

Countries imposing medical bans not qualified to be HRC members **2**



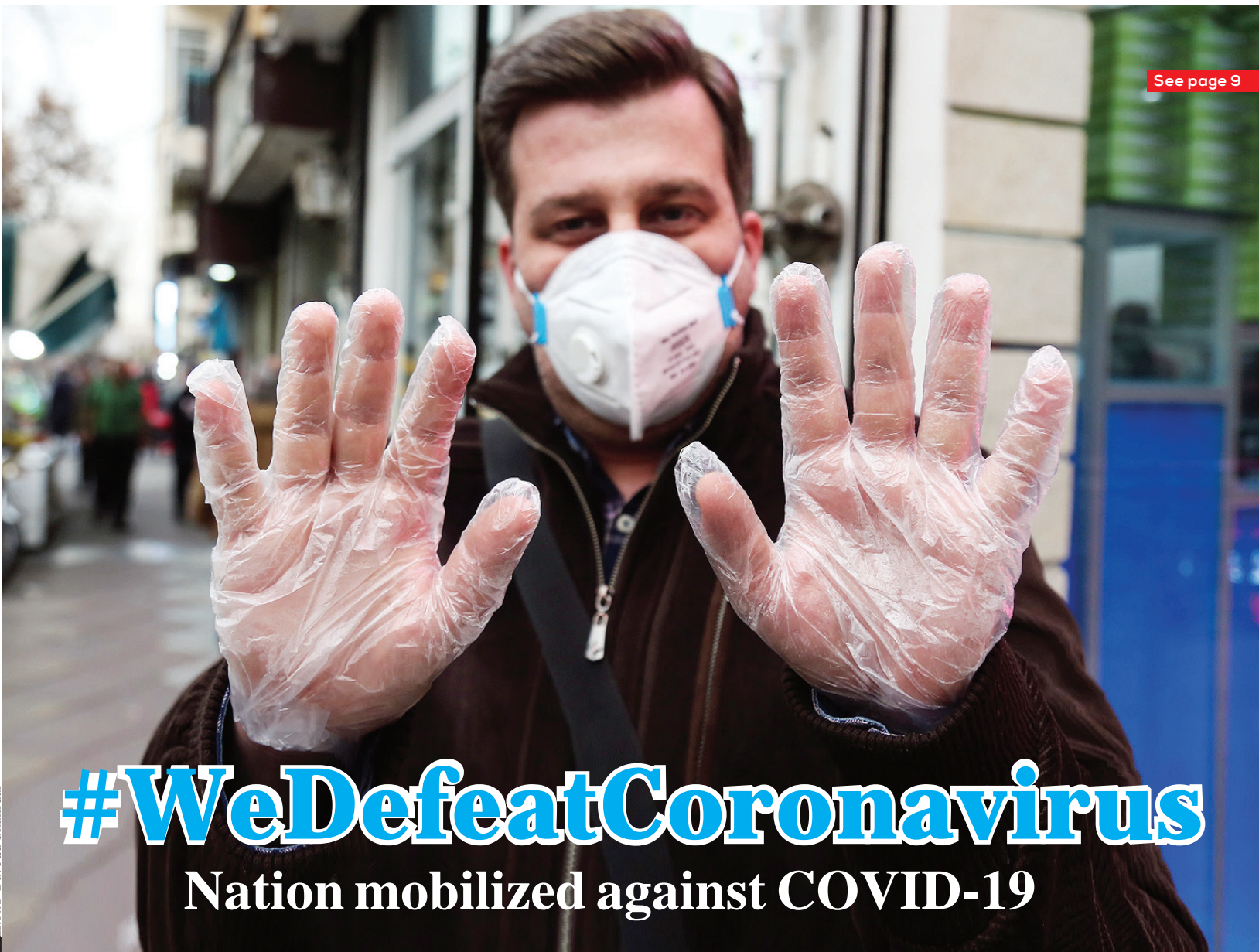
Coronavirus outbreak will be reined in soon **2**



Dragan Skocic meets Croatian football chief Davor Suker **11**



Tehran book fair postponed until end of Ramadan **12**



See page 9

1st section of Tehran-Shomal freeway inaugurated

TEHRAN – The first section of the long-awaited Tehran-Shomal freeway, which shortens the route between the Iranian capital and Mazandaran province in north, was officially inaugurated on Tuesday by President Hassan Rouhani.

The inauguration ceremony was also attended by senior officials including Transport and Urban Development Minister Mohammad Eslami.

Speaking in the inauguration ceremony, Rouhani described the project as a manifestation of Iranian engineers' capabilities, adding that "Sanctions didn't influence our determination to construct the freeway."

The first section of the freeway spans for near 32 kilometers and connects Azadegan freeway in the capital to Shahrestanak county in Alborz province. ➔4

Rainfall increases Lake Urmia level

TEHRAN – Recent rainfall has increased the level of Lake Urmia to 1,271 meters, a step closer to its ecological level of 1,274 meters.

Shared between West Azarbaijan and East Azarbaijan provinces in northwestern Iran, Lake Urmia was once the largest salt-water lake in the Middle East.

However, decades of long-standing drought spells and elevated hot summer

temperatures that speed up evaporation as well as increased water demands in the agriculture sector shrank the lake drastically. In 1999 the volume of water which was at 30 billion cubic meters drastically decreased to half a billion cubic meters in 2013. Moreover, the lake's surface area of 5,000 square kilometers in 1997 shrunk to one-tenth of that to 500 square kilometers in 2013. ➔9

Iraqi legislators schedule confidence vote for new government

Iraqi lawmakers say they will hold a vote-of-confidence session for Prime Minister-designate Mohammad Tawfiq Allawi later this week, following months of intense protests accusing the former government of corruption and mismanagement.

Allawi, a 65-year-old former communications minister, was appointed as the new premier by President Barham Salih earlier this month, after the divided parliament

missed a February 1 deadline set by the president to nominate someone for the post.

Allawi, whose appointment came some two months after former Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi resigned in the wake of unprecedented anti-government protests, had earlier called for a Monday vote and his request was supported by his predecessor and Deputy Parliament Speaker Hassan Karim al-Kaabi. ➔10



ARTICLE

Ebrahim Fallahi
Tehran Times journalist

Why Majlis rejected the budget bill?

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, stating that the bill is not compatible with the country's current economic conditions.

Back in December 2019, after President Hassan Rouhani submitted the administration's draft of the national budget bill to the Majlis, many economic analysts and experts had expressed concerns over the draft saying that the budget bill hasn't been prepared based on realistic revenue estimations.

Many predicted the bill to create serious problems for the country's economy in the upcoming year.

Now that the bill has also been rejected by the members of parliament, it is time to take a more detailed look into the budget bill to see what the reasons for such a unanimous rejection could be.

Oil revenues

The first and most important objection to the budget bill was regarding the unrealistic estimations of the country's oil revenues considered in preparing the draft. Iran's next budget bill has been set based on the prediction of selling one million barrels of oil at \$50 per barrel, however, many believe that due to the U.S. sanctions on the country's oil industry, the Iranian government will not be able to realize this prediction.

The submitted bill has envisaged a total of 2.61 quadrillion rials (about \$62.14 billion) of incomes, while revenues from exporting oil, gas, and gas condensate are estimated at 454.9 trillion rials (about \$10.83 billion).

These numbers have been opposed by many of the MPs for being unrealistic since the country is currently facing some problems for its oil exports and also the demand for oil is significantly falling in the global markets.

"Unfortunately, the next year's budget includes unrealistic numbers for oil sales, but we have to be realistic and base the budget on realistic figures," an MP said.

Tax incomes

The government has envisioned various strategies for compensating a probable deficit in the next year's budget due to the fall in oil revenues. ➔4

Saudis see Trump as unpredictable and fear who might be the next American president: Askari

By Javad Heirannia

TEHRAN — Professor Hossein Askari, an expert on Saudi Arabia who also teaches international business at the George Washington University, believes that "The Saudis see Trump as unpredictable and fear who might be the next American President."

"Open up a small channel with Iran in case it is needed given the unpredictability of U.S. foreign policy," Hossein Askari, who served as special advisor to Saudi finance minister, tells the Tehran Times.

Following is the text of the interview:

■ The Lebanese newspaper Al-Banna disclosed that Saudi Arabia had expressed willingness to negotiate with Iran after the Aramco oil facility incident, but it was ultimately the Americans who prevented Riyadh from fulfilling its demand. How effective do you think America is in affecting such decisions in Riyadh?

A: Historically, Saudi Arabia would never think about negotiating with Iran before two conditions were met. The King was convinced that Iran was not bent on overthrowing the Al-Sauds, a paranoia that has poisoned rapprochement between the two countries. And second, America's concurrence about a dialogue with Iran as the Kingdom is totally dependent on the United States for its self-defense. After the Iran Nuclear deal in 2015 (JCPOA), the Al-Sauds had second thoughts about relying on American support. Could they continue to depend on the United States? But when Trump

became president and after his trip to Saudi Arabia, the Al-Sauds became emboldened. They felt they could do anything in the region because Trump had their back. But after the Aramco incident, when Trump did not retaliate against Iran for its alleged role, the Al-Sauds became weak in their needs. They had second thoughts. They were willing to hedge their bets. I don't know, but I think the U.S. did not want any dialogue that would weaken its hands in dealing with Iran in the future.

■ In your opinion, what groups within Saudi Arabia are in favor of dialogue with Iran, and what groups oppose this? In general, the question is whether internal disputes within Saudi Arabia itself determine whether or not to negotiate with Iran. ➔7

Countdown for the establishment of new Iraqi cabinet

By Ramin Hooseinabadian

TEHRAN — A countdown for the formation of a new Iraqi cabinet has begun. Iraqi parliamentarians were due to hold a meeting to discuss the cabinet formation and vote of confidence on Monday, but it did not happen.

In this regard, Iraqi parliament sources said that an extraordinary session to examine the cabinet of Iraqi Prime Minister-designate Mohammed Tawfiq Allawi is postponed to Wednesday. The first deputy speaker of the parliament, Hassan Karim al-Kaabi, announced that the extraordinary session of the Iraqi parliament will be held on Wednesday instead of Monday to discuss Allawi's efforts to form a new government.

Head of the Parliamentary Bloc Hisham Al-Suhail called on the Prime Minister-designate to

restore dialogue with the components of society and not to rush until reaching an agreement that satisfies all parties.

However, the latest news and reports on the process of proposing cabinet to the parliament indicate that most cabinet members entered the final phase and the prime minister-designate is ready to submit the lineup to the parliamentarians.

Accordingly, it is expected that the process of presenting the new Iraqi cabinet to parliament will be finished on Wednesday, and political disputes over the nomination of some as ministers will end.

Meanwhile, foreign political pressure on Baghdad to prolong the presentation of new cabinet cannot be ignored. The U.S. has exerted political

pressures on Allawi to obstruct the establishment of new government.

About two weeks ago, the U.S. has agreed to extend a waiver for Iraq to import Iranian energy supplies for 45 days, while Washington has repeatedly extended the exemption for periods of 90 or 120 days.

By this action, the U.S. is in fact applying political pressure on Allawi to disrupt the formation of new government and make him to distance from the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Another factor that has obstructed the formation of new cabinet is political disputes. In this connection, Iraqi activist Alaa al-Khatib, a person close to the prime minister-designate, said that The Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP), ➔7



ISNA/Masoumeh Aliakbar

Duathlon Asian Cup held in Karaj

The 2020 Karaj ASTC Duathlon Asian Cup was held in Karaj, Alborz Province.

A total of 20 sportsmen and 14 sports-women took part in the competition.

In the men's division, Mohammad Hosseini won the competition, followed by Mohammadhossein Tayebi and Ali Rezvani.

Asma Beigzadeh finished in first place in the women's division. Fatemeh Mirian and Zahra Reisi came second and third, respectively.

Duathlon is an athletic event that consists of a running leg, followed by a cycling leg and then another running leg in a format similar to triathlons.



ARTICLE

Ali A. Jenabzadeh
Journalist

The FATF blacklist and its reverse impact on stock market

It may seem a little too soon, but I believe the world is on the threshold of facing a new kingdom, an economic one. Here is the story of The Kingdom.

Right in the middle of parliamentary elections of Iran on February 21, 2020, people of Iran were shocked by a piece of news that came just out of the blue: Iran's name goes on the FATF blacklist. For most Iranians, it seemed bad and scary, mostly because they don't know what it means. The FATF (Financial Action Task Force) is an intergovernmental organization founded in 1989 on the initiative of "G7" to develop so-called "policies" to combat money laundering and later, terrorism financing.

BEING in the FATF's blacklist is not something new for Iran, but KNOWING that we are in that list, is a brand new information for most Iranians. Iran was added to The List in 2009 alongside countries like South Korea and Cuba. So yes, we were there before, but in 2015 after the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) was signed by parties, this inclusion was suspended.

The FATF, as merely a supervisory structure and not an executive one, has posed different conditions on Iran to exclude the country from The List. One of them is the so-called Action Plan which includes 42 clauses. This Plan was SECRETLY granted by Ali Tayebnia, the minister of economic affairs and finance in Hassan Rouhani's first government. In fact, out of 42 clauses, 38 are already effective and in process. The entire controversy is over the remaining 4 and once the rest of these clauses are taken in, members of the FATF should decide whether or not Iran will be excluded from the list. Guess who is seating there to decide? Israel, next to the U.S. and Saudi Arabia...

But here is the question: if being in a blacklist, in any blacklist, is bad, then why Iranian Stock Exchange index skyrocketed just one day after the blacklist monster was unleashed? Howcome the reactions were not so promising in other markets like gold or currency? The math is simple: The Blacklist lets the genie out of the bottle! ➔7

Iranian Navy's 66th fleet berth at Jakarta port

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — The public relations of the Iranian Navy announced in a statement on Tuesday that the 66th combat-training fleet has berthed at the Indonesian port city of Jakarta.

The statement said that after 25 days of non-stop sailing and hoisting Iran's flag in international waters, the fleet berthed at Jakarta port.

In the meantime, Captain Ehsan Nasiri, the fleet commander, said that the fleet will stay in Jakarta port city for three days.



He added, "Holding meetings with the senior Indonesian navy commanders and managing sports competitions with the hosting country's navy staff are among programs of the fleet during its stay in Jakarta."

The fleet, including Khark helicopter-carrier and Bayandor destroyer, left the Iranian port city of Bandar Abbas in early February.

In recent years, Iran's naval forces have increased their presence in international waters to secure naval routes and protect merchant vessels and oil tankers against pirates.

In line with international efforts to combat piracy, the Iranian Navy has also been conducting anti-piracy patrols in the Gulf of Aden to safeguard the vessels involved in maritime trade, especially ships and oil tankers owned or leased by Iran.

Rouhani: Coronavirus outbreak will be reined in soon

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — In a live televised program on Tuesday afternoon, President Hassan Rouhani assured the Iranian citizens that the coronavirus outbreak will be controlled in the shortest period of time.

"The people should not be worried and should cooperate as they have cooperated until today," he said during his first meeting of the national coronavirus headquarters.

He said that the essential guidelines are being issued by the Ministry of Health.

"Our main source is the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting. It announces all the guidelines issued by the Ministry of Health and the people must pay attention to them and follow them," he noted.

Elsewhere, he said that all the people should continue their job while observing hygienic standards.

It is the enemies' plot to close the country through spreading fear, he added.

Army at high-level of readiness: commander

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — The commander of the Army's Ground Force announced on Tuesday that his forces, including combat and logistic units, are in a very good condition.

Addressing the third version of "Upgrading Ground Force's Dynamism Festival", Brigadier General Kiomars Heidari said, "Upgrading dynamism, efficiency and continuation of dynamism are of great importance for the military units."



He further pointed to production of spare parts in the Zarharan and Ya Ali (AS) industries and said, "Today, we have gained very good promotion in production of spare parts for the Army's Airborne Unit, heavy and ultra-heavy equipment."

"We have attained self-sufficiency in the field of upgrading dynamism," the commander said, explaining that dynamism means maintenance and even upgrading efficiency of the old but valuable equipment.

Leader of the Islamic Revolution suggested on February 8

that Iran must increase its military power, noting that being militarily vulnerable would prompt the enemy to take action against the country.

"In order to prevent war and in order to put an end to threats we must become powerful," Ayatollah Ali Khamenei told a number of Air Force officers.

