, particularly the sciences and philosophy.

He also studied mathematics, natural sciences, Avicenna's philosophy and medicine. His significant works in literary, theological and scientific disciplines later earned him the title of Mo'allem-al-thalith, i.e., the third teacher, following Aristotle and Farabi.



A portrait of Nasir ad-Din Tusi.

He is also the founder of Maragheh observatory, an astronomical observatory established in 1259, with a library, which is said at one time to have held over 400,000 volumes of literature related to astronomy and astrology.

His birthday, which falls on February 24 this year, is celebrated as Engineers' Day in Iran every year

## Turkish cultural delegation cancels visit to Iran over coronavirus

**CULTURE d e s k** **TEHRAN** — A Turkish cultural delegation that was scheduled to arrive in Tehran on Sunday canceled their visit due to the new coronavirus epidemic.



The delegation led by the general-director of the Libraries and Publication of Turkey's Ministry of Culture, Hamdi Tursucu, was scheduled to discuss details about Turkey as the guest of honor at the 33rd Tehran International Book Fair (TIBF), which will be held from April 14 to 24.

The director of the public relations team for the fair, Seyyed Mohammad Tabatabai, announced on Sunday the organizers are considering the postponement of the event.

The organizers also announced on Saturday that they have suspended China's presence in the event in an attempt to prevent the spread of the new coronavirus.

The new coronavirus, known officially as COVID-19, appeared first in the Chinese city of Wuhan in December and has since spread globally. The World Health Organization has declared it a global health emergency.

## “A Tale Dark & Grimm” published in Persian

**CULTURE d e s k** **TEHRAN** — A Persian translation of American author of children's books Adam Gidwitz's “A Tale Dark & Grimm” by Shohreh Nursalehi has recently been published in Persian, publisher Peydayesh has announced.

“In this mischievous and utterly original debut, Hansel and Gretel walk out of their own story into eight other classic Grimm-inspired tales,” writes Amazon.

“As readers follow the siblings through a forest brimming with menacing foes, they learn the true story behind (and beyond) the bread crumbs, edible houses, and outwitted witches,” it adds.

# MK2 Films to release Kiarostami's Koker Trilogy in France

**A R T d e s k** **TEHRAN** — The Paris-based distributor MK2 Films will release Iranian filmmaker Abbas Kiarostami's The Koker Trilogy on April 7, Nasrin Mirshab, the director of the DreamLab Films, the France-based international distributor of the film, has announced.

The trilogy is composed of “Where Is the Friend's House?”, “And Life Goes On” and “Through the Olive Trees”, which all were shot on location in the rural northern Iranian town of Koker.

“Poised delicately between fiction and documentary, comedy and tragedy, the lyrical fables in The Koker Trilogy exemplify both the gentle humanism and the playful sleight of hand that define the director's sensibility,” the Criterion Collection, the American distributor of the collection, wrote.

“With each successive film, Kiarostami takes us deeper into the behind-the-scenes 'reality' of the film that preceded it, heightening our understanding of the complex network of human relationships that sustain both a movie set and a village. The result is a gradual outward zoom that reveals the cosmic majesty and mystery of ordinary life,” it added.

Mirshab also said that MK2 Films also plans to release director Mehdi Shadizadeh's documentary “Along with the Wind” about the life of Iranian filmmaker Abbas Kiarostami and his artistic career at the same time.

“The film skillfully depicts the various aspects of Kiarostami's career and its eloquence that captured MK2 managers' attention,” Mirshab said.

The film was screened at the Art and Experience Cinema halls on June 22, 2019, concurrent with the late director's birthday.



Mohammad-Ali Keshavarz and schoolgirls from Koker act in a scene from “Through the Olive Trees”, one of Abbas Kiarostami's movies from The Koker Trilogy.

## Geneva human rights festival picks Iranian films

**A R T d e s k** **TEHRAN** — The Iranian films “Yalda, a Night for Forgiveness”, “Sunless Shadows” and “Coup 53” will go on screen at the International Film Festival and Forum on Human Rights in Geneva, Switzerland.

Directed by Masud Bakshshi, “Yalda, a Night for Forgiveness” is about a young woman, Maryam, who has been sentenced to death for murdering her husband, Nasser. Iranian law allows for the victim's family to forgive her and spare her life, so Maryam's fate will be decided by Nasser's daughter, Mona, on the country's most popular televised reality show.

In front of millions of viewers during Yalda, the winter solstice celebration, Maryam and Mona discover that forgiveness can be difficult as they relive the past.

Mehrdad Oskui is the director of the documentary “Sunless Shadows”, in which he builds a remarkable relationship with a group of adolescent girls who are serving their sentence for the grave crime of murdering their father, their husband or another male family member in an Iranian juvenile detention center.

The documentary “Coup 53” by Taqi Amirani is a decade-long investigation into the U.S.-designed 1953 coup against the government of Mohammad Mosaddeq in Iran.

The International Film Festival and Forum on Human Rights, which is one of the most important international events dedicated to cinema and human rights, will be held from March 6 to 15.