The Leader went on to say, "We are not seeking to threaten any country or nation, rather we are after protecting the country's security and preventing threats."

Hit-and-run shooting kills a person, injures another one in southwestern Iran

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — The governor of port city of Mahshahr announced on Tuesday that a young person was killed and another one injured in a hit-and-run shooting.

Mohsen Beiranvand said, "Following an announcement by the police emergency center (110) over a shooting near Nasr mall in an industrial area in Mahshahr, the policemen arrived at the scene."

"One person was murdered at the scene and another one sustained serious injury who was immediately transferred to the nearest medical center," he added.

Beiranvand went on to say that a team of policemen are investigating the incident.

Eyewitnesses also reported that the assailants, in a Pride passenger car, opened fire at two young people before noon, February 25, leaving one of the young men killed and another injured.

The shooting, reportedly, was due to personal conflicts.

Mahshahr is located 120 km to the east of Ahvaz in the southwestern province of Khuzestan.

Urgent action needed to lift medical bans on coronavirus-hit Iran, physician tells WHO

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — A top Iranian physician and media activist has urged the World Health Organization to take urgent action to help lift medical sanctions against Iran as the country is struggling to contain a rapid outbreak of the novel coronavirus.

"Humanity demands action today; otherwise, the vulnerable will pay the price," Dr. Abolfazl Fateh said in a letter to WHO director Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

Following is the text of the letter:

As you are aware COVID-19 has placed the world in a dangerous epidemic and all the forecasts indicate the very fast spread of the virus. As the World Health Organisation declared a global health emergency on 31st January, it seems that we are only just dealing with the tip of the iceberg. News from Iran indicates that so far, tens, probably even hundreds of people have been infected with COVID-19.

Iran has an advanced healthcare capacity and system however, as you are aware, the country is under unprecedented and extreme sanctions put in place by the United States of America. Due to the harsh conditions and the spread of the population of 80 million in such a large territory, along with its borders; it is evident that they are short of the required resources and equipment for diagnosis, prevention and treatment, especially laboratory kits, masks N-95, protective gowns for medical staff, ambulances, specialised medicines, antiseptics and appropriate medical supplies; in addition there is also a need for the latest information on successful trials in combating this virus.

Health, hygiene and access to medical care are the fundamental rights of all the human beings regardless of race, religion, and nationality.

As an Iranian physician and senior media activist residing outside of Iran, I sincerely seek your urgent attention for the sanctions on providing healthcare support, drugs,



medical laboratory kits and preventive equipment to be lifted immediately.

Iranians living outside the country are willing to send humanitarian support in such a difficult situation for the impacted population, however due to the sanctions, it is not possible to do so.

It must be brought to the attention of other global organisations not to overrule the healthcare rights through political considerations.

I firmly believe this is the request of a vast majority of Iranians living abroad.

Clearly, any delay in removing the sanctions on healthcare support will result in countless innocent and vulnerable people losing their lives.

It is our humane duty to do the right thing immediately and not to carry over the tragic consequences.

Humanity demands action today; otherwise, the vulnerable will pay the price.

I sincerely hope that you take the action needed to combat the sanctions on healthcare that Iran faces, and do not let health care become politicized and the political pressure take innocent lives.

Govt. must continue efforts to reduce consequences of FATF blacklisting: analyst

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Mehdi Motaharnia, a political analyst, has said that the government must continue efforts to reduce consequences of being blacklisted by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF).

"We have to study the current situation, restrictions and destructive consequences in order to be able to reduce the consequences," he told ISNA in an interview published on Tuesday.

He noted that 80 percent of international trade are done under regulations of the FATF and being blacklisted will cause restrictions on economic and banking transactions.

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 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 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 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.

Kourosh 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.

Iran: Countries imposing medical bans not qualified to be HRC members

(Press TV) — The head of the Iranian Judiciary's High Council for Human Rights says countries imposing sanctions on supply of medicine to Iran are "murderers of human beings" and lack qualification to be members of the UN Human Rights Council (HRC).

Ali Baqeri-Kani made the remarks while addressing the 43rd session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva, Switzerland, on Monday, where he described the unilateral sanctions imposed by the United States on Iran as the "most recent grave and systematic violation of human rights."

Emphasizing that "the Iranian nation is the major victim of such a violation," Baqeri-Kani said, "The United States has created an international sanction regime which amounts to a systematic violation of human rights at an international level."

"This new policy in practice has prevented the access to medicine and basic needs by those who are in need," the Iranian rights official said, adding, "Those who impose sanctions on medicine are not only violators of human rights but also murderers of human beings. And those who impose sanctions on life-saving medicine are not eligible to be a member of the Human Rights Council."

Refuting U.S. claims that its anti-Iran sanctions do not cover supply of medicine, the official said, "Although the US claims that basic needs such as pharmaceutical and commodities are not sanctioned, access to the most basic human needs are



blocked due to the sanctions imposed on international financial transactions and banking."

Baqeri-Kani slammed U.S. allies and some other countries for following the US sanctions policy against Iran and said, "To preserve their political and economic benefits, many states that may not approve such sanctions, not only have failed to oppose such inhuman treatment, but also supported these policies by succumbing to them."

"These acts are not only the collective punishment of a nation, but also a modern method of violation of human rights, which should be put high on the agenda

of the Human Rights Council," he added.

The U.S. returned its sanctions against Iran in 2018 after leaving a historic nuclear accord -- officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) -- signed between Iran and major world powers. The measures defied the agreement's multilateral nature and the fact that it had been ratified by the United Nations Security Council.

Washington then began forcing other parties to toe its sanctions line. The three European signatories to the deal -- Britain, France, and Germany -- have stopped their transactions with the Islamic Republic,

bowing under the pressure.

Switzerland late in January launched the so-called Swiss Humanitarian Trade Arrangement (SHTA), claiming it was aimed at facilitating the medicine trade, reportedly using the Central Bank of Iran's credits. Swiss officials have, however, refused to clarify how such transactions would continue if the CBI ran out of credit with Swiss banks.

Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Abbas Mousavi on February 3 dismissed as insufficient the Swiss-U.S. "humanitarian" channel, arguing that the United States is originally banned by the International Court of Justice from subjecting Iran's much-needed medical supplies to sanctions.

"We do not recognize any such so-called humanitarian channel. We do not recognize sanctions [for that matter]. Medicine and foodstuffs were never subject to sanctions in the first place so they can now create a channel [for their transfer] with much publicity," he added.

An NGO reported in November 2019 that Iranian children suffering from a rare skin condition known as EB are losing their lives as US economic sanctions hamper the flow of vital medical products.

Hamid Reza Hashemi-Golayegani, the head of the NGO that helps such patients, said that at least 15 Iranian children with epidermolysis bullosa (EB) have died since the US launched its new sanctions on Iran in August.

Zarif: Coronavirus, like terrorism, knows no bounds

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has said like other viruses, including terrorism, coronavirus knows no borders, calling for more regional co-operation to combat it.

"Like other viruses - incl terrorism - #COVID19 knows no borders and doesn't distinguish between ethnicities or faiths," Zarif said on Tuesday in a tweet.

"To combat it, neither should we," he said, adding, "In line with #HOPE, Iran calls for more regional cooperation incl long overdue Joint Center for Disease Control & Prevention."

Iran is one of the countries inflicted with the novel coronavirus, scientifically known as COVID-19.

Health Minister Saeed Namaki has said effective measures have been taken and comprehensive plans are underway to get rid of the novel coronavirus in the country.

Iran has put in place a set of contingency plans, including the temporary shutdown of schools, universities and cultural centers, to curb the coronavirus outbreak that by Tuesday afternoon had claimed at least fifteen lives in the country.

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



long," the minister said on Sunday.

"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."

Meanwhile, the head of the Iranian Judiciary's High Council for Human Rights has said countries imposing sanctions on supply of medicine to Iran are "murderers of human beings" and lack qualification to be members of the UN Human Rights Council (HRC).

Ali Baqeri made the remarks while ad-

ressing the 43rd session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva, Switzerland, on Monday, where he described the unilateral sanctions imposed by the United States on Iran as the "most recent grave and systematic violation of human rights."

Emphasizing that "the Iranian nation is the major victim of such a violation," Baqeri said, "The United States has created an international sanction regime which amounts to a systematic violation of human rights at an international level."

"This new policy in practice has prevented access to medicine and basic needs by those who are in need," the rights official said, adding, "Those who impose sanctions on medicine are not only violators of human rights but also murderers of human beings. And those who impose sanctions on life-saving medicine are not eligible to be a member of the Human Rights Council."

Refuting U.S. claims that its anti-Iran sanctions do not cover supply of medicine, the official said, "Although the U.S. claims that basic needs such as pharmaceutical and commodities are not sanctioned, access to the most basic human needs are blocked due to the sanctions imposed on international financial transactions and banking."

Coronavirus outbreak will be controlled next weeks: civil defense chief



POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — The chief of Iran's Civil Defense Organization said on Tuesday the Iranians' national resolve is to overcome the coronavirus outbreak, noting the situation will be brought under control over the next weeks.

"Controlling the epidemic situation resulting from coronavirus should be paid attention from two different aspects of field reality and public opinion," Brigadier General Gholamreza Jalali said.

"Fortunately, a form of national will and coordination has been created at the highest level of the country's management system which has resulted in partial controlling of coronavirus outbreak nationwide," Jalali explained.

"The mentioned control is meant that we will witness a decline in the number of the virus-affected people," the general explained.

The general also said it is unfair to question the performance of the Health Ministry and call its officials "liar".

"Calling the country's health sector as liar and inefficient and spreading panic among people are the techniques used by the enemies' media outlets," he further said.

On Monday, Ali Rabiei, the government spokesman, condemned any move to politicize the outbreak of coronavirus, scientifically called COVID-19, urging political groups, parties and media outlets to refrain from making baseless

accusations against the 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, 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.

According to Kianoush Jahanpour, the head of the Health Ministry's public relations, said as of Tuesday the number of people diagnosed with the coronavirus in Iran increased to 95, of whom 15 have so far lost their lives.

Ways and means to improve situation around nuclear deal to be discussed: Russian diplomat

By staff and agency

Mikhail Ulyanov, Russia's permanent representative to the Vienna-based international organizations, has said that ways and means to improve situation around the 2015 nuclear deal will be discussed at the Joint Commission of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on Wednesday.

"Participants of #IranDeal will meet the day after tomorrow at the level of political directors. Ways and means to improve the situation within and around #JCPOA will be discussed," Ulyanov tweeted on Monday.

The European Union said on Monday that the JCPOA Joint Commission will meet in Vienna on Wednesday.

"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.

Zarif also held talks with the Dutch and Austrian foreign ministers who visited Tehran on Saturday and Sunday, discussing the most pressing issues, chief among them the nuclear deal.

The two top European diplomats also held separate talks with President Hassan Rouhani.

In his meeting with the Dutch Foreign Minister Stef Blok on Saturday, Rouhani said Iran has not closed the path of dialogue with the EU.

In his meeting with Austrian Foreign Minister Alexander Schallenberg on Sunday, Rouhani also said, "The European Union is expected to stand up to the U.S. illegal measures."

Moscow sees JCPOA Joint Commission as opportunity for de-escalation

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov says Wednesday's Joint Commission meeting of the JCPOA would be an opportunity to stop the escalation of tensions surrounding the Iran nuclear agreement.

"Tomorrow, Vienna should host the meeting of the Joint Commission of the JCPOA participants. This is a chance, although not a 100 percent one, but still a chance to stop the process of escalation until it is too late," Lavrov said on Tuesday at the Disarmament Conference in Geneva, according to Sputnik.

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov will represent the country at the meeting.

Earlier on Monday, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said that the Wednesday meeting of the commission will be a 'regular and periodic session' led by deputy foreign ministers and political directors.

The spokesperson also emphasized that the upcoming session will have no connection with the JCPOA's dispute

resolution mechanism.

The JCPOA was struck between Iran and the five permanent UN Security Council members — the United States, Russia, China, France, and the UK — as well as Germany and the European Union.

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

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

The move was intended to push European countries to salvage the JCPOA from U.S. pressures. Iran argued that the three European members of the deal, namely France, Britain, and Germany, have done nothing of value to protect Iran's benefits from the deal.

Finally, Iran announced in January that it is taking the



last and final step to suspend all of its commitments to the JCPOA. The decision was based on Europe's failure to keep up its part of the deal, but Tehran clarified that it will return to the deal as soon as Europe fulfills its obligations.

JCPOA session has nothing to do with dispute mechanism: Tehran

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said on Monday that the session of the JCPOA Joint Commission in Vienna on Wednesday will have nothing to do with the nuclear deal's dispute mechanism.

Speaking to reporters, Mousavi offered some details about the meeting.



"The meeting that is going to be held on Wednesday, February 26, will be a regular and periodic session of the JCPOA Joint Commission that will be convened at the level of deputy (foreign) ministers and political directors," he said, the Foreign Ministry website reported.

The official website of the European Union first announced the meeting.

"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," it said on Monday.

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 commission.

U.S. President Donald Trump quit 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.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad 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.

Pakistan envoy submits credentials to Zarif

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Pakistan's new ambassador to Tehran, Rahim Hayat Qureshi, submitted a copy of his credentials to Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif on Tuesday.

Qureshi was appointed as the new Pakistani ambassador to Iran in December 2019. He served as an envoy to South Korea before his mission to Iran.

The Pakistani diplomat also has the experience of working at the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the UN.



Earlier this month, the Pakistani ambassador said Prime Minister Imran Khan has stressed the importance of fraternal ties with Iran.

"Pre-departure call on PM @ImranKhanPTI. He stressed the importance of brotherly and fraternal ties with Iran which are rooted in history, culture and society. As Ambassador to Iran it would be my earnest desire to take our bilateral ties to greater heights," he said via Twitter.

Prime Minister Khan visited Tehran on October 13. He met with Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and President Hassan Rouhani.

His trip was intended to mediate between Tehran and Washington.

Ayatollah Khamenei said Iran has never initiated a war "but if anyone starts a war against Iran will undoubtedly regret."

Elsewhere, Ayatollah Khamenei described Iran-Pakistan relations as brotherly and attached importance to expansion of ties and promotion of security in borders.

For his part, Khan called Iran and Pakistan brotherly countries and said that Islamabad seeks to expand relations with Iran.

Pakistan considers Iran an "important partner" especially in economic area, the prime minister said.

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	518513.9
IFX	6691.71

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	45,621 rials
GBP	54,338 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$55.52b
WTI	\$51.20/b
OPEC Basket	\$58.17/b
Gold	\$1,644.90/oz
Silver	\$18.41/oz
Platinum	\$969.20/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

1st section of Tehran-Shomal freeway inaugurated

➔ Earlier in February, Iranian transport minister had termed Tehran-Shomal freeway as a ‘megaproject’, noting that “although construction of this project took more than 24 years, the project was mainly started in 2015 at the initiative taken by Mostazafan Foundation and cooperation of the Ministry of Transport and Urban Development.”



The mega project consists of four phases spanning 121 km in total.

Section IV, which is 20 kilometers long and connects Marzana-bad in Kelardasht District to Chalous (both in Mazandaran), was inaugurated in March 2014.

China signals more easing to shore up economy

China’s top leaders signaled they are planning to increase stimulus this year through fiscal and monetary policy, as the coronavirus outbreak hammers the world’s second-biggest economy.

At a meeting chaired by Chinese President Xi Jinping last Friday, officials pledged to be more “proactive” in using fiscal policy and exercise “more flexibility” in monetary easing.

The wording indicates a greater easing bias compared with the stance that was endorsed at a top-level economic meeting last December, where the Communist Party leadership laid out stimulus plans for this year.

In a separate statement from the central bank over the weekend, deputy governor Liu Guoqiang said the People’s Bank of China (PBOC) will free up part of the reserves of some commercial lenders to unleash long-term funding to the economy, and consider adjusting the benchmark deposit rate at an appropriate time.

The coronavirus outbreak has forced officials to keep millions of people at home and away from work, impacting businesses - both big and small - which have suspended or limited operations.

The epidemic is weighing on an economy that was already growing at its slowest in three decades, with ratings company S&P Global warning that a prolonged public health crisis could cause the bad loans ratio in China’s banking system to more than triple.

The “rate cut, if rolled out, may not be a big one,” Mr. Ting Lu, chief China economist at Nomura International in Hong Kong, wrote in a note.

The “current benchmark deposit rates are quite low anyway. Cutting the reserve requirement ratio, using lending facilities like pledged supplementary lending to fund loan extensions, tax cuts, rent cuts and interest payments should be much more effective in the current situation.”

A separate teleconference meeting took place on Sunday with government officials all the way down to the county level, according to state-run news agency Xinhua.

Xi told attendees that the outbreak is the “most rapid, wide-spread and difficult to contain” public health crisis China has faced since the founding of the People’s Republic in 1949.

A financial inclusion review

The PBOC will soon conduct a financial inclusion review on commercial banks and offer qualified lenders discounts on their reserve ratios, Mr. Liu said on the central bank’s WeChat account last Saturday.

The authorities will keep liquidity sufficient and continue to use targeted relending and rediscounting funding to help small firms, he added.

Liu also repeated an earlier pledge that the central bank will consider economic and inflation pressures when adjusting the benchmark deposit rate at an appropriate time.

China slashed a range of policy rates this month.

Members of the party’s Politburo last Friday also pledged to accelerate construction projects and step up efforts to support industries that are involved in making vaccines, bio-medicine and medical equipment, as well as 5G and industrial networks.

Officials also urged local governments to shift towards restoring business operations and “actively” helping migrants return to work. (Source: straitstimes.com)

Industry minister holds talks with manufacturers of heath products amid coronavirus outbreak

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iranian Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Reza Rahmani held a meeting with the producers of health and hygiene products, on Tuesday, to discuss the supply of such products amid the coronavirus outbreak.

As reported by IRIB, the meeting was attended by the representatives of the country’s major health products manufacturers as well as senior officials

including the government’s spokesman Ali Rabiei.

Exploring the necessary measures which should be taken by the government and the industry ministry for countering the spread of coronavirus and supervising the production and supply of health and hygiene products were the major issues discussed in the meeting.

Earlier on Monday, Rabiei condemned



any move to politicize outbreak of the coronavirus, 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 to the physicians.”

Coronavirus, 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.

Why Majlis rejected the budget bill?

➔ One of the major measures provisioned for such compensation is said to be increasing the tax revenues.

Tax incomes are predicted to be 1.95 quadrillion rials (about \$46.42 billion) in the next year’s budget bill, rising 27 percent from 1.72 quadrillion rials (about \$40.95 billion) envisaged in the present year’s budget.

Considering the current economic situation, the question is how much of this revenue can be realized; is the taxpaying population going to expand or tax evasions are going to be eliminated or is the Iranian National Tax Administration (INTA) seeking to put more pressure on existing taxpayers?

Some MPs believe that the envisioned tax income is not in line with the provisions of the country’s Sixth Five-Year National Development Plan (2016-2021).

“Every year’s revenues must be set based upon an estimation of the one-sixth of the total revenue envisaged in the country’s national development plan, and this year’s budget bill is far from such an estimation,” an MP said.

Another issue that was raised by MPs about the tax section of the bill was regarding the current situation of the country’s factories and producers as major taxpayers.

“Our producers are facing many problems for importing their required raw materials and machinery and their production has reduced significantly, so how they are going to pay more tax?” said another MP.

Selling government assets

The government has suggested selling its excess assets as



another source for offsetting the next year’s budget deficit, however, parliament members are not convinced that such a program could be fully realized.

In the next year’s budget bill, it has been estimated that the government would gain 490 trillion rials (about \$11.6 billion) from the sales of its assets.

However, although last year the government had set a much lower target for the sales of its assets, unfortunately, it couldn’t be realized.

In addition to the transferring assets, using forex reserves, selling Islamic bonds, and withdrawing 450 trillion rials (about \$10.714 billion) from National Development Fund, were also among the strategies suggested for compensating budget deficits.

TEDPIX, IFX on rising trend

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), rose 14,778 points to 518,513 on Tuesday, after it notches the ever-high record of one million points on Monday, IRNA reported.

As reported, over 8.16 billion securities worth 52,914 trillion rials (about \$1.25 billion) were traded at TSE on Tuesday.

The first market’s index climbed 9,754 points and the second market’s index went up 34,466 points.

Indices of Persian Gulf Petrochemical Industries, Mobarakeh Steel Company and Golgozar Mining and Industrial Company mostly contributed to the TEDPIX growth during the Tuesday trades.

Tehran Stock Exchange has been ranked as the second best performer among the members of the World Federation of Exchanges (WFE) in terms of the main index growth during the 12-month period of De-



cember 2018-December 2019.

According to the TSE’s office of public relations, TEDPIX registered a growth of 133 percent in the mentioned time span to become the second-best performer after Jamaica Stock Exchange.

On Tuesday, IFX, the main index of Iran’s over-the-counter (OTC) known as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB), also rose 139 points to 6,691, as 2.62 billion securities valued at 26.346 trillion rials (about \$627.2 million) were traded at this market.

Housing price climbs 3.8% in Tehran City

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Housing price rose 3.8 percent in Tehran City during the past Iranian calendar month of Bahman (ended on February 19), compared to its previous month, ISNA reported on Tuesday.

The housing price has also climbed 43 percent in the capital city in Bahman of this year from the same month in the previous year.

As reported, the number of real estate deals increased 25 percent in the past month from its preceding month and 42 percent from the same month of the past year.

Two month ago, Deputy Transport and Urban Development Minister for Housing and Construction Affairs Mahmoud Mahmoudzadeh had said that the government was planning on launching a national real estate and housing system, aimed at controlling

the country’s housing and real estate market by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 19, 2020).

“In order to control and regulate the real estate market, the Ministry of Transport and Urban Development is following four major programs which include taxing vacant houses, completing Mehr housing units, constructing and supplying new housing units through the National Housing Plan and finally setting up a professional real estate and housing system,” the official explained.

According to Mahmoudzadeh, one of the main goals of establishing this system is to identify vacant and unused houses in order to receive tax from the owners.

“The system will be able to bring back 2.6 million vacant housing units into the real estate market, and consequently affect the rent prices significantly,” he said.

Iran-Turkmenistan Joint Chamber of Commerce to select its new board members

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iran-Turkmenistan Joint Chamber of Commerce will hold an extraordinary assembly on March 11 in order to select its new board members.

In the meeting, which will be held at the

place of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA), the chamber’s board of directors will present its report and the financial statements will be released to be approved, ICCIMA portal published.

The 15th Iran-Turkmenistan Joint Economic Committee meeting was held in mid-October 2019 in Turkmenistan’s capital Ashgabat.

The event was attended by senior officials from both sides and Iran’s Transport and Urban

Development Minister Mohammad Eslami was the Iranian chairman of the meeting.

On the sidelines of the committee meeting, the two sides’ businessmen and entrepreneurs discussed and followed up on expansion of economic relations.

The ECB is in for a Covid-19 shocker



130. The country’s government had to take some dramatic measures, including the cancellation of Venice’s Carnival celebration and suspending schools and other public spaces in a number of northern regions.

Propping up the global economy

Until now, policymakers had displayed little sense of hurry. At the weekend, finance chiefs and central bankers from the world’s largest 20 economies failed to put in place a concerted set of measures to prop up the global economy, as they only agreed to a “menu of policy options” if conditions worsen amid the virus outbreak. Last Tuesday, eurozone finance ministers had approved a joint policy recommendation that alluded to some form of fiscal expansion if the slump deepens. However, it is unclear when the boost would

actually occur or how forceful it would be. Germany’s politicians appear particularly reluctant to open their purse. The German economy is now one of the worst performers in the currency area, and yet its leaders continue to rack up fiscal surpluses.

The ECB has also been surprisingly upbeat recently. At the last press conference, its president Christine Lagarde displayed excessive optimism that inflation was edging closer to the central bank’s target of close to but below 2 percent. On Friday, Philip Lane, the ECB’s chief economist, said he still expected the impact from the virus to be “V-shaped”, meaning there would be an economic contraction followed by a rapid expansion. The implication is that the central bank could just look through such weakness, since it would be largely temporary.

So far, the fears for the global and European economies were largely the product of what was happening in China, a large export market for European businesses and is deeply rooted in their supply chains. However, there will now be serious consequences for domestic demand and supply too.

The outbreak in Italy has occurred between Lombardy, Emilia-Romagna and Veneto - the country’s industrial heartland. As people choose to stay at home and travel less, this is bound to impact local services.

An important question for central bankers and governments is to what extent these disruptions will have inflationary consequences. Over the past decade, policymakers have grown accustomed to responding to slowdowns by stimulating demand, especially through unorthodox monetary policy moves, including quantitative easing.

(Source: businesstimes.com.sg)

Iran's gas output to hit record high by mid-March: Zanganeh

ENERGY **TEHRAN** – Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh said on Monday that the country's daily gas production is going to reach one billion cubic meters (mcm) by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 19) when all the South Pars phases go operational.

"Today, Platform A of Phase 13 of South Pars Gas Field was installed which is the latest phase in South Pars development project and the last platform of this phase will be installed by the yearend," he said after a meeting with the chancellors of oil industry universities.

After the installation of the phase 13 platforms, all the 27 platforms of the giant gas field's phases will be installed completely and the country gas output will reach a new high, the minister said.

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.

The field is estimated to contain a significant amount of natural gas, accounting

for about eight percent of the world's reserves, and approximately 18 billion barrels of condensate.

Iran to take part in OPEC meeting
Zanganeh further noted that Islamic Republic of Iran will participate in upcoming meeting of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) which will be held in early March 2020.

He also pointed to his recent phone conversation with the Russian Minister of Energy Alexander Novak and said, "Russia's energy minister believes that further reduction in oil output is not necessary before OPEC's meeting in March."

Elsewhere in his remarks, Zanganeh pointed to the outbreak of 'coronavirus' and added, "Spread of this deadly virus is the main reason for the fluctuations of oil prices in the global market."

Instruction with regards to combat 'coronavirus' has been notified in the oil industry, Oil Minister Zanganeh added.

Oil prices rise on bargain-hunting; virus fears cap gains

Oil climbed on Tuesday as investors sought bargains after crude benchmarks slumped almost 4% in the previous session, although concerns about the coronavirus spreading out of China and curbing major economies and fuel demand capped gains.

Brent crude rose 49 cents, or 0.9% to \$56.79 a barrel by 0751 GMT, after slipping 3.8% on Monday.

U.S. crude futures gained 42 cents, or 0.8%, to \$51.85, recovering from a 3.7% drop in the previous session.

"Because we've seen a very significant fall in case of West Texas, from above \$60 to touch below \$50 (over the past six weeks), I think oil has largely reflected a lot of risk, unlike other markets," Michael McCarthy, chief market strategist at CMC

Markets, told Reuters over the phone. Crude markets are also close to an important technical support level between \$49.50 and \$50 a barrel for WTI and between \$54.50 and \$55 for Brent, McCarthy said.

"For this week, key factors are coronavirus, inventory data and the technical picture," he said.

Demand concerns savaged prices for oil and a whole swathe of commodities on Monday, while both U.S. and European equities suffered their steepest losses since mid-2016.

Asian share markets were trying to stabilize on Tuesday after a wave of early selling petered out and Wall Street futures

managed a solid bounce.

In the United States, crude oil inventories were seen building for a fifth straight week, while refined products likely fell, a preliminary Reuters poll on the expectations for the week ended on Feb. 21 showed on Monday.

Countries around the world are stepping up efforts to prevent a pandemic of the flu-like SARS-CoV-2 virus originating from China late last year that has now infected more than 80,000 people, 10 times more than the SARS coronavirus of 2002/2003.

"Fears that the rapidly-spreading coronavirus outside of China could lead to a bigger-than-anticipated impact on global economy and oil demand will likely keep weighing on market sentiment," Satoru Yoshida, a commodity analyst with Rakuten Securities said.

Saudi Aramco expects the coronavirus impact on oil demand to be short-lived, however, and for consumption to rise in the second half of the year, Chief Executive Amin Nasser told Reuters on Monday.

On Tuesday, Saudi Arabia's Minister of Energy Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman said that OPEC+ should not be complacent about the coronavirus.

Bank of America expects Brent to average \$62 per barrel in 2020, with medium-term downside risks due to slowing global growth, trade war uncertainties and the coronavirus outbreak.

(Source: reuters.com)

Indonesia's oil and gas output set for drop: analysts

Indonesia's oil and gas output is expected to contract for a fourth consecutive year in 2020, as aging fields and delays to new projects keep production levels below government targets, analysts said.

The output decline comes as Jakarta proposes a new law and aims to set up a special state vehicle aimed at reducing red tape and attracting foreign investment into the industry.

Details on the new initiatives remain scant but analysts said it could take years to boost energy exploration and production in Southeast Asia's largest economy.

Indonesia's crude oil output has been declining for years, from a peak of more than 1.5 million barrels per day (bpd) in the mid-1990s to below 800,000 bpd now as key fields run dry.

Oil output in 2019 was 3.7% below target while gas output dropped 15.2% below target due to field curtailments, pipe leaks and dozens of unplanned field shutdowns, according to SKK Migas.

"We are forecasting a 6% decline in liquids, and a 2% drop in gas output for 2020," said Andrew Harwood, Wood Mackenzie's research director for upstream oil and gas in Asia Pacific.

"Any increase from new projects will be offset by declines at Chevron's Rokan PSC, Pertamina's Mahakam block, and Pertamina's wider operations across Java and Sumatra."

Pertamina will take over the Rokan block from Chevron next year, but Indonesia's oil



production "will continue to decline until Pertamina drills further on the block," Rystad Energy analyst Prateek Pandey said.

"Given this lackluster outlook, it is imperative for Indonesia's oil and gas production that Pertamina reduces sanctioning hurdles that have long delayed many of its projects, and implements advanced enhanced oil recovery technology on its mature fields," he said.

The only promising project commencing operations this year is Eni's Merakes gas development, which analysts say may reach 60,000 barrels of oil equivalent production per day once at full capacity - deemed at least a year away.

Even if the new is passed, any revival in output may take years to materialize due to lingering investor worries about Indonesian resource nationalism.

"I don't know what's going to happen in five years from now, or three years from now when the campaign for the next presidential elections kicks off again," Harwood said.

(Source: oedigital.com)

Oman LNG and Baker Hughes to undertake major debottlenecking project

Baker Hughes Company and Oman LNG participated in a signing ceremony at Baker Hughes' 2020 Annual Meeting in Florence, Italy, the Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) for the turbomachinery scope of the debottlenecking project.

The project will increase Oman LNG production capacity by 10 percent to 11.4 MMTPA. Debottlenecking is defined as the process of highlighting specific areas in production trains, machinery equipment or the workflow configuration that would limit or constrain the flow of product inside the plant.

By optimizing plant operations, overall capacity can be raised further. The debottlenecking project comes as part of Oman LNG's far-sighted strategic projects that will boost

its efficiency.

"This project truly exemplifies the value of legacy partnerships. The opportunity for this seminal debottlenecking project grew from our more than 16-year relationship serving Oman LNG's turbomachinery fleet with our equipment and employing top-of-the-line LNG technology and solutions," said Mokhtar Fawaz, Vice President MENATI, Turbomachinery & Process Solutions, Baker Hughes.

Under the terms of the deal, Baker Hughes will supply the new helper motors, variable-frequency drives and deliver the engineering, procurement and construction (EPC) for the said project scope. FEED was completed in 2019 and awarded to Baker Hughes in Q4 2019. The project will be executed over the

next two years, with the first train completion by the end of 2020, followed by the second LNG train in 2021, and the third LNG train by 2022.

The current energy landscape is ever-challenging, requiring energy companies to adopt the most efficient practices to remain reliable and agile suppliers to customers.

Oman LNG provides cleaner and efficient LNG to customers while yielding greater contributions to the Sultanate's socio-economic fabric.

To "accommodate additional feed gas, Oman LNG has implemented a number of key activities and projects to boost its plant efficiency and increase the LNG output.

The ambitious debottlenecking project is

very important for our company. We have partnered in this initiative with organizations such as Baker Hughes as they have proper execution, integration and ensure flawless project delivery while sharing similar safety values as ours," said Harib Al Kitani, CEO of Oman LNG.

As the original equipment manufacturer of the debottlenecking equipment in the three LNG trains, Baker Hughes was selected by Oman LNG for the debottlenecking project to minimize execution risks and build upon the 16-year relationship between the two companies. Baker Hughes has serviced the plant's turbomachinery fleet in the region under a global contractual services agreement since 2004.