## Director of Indian Cultural Center visits Farabi Cinema Foundation

**A R T d e s k** **TEHRAN** — The director of the Indian Cultural Center at the Embassy of India in Tehran, Abhay Kumar Singh, visited the Farabi Cinema Foundation on Sunday.

He also held a meeting with Farabi CEO Alireza Tabesh to discuss the expansion of cinematic cooperation between the two countries, the foundation announced in a press release published on Monday.

Plans to screen films at the countries' festivals based on mutual agreements were also discussed at the meeting.

Singh pointed to the long relationship between Iran and India and said that Iranian films are popular among filmgoers in India and that the Iranian cinema has attracted great attention in the country.

He expressed his hope that the Indian filmmakers would have a stronger participation in the Fajr International Film Festival and other Iranian film festivals.

Tabesh also on his part said that the Indian cinema has a large share of the film market in the region and emphasized the need to develop bilateral cinematic ties between the two countries.

He also noted that collaboration with neighboring countries is Iran's top priority in the film industry.

Tabesh said that several film and TV series have so far been co-produced between Iran and India and added that Singh's proposal to celebrate 70 years of diplomatic relations between Iran and India during the Fajr International Film Festival will be examined by Iran.



Farabi Cinema Foundation director Alireza Tabesh (L) and Indian Cultural Center director Abhay Kumar Singh pose after a meeting in Tehran on February 23, 2020. (FCF)

## AmDocs to screen “Echo”, “Khatemeh”

**A R T d e s k** **TEHRAN** — The Iranian films “Echo” and “Khatemeh” will go on screen at the American Documentary and Animation Film Festival (AmDocs), which will take place in Palm Springs, California from March 27 to 31, the organizers have announced.

The story of the animation “Echo” by director Barzan Rostami is about understanding wildlife and the consequences of environmental abuse on the human race.

Directed by brothers Hadi and Mehdi Zarei, “Khatemeh” is about a 14-year-old Afghan girl named Khatemeh living in Iran

with her family.

She is forced to marry the husband of her late sister who died by suicide, but after a while, she escapes from home to save her life from her husband and her brother's torture and takes refuge in the Welfare Organization of Shiraz.

## Invader's ‘Rubik Mona Lisa’ beats estimate at Paris auction

**PARIS (Reuters)** — A French street artist's interpretation of the Mona Lisa made of 330 Rubik's Cubes sold for 480,200 euros (\$520,680) on Sunday at a modern art auction in Paris, well above presale estimates of up to 150,000 euros, organizers Artcurial said.

The 2005 artwork by anonymous street artist Invader uses the plastic puzzles' squares to create a mosaic of the Mona Lisa and her famous smile in garish colors.

The sale coincided with the closure of a blockbuster Leonardo da Vinci exhibition at the nearby Louvre museum, the home of the real Mona Lisa. That show marked the 500th anniversary of the death of the Renaissance master.

Invader is known for his mosaic tile works featuring pixelated versions of the 1978 Space Invaders video game characters, which “invade” cities around the world.

The Rubik Mona Lisa was created in 2005 and is the first in Invader's “Rubikcubism” series, in which he recreates well-known Old Master works.

Invader, who defines himself as an UFA, an Unidentified Free Artist, wears a mask



The Rubik Mona Lisa (2005) by French street artist Invader is displayed at ArtCurial in Paris, France, February 3, 2020. (Reuters/Gonzalo Fuentes)

and insists on his face being pixelated for his rare appearances on camera.

He has a large following of fans who use a Smartphone app, “Flash Invaders”, to snap pictures of his mosaics if they're authentically his, rack up points and compete with other players.

## “Parasite” star hopes film will help Japan-Korea cultural ties

**TOKYO (Reuters)** — One of the stars of “Parasite” said on Sunday he hoped the film would help improve cultural ties between Japan and Korea, which have been strained by disputes including a trade row that ignited between the Asian neighbors last year.

Actor Song Kang-ho, who in the Oscar-winning film plays the father of the basement-dwelling Kim family, said he was happy about the warm welcome Japanese fans had given “Parasite” and hoped relations would continue to improve.

“I hope we can go back to the early 2000s, and have an interest in each other's works,” Song told reporters at the Japan National Press Club. “Japan and Korea are close countries and can relate to each other's cultures.”

“Looking at how ‘Parasite’ has been received even in Japan, I hope we can have a mutual interest in each other's cultures.”

Song did not directly reference current relations, but the two countries have been going through a rocky patch

since last year when a diplomatic row over Japanese compensation for forced World War Two laborers was exacerbated by a trade dispute.

Japanese filmgoers have embraced “Parasite” since it opened in the country on Jan. 10. The film rode its Oscar bounce to the top of the Japanese box office last weekend and has now become the top-grossing South Korean film in Japan of all time.

“I've come to Tokyo because I want to express my appreciation for the interest that all the filmgoers have shown,” the film's director Bong Joon-ho told the same news conference.

“Parasite”, a dark social satire about the disparities between rich and poor in Seoul, made history this month by becoming the first foreign-language film to take Hollywood's top prize.

The film, which won the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival last year, also scooped up three other Academy Awards including best director for Bong, who beat out Hollywood royalty including Martin Scorsese and Quentin Tarantino.