(Source: hellenicshippingnews.com)

Energy storage to accelerate global energy transition, research agency says

The global energy storage market is set to grow from approximately 4 GW of annual deployments in 2019 to more than 15 GW in 2024, according to a new analysis from research agency Wood Mackenzie.

Costs have fallen, direct incentives and clean energy targets are proliferating and competitive markets and vertically-integrated electricity providers are beginning to recognize the potential of energy storage.

In the next decade, the already consolidating web of manufacturers, developers, investors and integrators will compete for their slice of this burgeoning industry, carving out mature supply chains and propelling cost reductions. As they do, continued policy and regulatory efforts will be key to driving upside in the market.

According to the analysis, the end of the decade will benefit from stabilizing supply chains and mature and experienced players, however, there will be even more potential for disruption from new technologies and policies.

Daniel Finn-Foley, Wood Mackenzie Head of Energy Storage, sees six key themes that will be the biggest trends to watch in the global energy storage market in 2020.

Finn-Foley said, the "energy storage industry is in the enviable position of juggling growth game changers from multiple directions. Plunging costs drove speculation in the first scaled markets but as price declines enter a steadier rate, further recognition of storage's value – rather than cost – will be the key factor in determining growth."

As with all renewable energy technologies, energy storage has an important role to play in the energy transition.



Oil major Total and automaker Opel announced a collaboration on electric vehicle (EV) cell manufacturing earlier this year, potentially investing as much as \$5.5 billion in up to 47 GWh of manufacturing capacity. "Total, already investing in stationary storage applications, and Opel clearly see batteries as a key element of the future," said Finn-Foley.

Companies like Microsoft, Google and Facebook have blazed a trail for scores of companies seeking to shrink or eliminate their carbon footprints. "When Google announced a partnership with NV Energy for significant solar-plus-storage investment to power data centers, they were not just breaking new ground in a key market but were pioneering a new way corporations value renewable energy."

Procuring renewables in real-time shows

"Rather than simply offset consumed electricity, Google

seeks to time-match consumption with availability and that requires storage. If this catches on among other climate-forward corporations, the upside could be huge. Daimler's commitment to procure renewables in real-time shows that this trend may become global," added Finn-Foley.

In 2019, the European Commission launched a EUR 10 billion innovation fund targeting low-carbon technologies, including energy storage. On top of this, the U.S. Department of Energy's Energy Storage Grand Challenge represents the U.S. federal government's largest-scale action to date.

With millions behind this technology globally, innovation efforts have the potential to encourage alternatives to lithium-ion and potentially shift the market, according to Wood Mackenzie. While solar and wind can displace carbon-emitting forms of energy supply, storing energy will be critical when renewable generation is not prolific.

Energy storage can play a role in balancing supply with demand on the electric grid and opportunities for BTM residential and non-residential energy storage are growing.

As the decade progresses and further incentives accelerate the energy storage market, the dynamic of the industry pushing stakeholders to recognize the technology for its potential will quickly flip, the analysis revealed.

"Stakeholders are already pulling, rather than being pushed, and turning to storage rather than being forced to consider it. The timing and speed of this push/pull shift and the speed with which the industry can react will define its potential," said Finn-Foley.

(Source: saurenergy.com)

OPEC hasn't run out of ideas, Saudi energy minister insists as oil prices slump

By Holly Ellyatt

His comments came amid speculation that there is tension in the alliance, known as OPEC+, over whether to cut oil production further.

Prices continue to be weighed on by ample supply and falling demand and, lately, fears surrounding the coronavirus and its impact on the global economy.

OPEC and its allied oil-producing nations are still working well together and still have options to try to rebalance global crude markets, Saudi Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman said Tuesday.

"We do communicate with each other, we use every opportunity to talk with each other," he said, speaking to reporters at the ICCUS conference in the Saudi capital of Riyadh.

"We did not run out of ideas, we haven't lost our phones and there are always good ways of communicating through conference calls and technology is very helpful."

His comments came amid speculation that there is tension in the alliance, known as OPEC+, over whether to cut oil production further.

Prices continue to be weighed on by ample supply and falling demand and, lately, fears surrounding the coronavirus and its impact on the global economy.

Prince Abdulaziz insisted that the producer countries in the alliance communicate and he was "confident of our partnership," adding that every producer was a "responsible" one.

Saudi Arabia's new Energy Minister, Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman takes a tour at the exhibition during the 24th World Energy Congress in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates September 9, 2019.

Cutting collective oil output

OPEC and its non-OPEC allies, led by Russia, will meet in Vienna on March 5-6 but there is uncertainty over whether the entire group will agree to cut their collective oil output further with rumors that Russia is still undecided. As it stands, the alliance has reduced its total oil output by 1.7 million barrels a day in a bid to stabilize oil prices.

The technical committee of OPEC+ met earlier in February to debate a possible oil output cut but the meeting ended with no solid recommendation.

The Saudi minister referred to a statement made last week by his Russian counterpart, Energy Minister Alexander Novak, in which Novak said Russia had not yet made a decision on any further cut and that it continued to discuss the matter with its OPEC partners.

Prince Abdulaziz said the statement showed that Novak remains "positively engaged." "I'm confident of our partnership as OPEC+, I'm confident that everyone in the OPEC+ is a responsible and responsive producer."

Oil prices steadied on Tuesday after crude benchmarks slumped almost 4% in the previous session on concerns over the impact of the coronavirus on already dented global demand and a build in U.S. crude oil inventories.

Brent crude for April delivery was trading at \$56.79 per barrel Tuesday, while West Texas intermediate (WTI) was trading at \$51.87.

(Source: cnbc.com)

Repsol's energy transition plan to major on renewables and green hydrogen

By Anamaria Deduleasa

Repsol's strategy of becoming a net zero emissions company by 2050 will see it develop around 400 to 500MW of new renewables projects per year, the Spanish giant said.

Under its plans to transition to a lower carbon business, the Madrid-headquartered company lowered the long-term value of its oil and gas projects and booked a nearly €4.85bn (\$5.17bn) impairment on production assets, which it said was "consistent with the Paris Agreement's climate goals".

Repsol posted a loss of €3.82b for the full year compared to a profit of €2.34b for 2018.

After putting a price tag on its environmental ambitions, Repsol said that in order to reach its goal, using 2016 as the baseline, it is targeting a 10% reduction by 2025, 20% by 2030 and 40% by 2040.

"In the local carbon business, we expect to approve between 400MW to 500MW per year of additional renewable generation capacity ... we will pursue international opportunities, leveraging our position in Iberia," Repsol chief executive Josu Jon Imaz said.

The year will see Repsol spend €700m on its low carbon business and decarbonization plans, part of a €1.9b capital expenditure budget set for its downstream business.

Having a positive impact

"When we talk about decarbonization, we are not taking only about renewables, but all areas of our business which can have a positive impact," Imaz said.

"We are exploration new decarbonisation paths, including waste-to-gas and waste to fuel, as well as integrating renewables into refining operations producing green hydrogen and using renewable power to fuel industrial processes," he added.

However, while Repsol's strategy to fight against climate change is in line with the targets of the Paris Summit and the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations, it said its investments in developing oil and gas assets will also continue.

"There has been an increase in demand from our shareholders for a clear identification of the risks associated with climate change and its impact on the future demand on our productions. This has made us reviews our assumptions on the price of oil and gas," Imaz said.

"Yet, carbon demand scenarios indicate that by 2040, almost half of global energy consumption will come from oil and gas, so we have to balance in our mix the role that oil will play, and the role that natural gas will pay as a transition fuel.

"In the upstream business we will prioritize value creation over production increase, but it will continue to be a sustainable cash contributor to the group that will finance growth in other areas," Imaz said.

For the full year, Repsol's upstream capex is expected to be €1.8b.

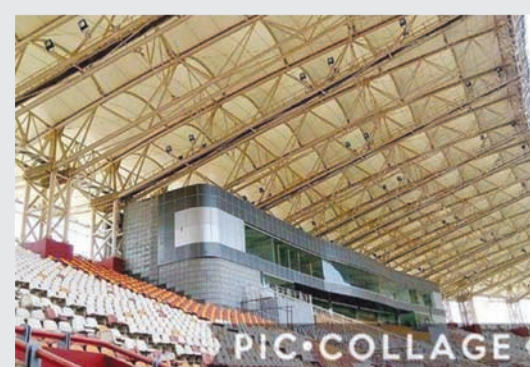
(Source: rechargenews.com)

TEHRAN TIMES

Iran's Leading International Daily

Advertising Dept**Tel: 021 - 430 51 450****times1979@gmail.com****tehrantimesdaily****tehrantimes79**

Modern Stadium of Martyrs of Khuzestan Football Club (KSC)



Catch up with the latest news in Iran and beyond with

**Mehr News English**

English page of Mehr News provides you
with great opportunity to advertise.

Get in touch
www.mehrnews.com

**en.mehrnews.com****@Mehrnewscom**

Saudis see Trump as unpredictable and fear who might be the next American President: Askari

1 → A: I think the issue is within the Al-Saud tribe. They don't listen to other voices in Saudi Arabia. The Saudi public wants peace, less military expenditures and less foreign adventures in places such as Yemen or Syria. The Al-Sauds have to be convinced that Iran has no designs on their rule and will not work with anyone or any group in Saudi Arabia to change the ruling structure in Saudi Arabia. Until then, something that is impossible to predict as relations and events can change, it will rely on the United States the best it can and even secretly secure Israeli support.

■ Saudi Arabia has aligned with Washington in pursuit of U.S. maximum pressure campaign toward Iran. But after the Aramco attack and the lack of serious U.S. support for Saudi Arabia, Riyadh found that its problems with Iran had to be resolved bilaterally. Do you agree with this assessment?

A: Yes, bilaterally but with full U.S. backing to reach a global security arrangement for the entire Middle East region.

■ In your opinion, which foreign countries oppose the normalization of Iran- Saudi relations and benefit more from the current situation?

A: The countries that benefit are clear. First, the United States. Because of the conflict, it sells arms to Saudi Arabia and has preferred access to Saudi Arabia for selling



everything else, goods and services, that the country imports. U.S. financial institutions are major beneficiaries of managing Saudi assets. But also don't forget the benefits to lobbyists and consultants of turmoil in the

Persian Gulf. The second country that benefits is Israel. I believe it has found a secret channel to Saudi Arabia, affording Israel a useful wedge to use against Iran and extract indirect Arab support in its suppression of

Palestinian rights. Russia and China are afforded a role to exploit opportunities for influence in the region.

■ Some media reported that the Americans had informed the Riyadh authorities that the Iranian system was in dire straits after the demonstrations in Iraq, Lebanon and Iran began and there was no need to negotiate. If this is true, why is Saudi Arabia fully defining its foreign policy towards Iran, despite the lack of American support for the Aramco attack?

A: U.S. hawks, such as Bolton and the Israeli lobby, are all the time touting the imminent collapse of the government in Iran if just a little more pressure is brought to bear. Always, a little bit more. I don't see any collapse of Iranian cooperation in Iraq or Lebanon. The one thing that has gotten worse for Iran is its economy. And even this seems to have stabilized. Still for the longer run, the migration of talent from Iran to Europe, North America and Australia spells further trouble ahead. But even if I am wrong and the Iranian system is in dire straits, the Saudis see Trump as unpredictable and fear who might be the next American President. A Bernie Sanders would scare the Al-Sauds to no end. They want to slowly hedge their bets. Open up a small channel with Iran in case it is needed given the unpredictability of U.S. foreign policy.

Nine years after Bahrain's uprising, its Human Rights crisis has only worsened

By Aya Majzoub

It's been nine years since Bahrain's February 2011 uprising. Tens of thousands of demonstrators marched in cities and towns across the country to protest the ruling Al Khalifa family's tight grip on power, discrimination against the country's majority Shia population, and arrests of political critics.

The 2011 uprising itself came 10 years after the 2001 referendum in which citizens voted overwhelmingly for the National Action Charter. The charter promised key democratic reforms, including a popularly elected national assembly.

Despite the "honeymoon" after the National Action Charter's adoption, Bahrain gradually reverted to its repressive past, and by 2010 authorities were detaining prominent opposition activists and closing opposition organizations, and reports of torture of detainees surfaced frequently.

A similar pattern played out following the last uprising.

In the years since, Bahrain's human rights crisis has only worsened. The authorities have demonstrated a zero-tolerance policy for any free and independent political thought, and they have imprisoned, exiled, or intimidated into silence anyone who criticizes the government.

From the very beginning, Bahraini authorities carried out a systematic campaign

of retribution, using lethal force to disperse protests, arresting thousands, and firing hundreds of public sector employees suspected of supporting the protesters' democratic demands. The Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry, in its November 2011 report, confirmed the "existence of an operational plan" to terrorize protesters and concluded that a lack of accountability had led to a "culture of impunity."

A case in point is that of Nabeel Rajab, one of Bahrain's most prominent human rights defenders and a member of Human Rights Watch's Middle East advisory committee, in prison since July 2016 due to his peaceful criticism of Bahrain's dismal human rights record. Although Rajab should not be in prison at all, the courts have also repeatedly rejected his appeals to serve a non-custodial sentence instead of his five-year prison term.

His case is not unique. He is one of dozens of human rights defenders, political activists, opposition leaders, and journalists unjustly imprisoned since the government quelled the 2011 protests.

In October, we found that Bahraini authorities were denying high-profile political prisoners urgently needed medical care, in some cases putting their lives in danger. In one example, the health of Abduljalil al-Singace, a leading opposition figure serving a life sentence for his role in the 2011 protests, has deteriorated significantly.

Al-Singace had polio as a child and needs crutches to walk. His daughter told us that he has severe chest pain, numbness in his fingers, and shaking in his left hand. Prison authorities have refused to take al-Singace to his medical appointments because he refuses to wear a prison uniform or shackles, which he considers humiliating. International human rights experts have said that using restraints on elderly or infirm prisoners who do not pose an escape risk can constitute inhuman or degrading treatment.

We have also documented routine torture in Bahrain's prisons, especially during interrogations. Detainees describe electric shocks, suspension in painful positions, forced standing, extreme cold, and sexual abuse.

Bahraini prosecutors and judges use confessions obtained under torture to convict detainees, and even sentence some to death. In July, the authorities executed two men whose trial was marred by allegations of torture and serious due process violations. On January 8, the appeals court reinstated the death penalty against two others, even after a Bahraini oversight body presented evidence "raising suspicions" that the two men had been tortured.

While the authorities actively prosecute people solely for exercising their right to free speech, there have been precious few prosecutions of security personnel implicated in

widespread abuses against detainees. The few prosecutions have almost exclusively involved low-ranking officers, and have — without exception — resulted in acquittals or disproportionately light sentences.

Bahrain's allies, including the United States and United Kingdom, seem reluctant to face the reality of what's happening in the country. During 2019, the U.S. State Department approved three major weapons sales to Bahrain worth 3.4 billion dollars, despite the government's dismal record on human rights and relentless persecution of dissidents. The United States has also failed to publicly raise human rights concerns with Bahraini authorities.

Based on freedom of information requests, the United Kingdom has provided 6.5 million pounds of technical assistance to Bahrain since 2012, including support aimed at security and justice sector reform. Yet the oversight bodies the UK has supported have repeatedly failed to hold prison guards and officers to account, amid evidence of inhumane and degrading conditions of Bahrain's prisons.

Bahrain's allies need to investigate — and publicly report — how effective their arms sales and assistance to Bahrain have been. They should consider whether they should suspend their support for the security sector until Bahrain releases Nabeel Rajab and others unjustly jailed for criticizing the authorities.

(Source: *fpif*)

Countdown for the establishment of new Iraqi cabinet: Washington political pressures

1 → led by Mullah Masrour Barzani, insisted on the necessity of picking its nominees for new cabinet's ministers, which was rejected by Allawi. Undoubtedly, if efforts for having a share in the government continues, the process of forming a cabinet will be further delayed, an issue that is desired by no Iraqi group. Another point is that the parliamentarians stated that they will grant the new cabinet a vote of confidence provided it guarantees the withdrawal of foreign troops, especially Americans, from Iraq.

Iraqi parliamentarians emphasized that the U.S. military presence is now Iraq's biggest security challenge, so their withdrawal will prevent any excuse for

foreign interference in the affairs of the country. On this basis, it can be said that the most important mission of Allawi and the new cabinet will be to provide a proper mechanism for implementing the Parliament's resolution on the expulsion of U.S. troops.

Allawi, of course, also faces challenges in this regard, including support by the domestic groups in Iraq for the survival of American terrorists in the country. For example, on February 14, 2020, Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) Prime Minister Masrour Barzani met with U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo.

Following the meeting, the Iraqi Kurdistan Prime

Minister's Office issued a statement, saying that Barzani has emphasized the need for the presence of U.S. troops within the framework of an international anti-terrorism coalition. This is while the parliament has earlier passed a resolution on expelling U.S. troops, with many calling for their immediate withdrawal.

It can be concluded that some domestic positions in supporting the survival of American terrorists in Iraq's territory are the most significant challenges for Allawi and its cabinet. However, given the decisive stance of the Iraqi religious authority, parliament and people, the withdrawal of U.S. troops has become inevitable and no one can stop it from happening.

Second Announcement



1398.7425

NATIONAL IRANIAN SOUTH OILFIELDS COMPANY AHVAZ-IRAN

TENDER NO. : 01-31-9780009

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

Items	Material Description	Quantity
32	P/F "BROWN BOVERI- SULZER" GAS TURBINEN TYPE NS70, S/N 7001/7006 & 7007/8 REF. BROWN BOVERI. SULZER TIRBOMACHUNERY LTD	470NO

Vendors who intend to participate in aforesaid tender are requested to send their "Intention To Participate" letter via fax to the following number along with their resume according to Qualitative Assessment Form No.1, available at: www.nisoc.ir, not later than 14 days after the second announcement, otherwise, their requests for participation in the tender will be disregarded

The applicants should have relevant background in supplying the required goods and capability to provide and submit a bid bond of 5,186 EURO or 244,329,394 RIAL, in favor of NISOC

Tender documents including the materials thorough technical specifications and Qualitative to Assessment Forms can be accessed via: www.nisoc.ir-material procurement management tab

ONLY ACCEPTABLE DELIVERY TERM IS D.D.P., NISOC'S WAREHOUSE, AGHAJARI IRAN, PAYMENT TERM IS C.O.D., SUBSEQUENT TO NISOC'S MATERIAL APPROVAL NO ADVANCE PAYMENT WILL BE PAID

FOREIGN PURCHASING DEPARTMENT

Bldg. No. 104, Material Procurement Management Complex

Kouy-e-Fadaeian Islam (New Site), Ahvaz, Iran

E.MAIL: KALA.F.P@nisoc.ir Tel. No.: 061 34 12 34 55 Fax No.: 061 3445 7437

Public Relations www.shana.ir www.nisoc.ir

تهران تایمز : نوبت اول ۹۸/۱۲/۴ نوبت دوم ۹۸/۱۲/۷

TEHRAN TIMES

Iran's Leading
International Daily
Advertising Dept



Tel:

021 - 430 51 450

Second Announcement

Call for public tender (First/Second publish) One-Stage (semi compressed) tender

N.I.O.C
1398.7361

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

National Iranian
Drilling Company

Tender descriptions:

The Tender holder	Registration No. through national electronic tendering system	Tender No. /Indnet No.	Estimated value (Rial/Euro)
National Iranian Drilling Company	3/229/837	Tender No.:FP/20-98/191 Indnet 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		The distribution of the documents will be started one day after the publishing of second advertisement and ended on the following tenth day thereof.
	Distribution Place	Hall No. 113, 1 st floor, Foreign Procurement Dept., National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahvaz, IRAN 061-34148707 Room No. 431, 4 th floor, Oil central building No.8,Yaghma alley, Jomhori Islami st., Tehran -- Iran
	Submitting Method	•Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt in the amount of 190,000 Iranian Rials under account number 4001114004020491(Shaba No. IR 520100004001114004020491) in name of "NIDC Incomes Centralized Fund" issued by I.R. of Iran Central Bank. •Submitting format Request for the purpose of receiving Tender Documents.
Documents Receiving Method	Closing date	•14 Days after the last time of Purchasing
	Address	Hall No. 107, 1 st floor, Tender Committee, Operation building, National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahvaz, IRAN. Tel: +98-61-34148580 +98-61-34148569

Tender Guarantee

Value of guarantee	3,288,000,000 Rial / 24,243 Euro
Type of guarantee	✓Bank guarantees or guarantees issued by non-bank institutions that obtain activity license from the central bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran. ✓Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt under account number 4001114006376636 (Shaba No. IR 350100004001114006376636) in name of "NIDC saving account" by the central bank of Islamic Republic of Iran.
Duration of credit & quotation	Tender Guarantee and quotation should be valid for 90 days and extendable maximum for one time in initial validity duration.

(Name of department)

More of this & other tenders are accessible by click on: www.nidc.ir <http://sapp.ir/nidc-pr>

تهران تایمز نوبت اول ۹۸/۱۲/۶ نوبت دوم ۹۸/۱۲/۷

One billion-year-old green seaweed fossils unearthed in China

Scientists have found evidence that green seaweeds were proliferating in Earth's oceans several hundred million years before modern plants began colonizing dry land.

The 1-billion-year-old micro-fossils, tiny imprints left behind by the algae species *Proterocladus antiquus*, comprise the oldest evidence of green seaweeds yet discovered.

The algae imprints were discovered in rock slabs recovered near the city of Dalian in the Liaoning Province of northern China. After dying in the shallow seas where they lived, the green seaweed became baked into layers of ancient marine sediment -- the shapes of their multiple branches and upright growths preserved in rock for millions of years.

Researchers described the record discovery this week in the journal *Nature Ecology and Evolution*.



"These new fossils suggest that green seaweeds were important players in the ocean long before their land-plant descendants moved and took control of dry land," Virginia Tech geoscientist Shuhai Xiao said in a news release.

Life on Earth depends on plants and algae for food and oxygen, but prior to 450 million years ago, plant life had not yet adapted to dry land. The latest findings suggest green algae anchored Earth's food chains for the 550 million years leading up to the arrival of the first land plants.

"Our study shows that green seaweeds evolved no later than 1 billion years ago, pushing back the record of green seaweeds by about 200 million years," Xiao said. "What kind of seaweeds supplied food to the marine ecosystem?"

Most geobiologists estimate *Proterocladus antiquus* and its relatives adapted to land over the course of a few hundred million years. Trees, grasses, food crops and bushes all evolved from these early green seaweed species, members of the Chlorophyta phylum.

"Molecular clock and biomarker data indicate that chlorophytes diverged in the Mesoproterozoic or early Neoproterozoic, followed by their subsequent phylogenetic diversification, multicellular evolution and ecological expansion in the late Neoproterozoic and Palaeozoic," researchers wrote in their paper.

Not everyone is in agreement. Some researchers claim green plants first evolved in rivers and lakes and only later made their way into the ocean.

The thousands of seaweed species found on Earth are divided into three classes: brown, red and green. Scientists have found fossil evidence of red seaweed, Rhodophyta, dated as far back as 1.047 billion years old.

Now, scientists can confirm that green seaweed was living in Earth's oceans around 1 billion years ago, too. And they looked a lot like green seaweeds found in the ocean, today.

"There are some modern green seaweeds that look very similar to the fossils that we found," Xiao said. "A group of modern green seaweeds, known as siphonocladaleans, are particularly similar in shape and size to the fossils we found."

(Source: UPI)



ROUND THE GLOBE

Old Bridge Area of the Old City of Mostar

A settlement established as an urban structure in the 15th century on the crossing of a river and a land road was originally located in a valley of the Neretva River, between Hum Hill and the foot of the Velez Mountain in Bosnia and Herzegovina.



This relatively small settlement had two towers around the bridge, which dated 1459, as noted by written historical sources. The current name, Mostar, was mentioned for the first time in 1474 and derived from "mostari" - the bridge keepers.

The historic town of Mostar developed in the 15th and 16th centuries as an Ottoman frontier town and during the short Austro-Hungarian period in the 19th and 20th centuries. Mostar has been long known for its old Turkish houses and the Old Bridge - Stari most, an extraordinary technological achievement of bridge construction.

The historic part of Mostar is a result of interaction between the natural phenomena and human creativity throughout a long historical period.

The essence of centuries-long cultural continuity is represented by the universal synthesis of life phenomena: the bridge and its fortresses - with the rich archeological layers from the pre-Ottoman period, religious edifices, residential zones (mahalas), arable lands, houses, bazaar, its public life in the streets and water.

Architecture here presented a symbol of tolerance: a shared life of Muslims, Christians and Jews. Mosques, churches, and synagogues existed side-by-side indicating that in this region, the Roman Catholic Croats with their Western European culture, the Eastern Orthodox Serbs with their elements of Byzantine culture, and the Sephardic Jews continued to live together with the Bosniaks-Muslims for more than four centuries.

(Source: UNESCO)

Iran targets Russia, India as future tourism markets

HERITAGE TEHRAN — Iranian **d e s k** Tour Operators

Association Director Ebrahim Pourfaraj has said that the country is considering Russia and India as its main tourism markets for the future.

"We have now become active in attracting Russian tourists and also considering India as [a main] tourism market for the country," ILNA quoted Pourfaraj as saying on Monday.

The senior tour operator also referred to fears of coronavirus spread in the country, saying "Currently, some potential travelers to Iran are facing challenges [such as tour or flight cancellations]."

Talking on China as one of the most desired travel markets for Iran, he explained, "China was [selected to becoming] one of Iran's largest tourism target markets, and in that regard, heavy investments have been carried out in the arenas of advertising and introducing travel attractions to the those who are active in the field of tourism."

We also held Even B2B meetings, however, coronavirus outbreak forced borders and air travels to come to a halt, he added.

"We are planning to hold B2B meetings with Russian and Indian travel agencies in the near future."

Pourfaraj last year said a majority of potential Russian travelers are unaware of vast tourist attractions that exist in every corner of Iran, "The fact is that Iran's political and economic relations with Russia are considered as good, but this has nothing to do with attracting tourists because it is directly connected with the Russian people. It is the Russian people who must choose Iran as their destination."

Last November, Maya Lomidze, president of the Association of Tour Operators of Russia (ATOR), said "Iran, as an open-air museum of cultural heritage, is steadily attracting the attention of more Russians."

"Russian tourists' interest in traveling to Iran has increased," Lomidze said.

Iranian tourism minister Ali-Asghar



A foreign traveler poses for a photo while standing at the terrace of the 17th-century Ali-Qapu Palace, a top masterpiece of Iranian architecture, which punctuates the middle of two-story arcades encircling the enormous Imam Square; a UNESCO-registered site in Isfahan, central Iran.

Mounesan earlier this month announced the country will follow up on the issue of visa-free travel for mutual tourist groups with Russia at the upcoming [27th edition] Moscow International Travel & Tourism Exhibition (MITT), which will be held from March 17 to 19.

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

In December, Mounesan announced that Tehran was considering to allow Russian tourists to visa-free entry into the country to boost tourism after it granted the same privilege for some other nationals including Chinese and Omani passport holders.

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin inked a preliminary visa-free agreement in 2017 for certain tourist groups during their meeting in Moscow.

Based on the agreement tour groups of 5 to 50 people heading to [easternmost

parts of] Russia from Iran or vice versa are granted a visa-free stay of up to 15 days.

Iran welcomed some 7.8 million foreign nationals last year, achieving 52.5 percent increase year on year.

The country expects to reap a bonanza from its numerous tourist spots, including 22 ones that have been placed on the UNESCO World Heritage list. Under the 2025 Tourism Vision Plan, the country aims to increase the number of tourist arrivals from 4.8 million in 2014 to 20 million in 2025.

Azeri, UAE airlines continue flights to Iran despite coronavirus



TOURISM TEHRAN — Azerbaijan's low-cost airline Buta Airways and its Dubai-based counterpart Flydubai have announced they will continue flights to and from Iran despite the outbreak of the novel coronavirus in the region.

Buta Airways will operate flights to Tehran despite the coronavirus threat, Azer News quoted Press Service of Azerbaijan Airlines (AZAL) as saying on Tuesday.

"Low-cost airline Buta Airways is operating daily flights on the Baku-Tehran-Baku route and plans to continue flights under the current schedule," AZAL President Jahangir Asgarov said.

Heydar Aliyev International Airport and other airports of Azerbaijan will not impose any restrictions on flights operated by Iran Air, he said.

"Azerbaijan's Ministry of Health has strengthened the sanitary-quarantine control on arrivals from Iran. Additional measures will be taken in this direction."

Meanwhile, a spokesperson for flydubai told Arabian Business: "Flydubai flights to Iran are currently operating according to schedule. We are following the directives issued by the relevant authorities with regards to screening and onward travel around the region. We continue to monitor



the situation."

Turkey, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Armenia closed land borders with Iran on Sunday. Iraqi and Kuwaiti authorities have both banned travel to and from the country, amid growing regional concerns about the spread of the virus.

Shiraz, the city of poetry, passion and love

TOURISM TEHRAN — Home to **d e s k** many magnificent buildings,

historical sites and scenic landscapes, Shiraz is known as the city of poetry, passion and love; it's like an old quilt composed of pieces with various patterns and designs.

The southern Iranian city was literally the capital of Persia during the Zand dynasty from 1751 to 1794.

Shiraz's is a journey to innumerable attractions visiting all of which takes days. Persepolis, Naqsh-e Rostam, gardens such as Delgosha, Afifabad, Narenjestan-e Ghavam and Eram, Hafez and Saadi's tombs, Citadel of Karim Khan, Nasir-ul Molk Mosque and Vakil Mosque and Bathhouse are only a few of the attractions of this beautiful city.

Vakil Bazaar, however, is the beating heart of this city, its main economic center. It has been said that when Karim Khan Zand-the just king of the Zand Dynasty who was Vakil-al Ra'aya (Deputy of the People) observes the Gheysariyeh Bazaar of Lar City, he decides to build a similar bazaar in the heart of Shiraz, capital of Iran at the time, hence the name of the beautiful Vakil Bazaar. Situated at the center of the city, the bazaar still accommodates some part of the city's business activities and its corridors and galleries are still bustling with buyers and sellers.

The scent of spices, colors of textiles,



A view of Bazaar-e Vakil (Vakil Bazaar) in Shiraz

and the magical patterns of carpets and rugs in the bazaar take you back to the past. Walking around the corridors and galleries of the bazaar is a pleasing excursion. You can close your eyes and be enraptured with the music and delightful ambiance of this old bazaar.

Vakil Bazaar is one of the most charming bazaars of Iran made of an intersection with

a domed arch and four bazaars perpendicular to each other. The bazaars of drapers, wholesalers, saddlers, and silk sellers make up the main sections of Vakil Bazaar.

The corridors of this bazaar are made of three parts: a passageway for customers, the frontage of the shop which is generally two steps above the ground and the shop itself as the selling space. The materials used

in constructing the bazaar include plaster, brick and lime and some of the arches are embellished with medallion designs. In addition, several caravanserais such as Roghani, Ahmadi and Gomork were built later and added to Vakil Bazaar complex.

Don't miss Shiraz's springtime afternoons; walking the streets and gardens of Shiraz at sunset and when the fragrance of bitter oranges fill the air will be the best moments of your trip to the city of poetry and passion. Working hours of the bazaar are between 9 am and 5 pm, but in spring it is usually open until midnight.

You may buy some of your souvenirs and mementos from this bazaar: masghati, various distillates, lime juice and Yukhe sweets are some of Shiraz's souvenirs. While in the bazaar, don't forget to eat Shiraz's fallodeh with lime juice and sour cherry juice. There is also an old restaurant by the bazaar where you may try local Shirazi cuisine including Kalam Polo (Rice and Cabbage) with Shirazi Salad, Allooapolo (Plum-in-rice) and Dopiazeh (Potatoes and onions).

■ Best time to visit

The best time to travel to Shiraz is during spring when bitter oranges blossom and give their fragrance to the wind and when colorful tulips paint the city's garden. Although Shiraz has hot summers, it is a four-season city and you can visit it in any time.

'Kids should sit with their parents': Petition urges airlines to seat families together for free

Travelers buying airline tickets today are increasingly faced with a costly decision: pay up for seat assignments or risk not sitting together on the plane.

Blame the proliferation of pricey airline seat selection fees, which have spread from no-frills airlines like Spirit and Frontier to major carriers including Delta, United and American, and the advent of basic economy tickets.

The latter don't come with a free advance seat as-

signment, and airlines routinely try to scare travelers into buying a pricier regular economy ticket (which may or may not come with a free seat assignment) or into paying a fee for seat assignments.

Anna Laitin, director of financial policy for Consumer Reports' advocacy arm, said it's a calculation travelers with younger children should not have to make.

The organization last week launched an online petition urging American, Delta and United to allow

adults traveling with children 13 and younger to sit together without paying a fee. The initial goal was 25,000 signatures, which was quickly surpassed. On Monday, the number of signatures was approaching 45,000.

The plea: "I expect you to put safety over profits, and seat children with their families without charging them extra for it."

(Source: MSN)

“We Defeat Coronavirus” national campaign launched

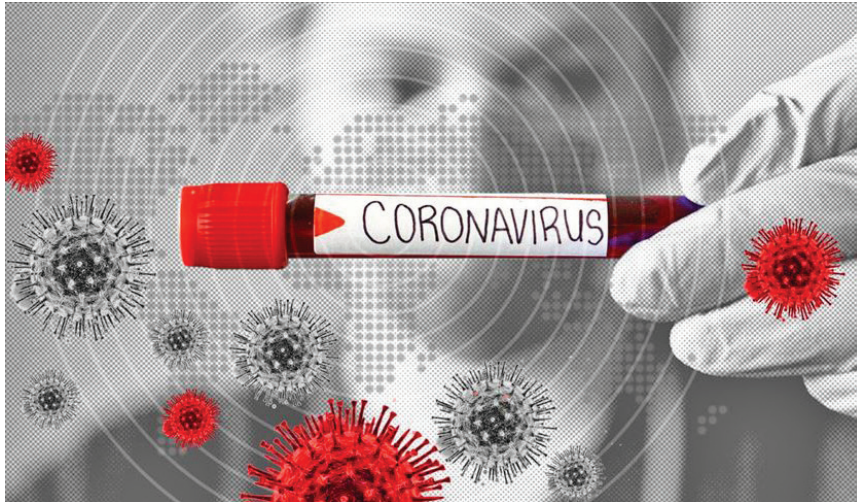
SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — A national campaign called “We Defeat Coronavirus” is going viral among Iranian social media users.

Kianoush Jahanpour, head of the Ministry of Health’s public relations and information center, expressed hope to soon be able to announce the containment and control of the virus and eventually elimination of the disease.

The campaign defines students as health ambassadors who promote public motivation to combat coronavirus, ISNA reported.

So far, 95 people in the country have been infected with the virus, of whom 15 died.

Iranian Health Minister Saeed Namaki has said effective measures have been taken and comprehensive plans are underway to get rid of the novel coronavirus, known as COVID-19, 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.”

Facts being ignored on coronavirus status in Iran’s neighbors

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — After the detection of coronavirus in Iran, some neighboring countries reacted as if their territories are free of covid-19, however, available evidence suggests otherwise.

The news of some cases of coronavirus infection in Iran was enough for a number of neighboring countries to consider the necessity of closing their borders with Iran. These countries always seek to benefit from critical situations, and this time, they are striving to conceal the real truth about their own territory.

Meanwhile, the emergence of #close_Iran_borders has also raised questions, but are the neighboring countries of Iran immune from covid-19?

Turkey
If we consider the relations of various countries with China as the criterion for the transmission of the virus, then based on the reports of Daily Sabah, more than 403,000 Chinese tourists have traveled to Turkey in 2019 and according to statistics another 30,000 Chinese tourists had planned to visit Turkey, however, due to the outbreak of coronavirus in China, only half of these trips were canceled.

None of the Turkish media outlets have indicated whether or not the other half of the Chinese tourists who were supposed to travel to Turkey have actually arrived in the country, nevertheless, the beginning of coronavirus outbreak in China was December 2019.

Although the coronavirus outbreak in China began in December 2019, a search in Turkish media indicates that airline agencies such as Turkish Airline did not cancel their flights to China till the end of January, which is more than a month after the outbreak.

Meanwhile, the Yeni Safak Daily reported on January 2020 that Turkish Airlines were utilizing special gloves and masks to prevent coronavirus infections.

These findings show that despite more than a month

since the outbreak of the Coronavirus in China, Turkish airlines continued transporting passengers from the country and did not say a word about the necessity of closing borders to Chinese tourists nor the prevention of flights originating from China.

At the same time, reports of providing Turkish hospitals with advanced equipment that can detect covid-19 in 60 minutes were released in Turkish media.

Now we must ask Turkish authorities whether or not their country is thoroughly clean after the arrival of a huge number of Chinese tourists?

Those who have traveled to Turkey admit the substantial presence of Chinese tourists in the country and believe that Turkey is unlikely to prevent the arrival of Chinese nationals due to maintaining tourism markets and its benefits, nor will they inform Turkish people properly regarding the possibility of coronavirus infection.

It should be noted that currently, Chinese nationals can book tickets to Istanbul at <https://www.trip.com/flights/shanghai-to-istanbul/airfares-sha-ist/>, while Iranian flights to Turkey Have been canceled.

Protecting people’s lives or political revenge?

The closure of the Turkish border with Iran and the cancellation of flights from Iran to Turkey are carried out amid new hostilities in the region. Turkey recently has occupied some parts of Syria apparently for the fight against terrorism and this led to some sort of tension with Iran and Russia.

Turkish officials now appear to be exaggerating about the spread of coronavirus in Iran, seeking revenge on Tehran over Syria since they canceled the trip of a Turkish delegation to Tehran seemingly due to covid-19 infection, as Tehran hosted top European authorities on Feb. 23.

A Turkish cultural delegation which was supposed to sign a memorandum of understanding with regard to Tehran

Book Fair reportedly canceled their flight to Iran.

The situation in other neighboring countries of Iran
Other neighboring countries of Iran have not been immune to coronavirus, as a number of infections have been reported in UAE, Bahrain, Afghanistan, and Kuwait.

For example, by February 9, at least 9 cases of infection were reported in UAE, however, unofficial reports indicate other facts.

Sources in UAE have reported the deaths of 18 cases of the new coronavirus infection dubbed covid-19. So far, about 50 cases have been diagnosed in UAE. Official sources in UAE have so far refused to publish these figures.

The reaction of Pakistani officials to coronavirus is interesting. While most countries have moved their own nationals out of China, Pakistan asked them to stay in that country.

The new phase of Iran phobia

It seems that the outbreak of coronavirus in Iran has created a new opportunity for the countries and media outlets opposing Iran to launch a massive offensive against the Islamic Republic. These countries reported the news of covid-19 in a way as if Iran was the primary source of infection, not china.

Exaggerating the problems of one country with the aim of hiding the same issues elsewhere is a situation we observe these days in some neighboring countries. Sooner or later the coronavirus outbreak will end in Iran, and then these countries must take responsibility for their behavior. It must be seen if the rulers of neighboring countries will ignore Iranian tourists during the Nowruz holidays or simply forget the dangers of coronavirus.

One should bear in mind the huge propaganda against coronavirus and the situation it created between Iran and neighboring countries. Moreover, it gives rise to the theory of the US exaggerating the issue to undermine the Chinese economy.

Accountants urged to help firms worldwide combat climate crisis

The world’s accountants must put the climate crisis at the forefront of their work to spur global companies to adopt green policies and help prepare them for the risks, according to the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW) and other industry groups.

They have called on a global alliance of accountants, representing more than 2.5 million professionals worldwide, to put their skills to use by helping companies prepare for a climate emergency.

The groups want all members of the Accounting for Sustainability Project (A4S) network to integrate climate risk into their company audits to drive com-

panies to set more sustainable business strategies.

Michael Izza, the chief executive of the ICAEW, said it is crucial that chartered accountants use their “unique position” at the core of almost every business, government and non-governmental organisation to make the case for sustainability.

“Chartered accountants bring practical skills like measurement and management to the table, and can work with business to build green policies into their working practices. We need to make this a decade of transition for business; failure to make this move will make the inevitable adjustments required much more difficult,” he said.

Accountants should demonstrate the risks to business posed by the climate crisis, such as the impact of flooding or the effect of drought on the price of crops needed in the supply chain, the industry groups said.

The call for climate action comes after the accounting watchdog, the Financial Reporting Council, launched a review into whether companies and their auditors are adequately reflecting the financial risks of the climate crisis in their annual financial accounts.

Sir Jon Thompson, the FRC’s chief executive, said auditors have a responsibility to challenge management to face up to the

financial risks of the climate crisis and provide clear information to investors.

Bruce Cartwright, the chief executive of Icas, the global professional body, said there are “dramatic implications for failing to tackle climate change – environmental, social and economic”.

He said: “It is our future that is at risk and the urgency at which we are required to act must remain front of mind. Icas is working with fellow accountancy bodies to act now to limit the negative effects of climate change. Our individual actions, collectively, have the ability to make a difference.”

(Source: The Guardian)

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → ع

E-motorbikes come to curb air pollution in metropolises

The first phase of electric motorcycles development project will be implemented aiming at reducing air pollution in Tehran and other metropolises, IRNA news agency reported.

Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian said on Tuesday that electric motorcycles will be promoted in big cities in collaboration with the Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade.

Through the first phase of the project, electric motorcycles will replace the regular ones used by the Ministry of Energy and state-run companies, he explained.

Ardakanian went on to say that, in addition to electric motorcycles being manufactured and marketed from now on, existing motorcycles will also change to use electricity sources.

آغاز طرح برقی کردن موتورسیکلت‌ها با هدف کاهش آلودگی هوا

مرحله نخست طرح برقی کردن موتورسیکلت‌ها با هدف کاهش آلودگی هوای تهران و دیگر کلانشهرها آغاز می‌شود.

به گزارش ایرنا، رضا اردکانیان وزیر نیرو روز سه شنبه گفت برقی کردن موتورسیکلت‌ها با همکاری وزارت صنعت، معدن و تجارت انجام خواهد شد.

وی افزود: هدف این طرح در گام نخست، برقی کردن موتورسیکلت‌های مورد استفاده وزارت نیرو و شرکت‌های دولتی است.

اردکانیان اضافه کرد بر این اساس علاوه بر اینکه از این پس موتورسیکلت برقی تولید و وارد بازار می‌شود، موتورسیکلت‌های موجود نیز برای مالکان آنها برقی می‌شوند.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“-agog, -agogue”

■ **Meaning:** leader

■ **For example:** he was a **pedagogue** whose classroom lessons consisted entirely of reading directly from the textbook in a monotone.

PHRASAL VERB

put something back

■ **Meaning:** to put people or things in the place or situation they were in before

■ **For example:** Our win today put us back into third place in the league.

IDIOM

Dodge a bullet

■ **Explanation:** If you dodge a bullet, you narrowly avoid a very serious problem or a disaster

■ **For example:** I dodged a bullet when I missed the plane. It crashed just after take-off.

Rainfall increases Lake Urmia level

1→ The lake is expected to reach its ecological level within 10 years by completing the restoration plans which started four years ago.

Farhad Sarkhosh, head of the Lake Urmia Restoration Program’s office in West Azarbaijan province, said that the Lake’s level is now 58 cm higher than it was last year.



According to the latest monitoring, the lake’s water volume is estimated at more than 3.6 billion cubic meters.

He added that the lake surface area has reached 2,883 square kilometers, adding that the figure is increased by 538 square kilometers compared to the same period last year.

Although the ecological level of the lake is defined as 1,274 meters, the lake will also have favorable conditions at 1,272 meters and more than 90 percent of sand and dust storm hotspots will be eliminated.

Alireza Shari’at, head of monitoring and supervision department of the Lake Urmia restoration program said in September 2018, that in order to maintain the Lake Urmia ecological balance of 14 billion cubic meters over the next 10 years, an annual amount of 3.3 billion cubic meters of water is required.

The sharp rise in precipitations rates over the past crop year since now has raised hopes for total restoration of the once glorious Lake Urmia.

This is a while, deputy environment chief Masoud Tajrishi told Khabaronline in July 2019 that rainfall is not the only the reason behind Lake Urmia coming back to life. Thus, restoration measures turned out to be effective, unlike the previous years of high rainfall poured over the lake but did not raise the lake level.

The effort put into properly dredging and clearing of weed and vegetation in river beds as a way came efficient in the lake conservation, he added.

WORDS IN THE NEWS

EU Iraq meeting

(March 19, 2003)

European Union foreign ministers are meeting in Brussels to prepare for what looks likely to be a difficult summit meeting of EU leaders later this week. This report from our Europe correspondent, Chris Morris.

There is a real sense of gloom and frustration in Brussels. The EU has been **split asunder** by the diplomatic divisions on Iraq. There is, said the external relations commissioner, Chris Patten, a lot of broken **crockery** on the floor, and we’re going to have to work hard to put the pieces together again. The EU has done that before, many times, but as one senior official admitted, this is the most serious set of foreign policy differences we’ve ever had.

What’s worse is that it’s the biggest and most important EU countries which are **at daggers drawn**. If the EU is to form any kind of **coherent** common foreign policy, it needs France and Britain **singing from the same song sheet**. But their disagreements about Iraq are well-documented and increasingly angry.

The foreign ministers meeting here have found some **common ground**; they’ve agreed that the EU will provide emergency humanitarian aid to Iraq if war begins. But there’s far less **consensus** on how much the EU might be willing to pay towards reconstruction **in a post-war phase**, now that it’s clear that a conflict will not have United Nations approval.

The political **fallout** of a war in Iraq will haunt Europe for some time.

■ **Words**

split asunder: if something is split asunder, it is separated violently into two or more parts

crockery: plates, cups, saucers (an image suggesting that people have argued violently, throwing plates on the floor and smashing them)

at daggers drawn: being so hostile, like two enemies who are about to fight with knives

coherent: if something is coherent, it is clear and easy to understand

singing from the same song sheet: to be in complete agreement, as if singing the same song

are well-documented: have been published widely

common ground: areas of agreement

consensus: general agreement among a group of people

in a post-war phase: in the period after a war

fallout: here, disagreement; fallout is the radiation that affects an area after a nuclear explosion; if you fall out with someone, you have an argument and stop being friendly

(Source: BBC)



Without water,
everything
withers

Iraqi legislators schedule confidence vote for new government

→ 1 Influential Shia cleric Moqtada Sadr, whose bloc is the largest in parliament, also supports Allawi. It had threatened to organize mass protests outside parliament unless the legislators backed the new premier's cabinet in a confidence vote on Monday.

However, the Iraqi parliament, known as the Council of Representatives of Iraq, said in a statement on Monday that the confidence-vote session would be held on Thursday.

Months of political turmoil began in Iraq in early October last year, when public grievances grew, pressing the government to bring in reforms that would root out corruption and alleviate the economic woes.

Demonstrations, however, soon turned violent, amid reports of foreign interference. Hundreds of people, including members of security forces, were killed.

In November, Abdul Mahdi stepped down. The parliament approved his resignation in early December, but he had retained the position ever since as caretaker prime minister.

Allawi, the son of a wealthy Iraqi industrialist who educated at the American University of Beirut, is a cousin of pro-Western Shia politician Ayad Allawi, a figure who has been at the heart of many political disputes in Iraq for the past years.

Mohammad Allawi has a reputation of repeatedly clashing with Nouri Maliki, a key political figure known for his anti-American positions who led two governments in Iraq after the 2003 US invasion of Iraq.

(Source: Press TV)

U.S. wants Afghan president to postpone planned inauguration

The United States wants Afghan President Ashraf Ghani to defer his second-term inauguration over concerns it could inflame an election feud with his political rival and jeopardize U.S.-led peacemaking efforts, two sources familiar with the matter said.

Ghani claimed victory last week in a disputed Sept. 28 election and plans to take the oath of office on Thursday, an Afghan official said. His opponent, Abdullah Abdullah, Afghanistan's chief executive, also proclaimed himself the winner and is planning a parallel inauguration, according to Afghan media reports.

The competing claims, neither of which Washington has recognized, threaten a U.S.-led peace process that got a boost on Saturday with the start of a week-long reduction in violence that is to culminate on Saturday with the signing of a U.S.-Taliban deal on a U.S. troop withdrawal.

The U.S.-Taliban agreement is to be followed by inter-Afghan talks on a political settlement to end decades of war.

But the Ghani-Abdullah feud threatens to further complicate the naming of a delegation to negotiate with the insurgents, a process already mired in delays and disputes.

A source familiar with the matter said that because of those concerns, U.S. Special Representative Zalmay Khalilzad, who has been in Kabul since last week, wants Ghani to delay his planned inauguration to a second five-year term.

The U.S. State Department and White House did not immediately respond to requests for comment. The Afghan Embassy in Washington declined comment.



President Donald Trump has made the withdrawal of the roughly 13,000 U.S. service members from Afghanistan a major foreign policy objective. An agreement with the Taliban to end America's longest war could boost Trump's re-election prospects.

A former senior Afghan official said Khalilzad, an Afghan-born veteran U.S. diplomat, was pressuring Ghani to postpone the ceremony and trying to persuade Abdullah to do the same to preserve the peace process.

The sources requested anonymity because of the sensitivity of the matter.

(Source: Daily Star)

Trump secures \$3 bln military sale with India

U.S. President Donald Trump said Tuesday India will buy \$3 billion worth of military equipment, including attack helicopters, as the two countries deepen defense and commercial ties in an attempt to balance the weight of China in the region.

India and the United States were also making progress on a big trade deal, Trump said. Negotiators from the two sides have wrangled for months to narrow differences on farm goods, medical devices, digital trade and new tariffs.

India's tariffs were still too high, probably the world's highest, Trump said in his only criticism of the world's biggest democracy during a visit that he said was a spectacular success.

"We are being charged large amounts of tariffs, can't do that," he said at a news briefing, again pointing to Indian duties on Harley-Davidson motorcycles

Trump was accorded a massive reception in Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's home state of Gujarat on Monday, with more than 100,000 people filing into a cricket stadium for a "Namaste Trump" rally.

On Tuesday, Trump sat down for one-on-one talks with Modi followed by delegation-level meetings to try and move forward on issues that have divided the two countries, mainly a festering trade dispute.

After those meetings, Trump said his visit had been productive, with the conclusion of deals to buy U.S. helicopters for the Indian military. India will buy 24 Sea Hawk helicopters from Lockheed Martin equipped with Hellfire missiles worth \$2.6 billion and plans an order for six Apache copters.

India is modernising its military to narrow a gap with China and has increasingly turned towards the United States over its traditional supplier, Russia.

(Source: Reuters)

Hosni Mubarak, Egypt's long-time dictator, dead at 91

INTERNATIONAL TEHRAN — Hosni d e s k Mubarak, the former autocratic president of Egypt, whose hold on power was broken and place in history upended by a public uprising against the poverty, corruption and repressive police tactics that came to define his 30 years in office, died on Tuesday. He was 91.

His death was confirmed by state TV. Mubarak ruled Egypt for 30 years until he was ousted following mass protests against his rule in 2011.

Mubarak spent most of his final years at the Maadi Military Hospital in southern Cairo, under guard in a room overlooking the Nile as he defiantly battled courtroom charges of corruption and conspiracy to murder. He was finally released on March 24, 2017, having been convicted in a single, relatively minor case, and spirited across the city to his mansion in the affluent neighborhood of Heliopolis.

Last October, he made a rare appearance in a video published on YouTube where he shared his memories of Egypt's 1973 war against Israel, when he commanded Egypt's air force. It was the first time he had spoken before a camera since his ouster during the Arab Spring in 2011.

Mubarak had once appeared invincible. He had survived multiple assassination attempts, held power longer than anyone since Muhammad Ali Pasha, the founder of the



modern Egyptian state, suppressed a wave of terrorism by Islamic fundamentalists and appeared even to defy the gravity of age.

But his edifice of power turned out to be fragile and dated, built on strong-arm rule, cronyism and an alliance with the West. It was ultimately brought down by the shock wave of popular unrest in the Arab world — calls for democracy, the rule of law and an end to corruption — that came to be called the Arab Spring.

Shaky ceasefire holds between Islamic Jihad, Israel in Gaza



A ceasefire between the Palestinian Islamic Jihad group and Israel is holding in the Gaza Strip after two days of heavy fighting.

Following Egyptian and international mediation, the truce came into effect at) on Monday, Ihsan Ataya, a senior Islamic Jihad leader based in Lebanon, said in a press statement.

No projectiles were fired from the Gaza Strip overnight, a spokeswoman for the Israeli army confirmed.

During two days of fighting, Israeli aircraft pounded dozens of targets in the Gaza Strip while Islamic Jihad bombarded southern Israel with heavy rocket fire.

The latest escalation began after Israeli soldiers on Sunday shot dead Mohammed al-Naim, a member of the Islamic Jihad's armed wing, who was allegedly planting an explosive device at the heavily secured Israeli fence east of Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip.

In a graphic video that went viral, an Israeli bulldozer violently retrieved al-Naim's body and it remains in the custody of Israeli forces.

Islamic Jihad responded by firing a barrage of rockets and mortar rounds at Israel, which prompted the military to strike Islamic Jihad targets in Syria, where some of the Iran-backed group's leaders are based. Two more Islamic Jihad members were killed in an overnight air attack.

On Monday evening, Islamic Jihad declared a unilateral ceasefire. But Israel continued to attack targets in Gaza, resulting in the injury of at least eight Palestinians, Gaza's health ministry said.

Islamic Jihad accused Israel of continued "aggression" and resumed its rocket fire, drawing further Israeli air raids and an Israeli closure of Gaza's key border crossings and a fishing zone.

(Source: al Jazeera)

Trump says Russian interference 'highly exaggerated'

President Donald Trump has called reports that Russia is interfering with the 2020 election "highly exaggerated," and blamed the rumor on House Intelligence Committee Chairman Adam Schiff.

The specter of 'Russian interference' raised its head again last week, when the Washington Post ran an article claiming the Kremlin is interfering in the upcoming presidential election on behalf of Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders, with the ultimate goal of getting Trump re-elected. The story provided no specifics on what form the supposed interference took, but claimed that Sanders and Trump had both been briefed on the threat.

"Intelligence never told me," Trump told reporters on Tuesday at a press conference held during his state visit to India. "What I'm reading," he continued, is that "they went to see Bernie and they told Bernie."

While Sanders responded to the story by denying receiving Russian assistance, and warning Russian President Vladimir Putin to "stay out of U.S. elections," Trump took



a different approach.

Calling the story "highly exaggerated," Trump accused House Intelligence Committee Chairman Adam Schiff of leaking it to the media, following a closed-doors briefing on Capitol Hill. Schiff, of course, was one of the principal architects of the impeachment effort against Trump, and

Nine killed, many injured in India capital as Trump visits



Clashes over a contentious citizenship law rolled India's capital for a second day Tuesday -- coinciding with a visit by US President Donald Trump -- as the death toll in rose to at least nine.

There have been widespread protests since the law that critics say is anti-Muslim was passed in mid-December, with more than 25 people killed.

"There have been nine confirmed deaths," Guru Teg Bahadur Hospital official Rajesh Kalra told AFP.

He said 31 people, including 10 who were seriously hurt, were brought to the New Delhi hospital Tuesday.

Senior policeman Alok Kumar told AFP that officers were still receiving reports of violence.

"The protesters are attacking police wherever they are present and clashing among each other where the police aren't there," Kumar added.

One of those killed Monday was a po-

held accountable for the more than 800 people killed during the days of protest.

The public pressure worked; he was arrested and remanded to a military hospital while he awaited trial. His sons, Alaa and Gamal, once treated as princes of the state, were jailed in the notorious Tora prison.

In June 2012, Mubarak was wheeled back into court, his arms crossed defiantly across his chest as he was convicted and sentenced to life in prison. But an appeals court overturned that verdict and ordered a retrial, and he was ultimately exonerated. He also skirted several corruption accusations.

The 2012 trial occurred against the tense backdrop of a presidential election. The two candidates heading for a runoff were polarizing figures, one a leader with the Muslim Brotherhood, a popular Islamist movement; the other, Mubarak's last prime minister. And the verdict drew thousands of people into the streets to denounce it as a sham, many believing that the judge laid the groundwork for the former president to go free on appeal.

Mubarak never did actually resign publicly; apparently stumbling in a speech on Feb. 10, 2011, he failed to choke out the words. The next day, against a tide of public anger, Omar Suleiman, the longtime chief of intelligence and newly installed vice president, read a statement on television signaling the end of Mubarak's reign.

liceman, a senior officer told AFP. More rioting was reported Tuesday, with a large plume of black smoke rising in the sky.

Broadcaster NDTV said three of its reporters and a cameraman were attacked by a mob on the northeastern fringe of the megacity of 20 million people.

"There is hardly any police presence in the area. Rioters are running around threatening people, vandalizing shops," a resident of the poor, migrant neighborhood of Maujpur told the Press Trust of India.

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, who visited a hospital where the injured were being treated, called for calm.

National Home Minister Amit Shah, whose ministry controls law and order in the capital region, met with senior Delhi government officials and promised to deploy more police if they were needed, Kejriwal said.

(Source: AFP)

one of Washington's loudest proponents of the "Russian collusion" conspiracy theory.

"Schiff leaked it," Trump said on Tuesday. "Bernie is probably winning... and maybe they don't want him. So they put out a thing that Russia's backing him. This is what they do. I've gone through it for a long time. I get it. I get the game better than anybody.

"They ought to stop the leaking," Trump continued. "I can imagine that people are going to go after them and find out what's happening," he added, without elaborating further.

"I want no help from any country and I haven't been given help from any country," Trump stated.

The president has previously described Adam Schiff as "the biggest leaker in Washington," and Tuesday's press conference was not the first time he has accused the California Democrat of being behind the Sanders/Russia story. On Sunday, he warned that Schiff should "stop leaking classified information or, even worse, made up information, to the Fake News Media."

(Source: RT)

Germany tightens carnival security after car driven into crowd injures 60

Germany increased security at some carnival processions on Tuesday after a local man plowed his car into a parade in the western German town of Volkmarsen, injuring around 60 people, including at least 18 children.

The incident on Monday shook Germans still struggling to take in last week's racist gun attack on two bars in the town of Hanau which left 11 people dead.

The driver was detained on suspicion of attempted homicide and was being treated for his own injuries. The prosecutors' spokesman said he had not been in a fit state to be questioned overnight, but was not drunk at the time of the incident. Tests for drugs were due in the course of the day.

Prosecutors did not appear to see a political motive because a spokesman

said there was no sign the investigation would be handed to national prosecutors.

While some carnival processions in the state of Hesse, home to Volkmarsen, were canceled, others were due to take place in the region on Tuesday. A police spokesman said security would be intensified.

Rose Monday is the height of the carnival season in Catholic areas of Germany, especially in the Rhineland where tens of thousands of people dress up, drink alcohol and line the streets to watch decorated floats that often mock public figures.

Prosecutors said there was no concrete reason to think that the risks of attacks at parades had increased, but they urged organizers to review their security arrangements and adjust them if necessary.

(Source: Reuters)

Dragan Skocic meets Croatian football chief Davor Suker

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iran national football team head coach Dragan Skocic met with Croatian Football Federation president Davor Suker on Tuesday.

In a meeting which was held in Croatian Football Federation's headquarters, the officials underlined their willingness to promote cooperation in football.

The legendary Croatian footballer, who helped the Chequered Ones finish third in the 1998 World Cup, had previously said he is interested in visiting Iran.

Skocic has recently met the Iranian footballers playing in Belgium league.

Skocic, who was appointed as Team Melli coach in early February, has a difficult task ahead since Iran will have four must-win matches in late March and early June in the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 and AFC Asian Cup China 2023.

Iran will entertain Hong Kong on March 26 in Tehran and meet Cambodia five days later in an away match.

The Persians will face Bahrain and Iraq on June 4 and 9, respectively in Tehran.

Iran, who are going to continue their quest for a sixth World Cup appearance, sit five points behind leaders Iraq in Group C but having played one game fewer.



Ivan Markovic joins Iran's Zob Ahan



S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Serbian midfielder Ivan Markovic has joined Zob Ahan on Tuesday, the Iranian football club announced.

The 25-year-old player started his playing career at the Serbian club Zemun in 2010 and has also played in Bulgarian and Greek clubs.

Markovic has most recently played at Macedonian football club Rabotnichki.

He has joined the Isfahan based football club until the end of the season but the details of his contract have

not been disclosed.

Zob Ahan have already signed Serbian forward Darko Bjedov in the January transfer window.

Zob Ahan are five points above the relegation zone in Iran Professional League after a run of five wins in their last 20 matches.

The Iranian football team hired former Lebanon coach Miodrag Radulovic in January as a replacement for Alireza Mansourian.

Zob Ahan will host Sepahan on Thursday in Isfahan derby.

AFC not to postpone all the matches of ACL



S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) has faced tough challenges with regard to the holding of the AFC Champions League current season matches due to the outbreak of coronavirus in Asian countries.

The outbreak of the coronavirus means the scheduling of the AFC Champions League (ACL) has been thrown into chaos.

However, according to the Saudi Arabian website, Erem News, the AFC has denied that all of the matches 2020 AFC

Champions League may be postponed or suspended owing to the crisis.

Based on the media reports, Dato Windsor John, the AFC Secretary General insisted on the continuity of the ACL tournament, while confirming the partial delay of some matches based on the decisions of the participating countries.

Previously, the Saudi newspaper Arriyadiyah had reported that AFC may decide to postpone the ACL matches for an unknown period, or cancel the current season of the tournament

Michael Jordan: 'When Kobe died, a piece of me died.'

Michael Jordan, arguably the greatest basketball player of all-time, delivered one of the most raw and powerful speeches at Kobe Bryant's public memorial on Monday. He also provided some much-needed humor.

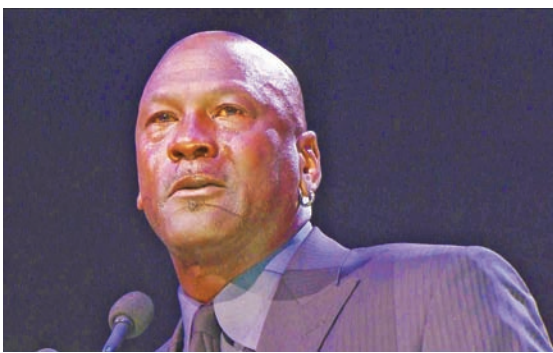
While remembering his "little brother" Bryant, Jordan, who was fully crying before he even took the stage, couldn't help but reference a now-classic Internet meme.

"I'll have to look at another crying meme (of myself) for years," Jordan quipped, wiping away tears. The 20,000 mourners at Staples Center, all clearly familiar with the "Crying Jordan" meme, burst into laughter.

"I told my wife I wasn't going to do this because I didn't want to see (a new meme) for the next three or four years," he continued. "That's what Kobe Bryant does to me."

Bryant was often compared to Jordan throughout his NBA career and regularly sought advice from the Chicago Bulls legend.

"He used to call me, text me 11:30, 2:30, 3:00 in the morning," Jordan recalled. "Talking about post-



up moves, footwork, and sometimes the triangle. At first it was an aggravation, but then it turned into a certain passion. This kid had passion like you would never know. And it's an amazing thing about passion. If you love something, if you have a strong passion for

something, you would go to the extreme to try and understand or try to get it."

A few months prior to the Jan. 26 helicopter crash that killed Bryant, his daughter Gianna, and seven others, Jordan said he received a text from Kobe.

"(He said) 'I'm trying to teach my daughter some moves... what were you thinking about when you were growing up trying to work on your moves?' I said, 'What age?' He said, '12.' I said, '12, I was trying to play baseball.'" The crowd of family members, NBA icons and diehard fans howled again. "He texted me back, 'Laughing my a-- off.'"

Toward the end of his speech, a clearly heartbroken Jordan said, "When Kobe Bryant died, a piece of me died. And as I look in this arena and across the globe, a piece of you died... (But) I promise you from this day forward I will live with the memories knowing that I had a little brother that I tried to help in every way I could. Please, rest in peace, little brother."

(Source: Variety.com)

Qatar on track to welcome the world with just 1,000 days to go until the FIFA World Cup 2022



In exactly 1,000 days, the world will gather again for the biggest football show on Earth — in the most unique setting yet. The compact nature of the first FIFA World Cup in West Asia will ensure that fans of all 32 teams are always within reach of the eight stunning stadiums, the FIFA Fan Fest, some world-class museums, Qatar's desert dunes and, most importantly, each other.

While the eagerly awaited tournament might still feel a long way off for fans, 136 out of 900 qualifying matches have already been played, and the tournament infra-

structure can be seen rapidly evolving in and around Doha.

Two stadiums are fully operational: Khalifa International and Al Janoub. Three more venues — Education City, Al Rayyan and Al Bayt — will be inaugurated this year, with the remaining three set to be launched well in advance of the tournament.

Brand-new metro lines have also been delivered and successfully transported over 50,000 fans across three games during the FIFA Club World Cup.

New roads and training sites are being completed, the airport expanded and permanent and temporary accommodation will be delivered with the aim of coping with demand while also considering post-event use.

"With 1,000 days to go, Qatar stands where no other host did before. Qatar wants to amaze the world and is on track to achieve it," said FIFA President Gianni Infantino.

"The FIFA World Cup 2022 will be a breakthrough from a social and cultural perspective. It will open the doors of this football-mad region, offering a new perspective to locals and foreigners, bringing people together and serving as a tool for common

understanding."

H.E. Hassan Al Thawadi, Secretary General of Qatar's Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy (SC), added: "Ten years of our lives, day in, day out, have been dedicated to this tournament."

"Personally, I can only look forward with excitement, as well as some nerves, but more importantly, conviction that this will be — without a doubt — the best tournament. We are determined to ensure that the first World Cup in the Middle East and Arab world will set a benchmark in the history of hosting major sporting events."

When it comes to tournament preparations, Qatar and FIFA have been scrutinizing the lessons learned from the FIFA Club World Cup, held in December last year, and which will return to the country later in 2020.

According to the local authorities, the tournament brought over 50,000 international fans into the country. The event's official fan zone welcomed 43,000 visitors over the course of the tournament.

"Test events give us a great opportunity to assess new stadiums, work with authorities, integrate and train the teams. That all

provides us with an important insight into planning for the World Cup. And as we move closer, planning becomes more operational."

"The joint venture team we have in Qatar is increasing in size, several teams have already visited Qatar to inspect training facilities, and we are bringing stakeholders closer — our Commercial Affiliates were in Doha last year, and the main broadcasters earlier this year," said FIFA's Chief Tournaments & Events Officer and FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 LLC (Q22) Managing Director, Colin Smith.

"With all our infrastructure projects on track, one of our key priorities now is to shape the fan experience in 2022. We are determined to host a tournament which is welcoming to all and family-friendly, and one that shows our country and region in the most positive light."

"We learned a lot from the Club World Cup across every functional area and will apply the lessons learned in the 2020 edition and in our 2022 planning," assured the Chief Executive Officer of the Q22, Nasser Al Khater.

(Sources: FIFA.com, Qatar's Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy)

Iran volleyball, handball leagues postponed

IRNA — Iran volleyball and handball leagues were postponed on Tuesday due to coronavirus.

The other sport events have taken similar measures as confirmed cases of COVID-19 rose to 95 in Iran, with 15 deaths.

Football matches in Iran Professional League were held behind closed the doors.

Authorities in Iran have previously called off all major sports events except for football matches for a ten-day period, in response to the spread of the virus in the country.

Mahmoud Fekri named Nassaji coach

PLDC — Ex-Esteghlal midfielder Mahmoud Fakri has been named as new head coach of Nassaji Mazandaran football team Monday night.

The 50-year-old coach has most recently coached Iran's First Division Khooshe Talaei.

Fekri replaced Reza Mohajeri who left the team on Sunday due to healthy issues.

Nassaji sit 11th in Iran Professional League (IPL) four points above the relegation zone.

Iran to host Hong Kong at neutral field?

TASNIM — Iran national football team will likely host Hong Kong at a neutral field over health concerns.

The match has been scheduled for 26 March in Tehran's Azadi Stadium but the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) will likely change the place of the match amid coronavirus fears.

The virus has infected more than 80,000 people around the world, including more than 77,000 in China. More than 2,600 people have died in China's central Hubei province alone.

The outbreak has had a major impact on the global sporting calendar, with a host of events canceled or postponed, and raised alarm bells for Tokyo Olympics organizers.

Iranian gymnast among top 4 in world

IRNA — International Gymnastics Federation published its new rankings on Tuesday in which Saeedreza Keikha ranked fourth in pommel horse apparatus.

In the previous ranking of the world gymnasts, Keikha had been placed 5th, but his great performance in Melbourne World Cup promoted him to 4th position with 63 points.

Mehdi Ahmad Kohani, another Iranian gymnast, stood thirteenth with 25 points. He received a silver medal in the 2020 World Cup Gymnastics in Melbourne on Sunday.

The two athletes are now in Turkey to prepare for Baku competitions to be held during April 24-26.

Esteghlal best Iranian club at Club World Ranking

TASNIM — Esteghlal football team of Iran have moved two places up to 129th in the latest Club World Ranking.

Esteghlal, headed by Farhad Majidi, are the favorites to win Iran Professional League (IPL) in the current season.

Another Iranian football giants Persepolis have moved up six places to 154th and sits in the second place.

Zob Ahan have moved 27 places down to 216th and is third in the ranking.

Sepahan also are fourth in Iran football.

Liverpool are first, followed by Barcelona and River Plate.

Club World Ranking is a ranking system of the best soccer teams, top scorers and coaches in the world, based on match results over the past 52 weeks.

Iran, Serbia to bolster sporting cooperation

IRNA — The officials of Serbia and the Islamic Republic of Iran on Tuesday called for boosting mutual sporting cooperation.



Iran's Minister of Sport and Youth Masoud Soltanifar made the remarks in a meeting with Serbian Ambassador to Tehran Dragan Todorovic, adding that bilateral ties in the area of the sport have been developed.

Both sides are to sign a sporting memorandum of understanding (MoU) during the upcoming visit of the Serbian president to Iran, he further noted.

INTERNATIONAL DAILY
www.tehrantimes.com

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

» **Editorial Dept.:** Fax: (+98 21) 88808214 — 88808895
editor@tehrantimes.com

» **Switchboard Operator:** Tel: (+98 21) 43051000

» **Advertisements Dept.:** Telefax: (+98 21) 43051450

» **Public Relations Office:** Tel: (+98 21) 88805807

» **Subscription & Distribution Dept.:** Tel: (+98 21) 43051603

» **www.eshtarak.ir** Distributor: Padideh Novin Co.
Tel: 88911433

» **Webmaster:** webmaster@tehrantimes.com

» **Printed at:** Jame Jam Barta Borna - 44197737

Tehrantimes79 **Tehrantimesdaily**

No. 18, Bimeh Alley, Nejatollahi St., Tehran, Iran
P.O. Box: 14155-4843
Zip Code: 1599814713



GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Doubt is four in kind, fruitless talk, fear, vagrancy, and submission.

Imam Ali (AS)

New films line up to augment Noruz holiday

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — Seven Iranian films are scheduled to go on screen at Iranian theaters during Noruz, the Iranian New Year celebration, which will begin on March 20. Mohammad Kart's directorial debut "Butterfly Swimming", which received Crystal Simorghs in six categories, including the audience award, at the 38th Fajr Film Festival, is among the films.



A scene from "Laminor" by Dariush Mehrjui.

The film tells the story of Hashem, a gang member whose wife's swimming video goes viral. Now Hashem and his brother-in-law Hojjat are looking for the person who uploaded the video on the net. Peyman Qasemkhani's comedy movie "Good, Bad, Garish 2: The Secret Army" and Mohammad-Hadi Karimi's "Filicide" are other movies for the Noruz holiday.

Starring Sam Derakhshani, Pejman Jamshidi and Hamed Komeili "Good, Bad, Garish 2: The Secret Army" is a sequel to Qasemkhani's 2017 film "Good, Bad, Garish" about a film director who has to use two superstars for his new film contrary to his desires.

"Filicide" narrates the story of a family and their ups and downs over a period of 30 years.

"Laleh" by Los Angeles-based Iranian filmmaker Asadollah Niknejad, about the first female Iranian race car driver, Laleh Seddiq, will also go on screen during Noruz.

The lineup also includes "Laminor" by veteran filmmaker Dariush Mehrjui, children's movie "Bazivoo" by Amir-Hossein Qahraei and "Women Are Angels 2" by Mohammad-Hossein Farahbakhsh.

German festival to screen Iranian shorts

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — The acclaimed Iranian movies "Child Eater" and "Driving Lessons" will go on screen at the 25th Regensburg International Short Film Week in the German city.

Directed by Mohammad Kart, "Child Eater", also known as "Pedovore", is about a teenage boy laborer who falls in love with a teenage girl.

Marzieh Riahi is the director of "Driving Lessons", which tells the story of Bahareh, a young woman who, according to Iranian law, must have a man from among her relatives accompany her on driving lessons so she and her male instructor won't be alone.

The Regensburg International Short Film Week will be held from March 11 to 18.

"Sunrise Over Fallujah" appears in Iranian bookstores

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — American writer Walter Dean Myers' 2008 novel "Sunrise Over Fallujah" has recently been published in Persian by Sorush Publications in Tehran.

Translated by Abdolhamid Mirhosseini, the book tells the story of a new army recruit from Harlem, Robin 'Birdy' Perry. Birdy is not quite sure why he joined the army, but he decides to accompany his unit to Iraq.

Birdy and the others in his unit are supposed to help secure and stabilize the country and successfully interact with the Iraqi people. Officially, the code name for their maneuvers is Operation Iraqi Freedom. But the young men and women in the unit have a simpler name for it. They call it war.

Myers is the writer of the bestsellers "Fallen Angels" and "Monster". "Monster" has been published in Persian.

Art galleries in Tehran deserted over coronavirus fears

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — Art galleries in Tehran have almost been deserted in light of the latest spread of the novel coronavirus in the country.

The Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance earlier cancelled all art, cultural and cinematic events in an attempt to stem the coronavirus' spread.

The director of Tehran's Mojdeh Gallery has lamented the dearth of its regular ardent visitors for a calligraphic painting exhibit currently underway at the gallery.

"The exhibit named 'Zemestaneh' by curator Kiarash Yaqubi has provided a chance for the young artists to offer a variety of works of calligraphic paintings in different techniques and dimensions," Mojdeh Tabatabai said in a press release published on Tuesday.

She said that they expected a warm welcome at the opening ceremony on Friday, however, the number of visitors was few due to the new coronavirus' spread in the capital.

"After the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance announced the cancelation of all the art, cultural and cinematic events, the exhibit is half open and the visitors are asked to visit the exhibit with an appointment in response to the situation," she remarked.

"The works are also available on the gallery's Instagram page, however, I think people are not in the mood for purchasing any artworks," she noted.

She said that they are forced to close the exhibit on Friday, adding, "Because it is not clear what will happen next week and because people will get busier with the preparation for Noruz."



Calligraphy paintings by a number of Iranian artists are on view in an exhibition entitled "Zemestaneh" at Mojdeh Gallery in Tehran on February 24, 2020. (Honaronline/Siamak Zorrodi-Motlaq)

IRIB to air educational programs on basic protective measures against coronavirus



A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) plans to air a lineup of educational programs on basic protective measures against the new coronavirus. IRIB Health Policymaking Council has announced.

"Several world organizations have produced animations which teach how to protect against the disease. The animations are being dubbed into Persian to be aired on IRIB channels," the director of the council,

Mohamad-Mehdi Qasemi, said on Tuesday.

"The animations show what the symptoms of the disease are, how to protect against it, what people must know about the disease, and what to do if an individual is infected," he said.

He also said that the IRIB Health Channel has also arranged several live programs with doctors, psychologists and officials to discuss the issue and help decrease stress and worries in society.

Tehran book fair postponed until end of Ramadan



People visit the 32nd Tehran International Book Fair at Imam Khomeini Mosalla on April 25, 2019. (Tasnim/Hossein Movahedinejad)

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — The 33rd Tehran International Book Fair (TIBF) has been postponed to a time after the holy month of Ramadan due to the new coronavirus epidemic in Tehran.

The exact date of the fair will be specified later, the organizers announced on Tuesday.

The book fair was scheduled to be held from April 14 to 24.

Ramadan will probably begin on April 24 and end on May 23.

Turkey is the guest of honor of the Tehran International Book Fair this year. The postponement was announced a day after a Turkish cultural delegation canceled their visit to Tehran.

The delegation was scheduled to discuss details about Turkey as the guest of honor of the Tehran fair.

Toronto theater to open onto Carriere's "Terrace" this weekend

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — The Zendegi Theater Company is scheduled to perform French writer Jean-Claude Carrière's play "The Terrace" at Fairview Theatre in the Canadian city of Toronto.

Jafar Mahyari is the director of the play that will be staged in three performances from February 27 to 29, the troupe announced on Tuesday.

"The Terrace", an absurd comedy highlighting the inanity of life at the end of the modernist era, has been translated by Asghar Nuri.

"The play portrays the anxiety and distress of man in modern life," said Mahyari who staged "Stools" at Camere d'aria, a multipurpose space for art and culture in the Italian city of Bologna in October 2018.

"We have tried to approach the realistic ambience of the play to a surreal atmosphere to better convey the message

of the performance," he added.

Voria Havarinasab, Najla Azizi, Tannaz Qodraty, Sara Fallahi, Farzad Nazari-Moqaddam and Sorush Mahmudi are members of the cast.

Mahyari said that the idea of performing the play began to form last spring when he held some workshops at Theatre Encounter in the Canadian city of Calgary.

His troupe in collaboration with the Sun Ergos Company of Theatre and Dance in Canada also performed "The Chairs" at the theater afterwards.

"The Terrace" has been performed by several Iranian troupes over the past decade.

Masud Keramati directed the play the Nazerzadeh Kermani Hall of the Iranian Artists Forum last spring.

It was staged earlier by Iranian director Mohammareza Khaki at Tehran's City Theater Complex during fall 2011.



A poster for Zendegi Theater Company's new production "The Terrace".

Weinstein found guilty in victory for #MeToo movement

NEW YORK (Reuters) — Former movie producer Harvey Weinstein was convicted of sexual assault and rape in a New York court on Monday and taken off to jail in handcuffs, a victory for the #MeToo movement that inspired women to publicly accuse powerful men of misconduct.

Once one of Hollywood's most influential producers, Weinstein, 67, was found guilty of sexually assaulting former production assistant Mimi Halsey in 2006 and raping Jessica Mann, a onetime aspiring actress, in 2013.

Officers helped Weinstein unsteadily to his feet before leading him away. His lawyer said Weinstein, who has used a walker throughout the trial, was expected to be taken to a medical facility at New York City's Rikers Island jail complex.

A spokesman for Weinstein said later that the onetime movie mogul was diverted instead to Bellevue Hospital in Manhattan, which has a unit that provides medical care for jail inmates.

The spokesman, Juda Engelmayer, told Reuters he did not know why Weinstein went to Bellevue or how long he would be there. But a number of news outlets, including Variety, reported that he had complained of chest pains.

Either destination would be a sharp contrast to the posh



Film producer Harvey Weinstein is handcuffed after his guilty verdict in his sexual assault trial in the Manhattan borough of New York City, New York, U.S., February 24, 2020 in this courtroom sketch. (Reuters/Jane Rosenberg)

Four Seasons hotel where the producer of such acclaimed films as "The English Patient" and "Shakespeare in Love" started his day.

After the verdict Arthur Aidala, Weinstein's lawyer, quoted his client as saying, "I'm innocent. I'm innocent. How can

this happen in America?"

His sentencing hearing was set for March 11. The attorney vowed to appeal. Weinstein never testified in his defense. He told reporters during the trial that he had wanted to speak but his lawyers said it was unnecessary because the case against him was weak.

Actress Rose McGowan, who had accused Weinstein of rape, wrote on Twitter: "Today is a powerful day & a huge step forward in our collective healing."

A statement for the #MeToo movement said: "The jury worked with an incredibly narrow and unjust set of laws governing sexual assault, and though he was not convicted on all counts, Harvey Weinstein will have to answer for his crimes."

Weinstein faces up to 25 years in prison on the sexual assault conviction. He was also convicted of third degree rape which carries a prison sentence of up to four years.

The jury of seven men and five women acquitted Weinstein on the most serious charges, which carried a potential life sentence.

Asked by reporters outside court how the jury service experience was for him personally, jury foreman Bernard Cody said, "Devastating," but declined to elaborate.