



Rights bodies' silence over U.S. sanctions regretful **2**



Leader thanks medical staff fighting coronavirus **3**



Persepolis a step closer to fourth successive title **11**



Iranian actor Hosseini receives France's Chevalier of Legion of Honor **12**

Newest decisions to contain coronavirus



See page 2

Chief banker holds talks with economists to discuss economy

TEHRAN — In the ninth meeting of the country's economists with the governor of Central Bank of Iran (CBI) in Tehran on Wednesday, various issues like CBI actions for stabilizing the currency market, open market operations, the importance of non-oil exports and the recent FATF decision were explored.

According to CBI office of public relations, in the meeting Abdolnaser Hemmati underlined the country's current economic conditions and said: "Considering the country's current conditions [mentioning the U.S. sanctions and FATF decision for blacklisting Iran], the central bank has made more efforts to stabilize the forex markets." **→ 4**

German MPs sue Merkel govt. for complicity in Soleimani assassination

Eight German lawmakers from the country's Left Party filed a criminal complaint against German Chancellor Angela Merkel and her government for complicity in U.S. assassination of Iran's General Qassem Soleimani.

The complaint claims that the U.S. Air Force's Ramstein base in western Germany, believed to be used to control drones over Africa and the Middle East, was part of the operation that led to the general's

assassination, Press TV reported.

"The control signals for the drone attack can only have been transmitted via a satellite relay station on German territory, the U.S. airbase in Ramstein," MP Alexander Neu said in a statement.

"We cannot continue to accept that the federal government itself breaks international law by enabling and supporting the illegal U.S. drone war," Neu added. **→ 2**

33 Turkish soldiers killed by airstrike in northwestern Syria

By staff & agencies

Turkey on Friday raised the death toll from a Syrian airstrike on its forces in northwestern Idlib province the previous night to 33, the highest number of Turkish soldiers killed in a single day since Ankara first intervened in the Syrian conflict in 2016.

Meanwhile, a senior Russian lawmaker has warned that a full-scale Turkish operation in Syria will end badly for Ankara after

Russia's Defense Ministry said Turkish soldiers killed in Syria were targeted after being deployed alongside terrorists.

Russia's Interfax news agency reported that Vladimir Dzhaharov, first deputy head of the Russian upper house of parliament's international affairs committee, made the warning against a possible escalation of Ankara's deployments in Syria's northwestern province on Friday. **→ 10**

Death toll from Delhi's worst riots in decades rises to 38

The death toll from Delhi's worst riots in decades has risen to 38, as a political row broke out over the transfer of a judge who criticized the police and government's handling of the crisis.

Tensions remained high in India's capital, as thousands of riot police and paramilitaries patrolled streets littered with the debris from days of sectarian riots.

Justice S. Muralidhar, a Delhi high court judge, sharply criticised the police and called on officers to investigate politicians from Narendra Modi's governing Bharatiya Janata party for inciting violence.

Muralidhar was transferred to another state court in a late-night order, prompting an outcry among opposition politicians and on social media.

Manish Tewari, opposition Congress party leader, said every lawyer and judge in India should strongly protest what he called a crude attempt to intimidate the judiciary.

Ravi Shankar Prasad, the law minister, insisted it was a "routine transfer".

The violence began over a disputed new citizenship law on Monday, which led to clashes between Muslims and Hindus in which hundreds were injured. Many suffered gunshot wounds, while arson, looting and stone-throwing also took place.

As the nation reeled from the bloodshed, a heavy deployment of security forces brought an uneasy calm on Thursday.

At the heart of the unrest is a citizenship law

which makes it easier for non-Muslims from some neighbouring Muslim-dominated countries to gain Indian citizenship. UN human rights chief Michelle Bachelet said the new law adopted last December is of "great concern" and she was worried by reports of police inaction in the face of assaults against Muslims by other groups. "I appeal to all political leaders to prevent violence," Bachelet said in a speech to the UN human rights council in Geneva.

Critics say the law is biased against Muslims and undermines India's secular constitution. Prime minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata party has denied having any prejudice against India's 180 million Muslims, saying that law is required to help persecuted minorities. **→ 10**

U.S.-Taliban peace deal closer than ever, important step toward Afghan peace: NATO

The U.S.-Taliban peace deal is now closer than ever and NATO will continue to support efforts to find a lasting peaceful solution in Afghanistan, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said Friday.

"NATO will continue to support efforts to find a peaceful and negotiated solution. We have seen a very significant reduction in violence in recent days and therefore we are very close to signing an agreement between the United States and Taliban. This will be the first but very important step to finding lasting peace agreement in Afghanistan", Stoltenberg said at a news conference in Brussels.

The U.S. and Taliban are set to sign a peace agreement Saturday after a seven-day reduction of violence is observed in the country.

Since 2018, Washington and the Taliban movement have been attempting to negotiate

a peace deal that would ensure the withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan in exchange for a guarantee that the country would not become a base for terrorists. However, the talks were declared "dead" in September, after the militants claimed responsibility for an attack that killed a U.S. serviceman.

■ Ex-leader welcomes peace deal

On the eve of a potentially historic deal with the U.S. and the Taliban to end 18 years of war in Afghanistan, former Afghan President Hamid Karzai welcomed the signing of the agreement, thanked Americans for their generosity, but had harsh words for the U.S. government and military.

"To the American people our message is we are grateful for the help that you gave us in areas where there has been a lot of improvement

in Afghan society, together with the rest of the international community," Karzai told The Associated Press in an interview Friday in the Afghan capital of Kabul. "We understand and respect and admire your good intentions towards us."

The deal to be signed Saturday in Qatar is to provide for the eventual withdrawal of America's 13,000 troops, as well as for negotiations between the Taliban and the Afghan government and other prominent Afghan leaders.

Karzai was chosen as Afghanistans first post-Taliban leader after the U.S.-led coalition in 2001 toppled the hard-line Taliban for harboring al-Qaida chief Osama bin Laden while he planned the 9/11 attacks in the United States.

Karzai ruled until 2014, and during that time his relationship with his U.S. allies soured. **→ 10**



ARTICLE

Salman Parviz
Journalist

Trump's India visit to counter China

U.S. President Donald J. Trump trip to India on February 24 for a two-day visit, came amid protests in New Delhi against the controversial Citizenship Amendment Act which left 38 dead and many more wounded.

Trump's visit also comes during the time of explosive tensions between the U.S. and Iran, the first ever trilateral naval exercise between Iran, Russia and China, explosions and seizures of tankers in the Persian Gulf which is known as one of the world's most important choke-point of global oil supplies. Accounting for a third of the world's sea-borne oil (and a fifth of the world's total oil exports), the strait links oil and gas producers in the Middle East with consumers around the globe, including those in Europe, Asia and America.

To make things worse are the rampant attacks by Yemeni Houthis on Saudi Arabia, one of which hit Aramco's largest oil processing site, knocking out 50 percent of the country's oil production.

Getting back to Trump's India visit: U.S. elections are slated for November. The four million affluent Indian-American community, has traditionally leaned towards the Democratic party. Some say Trump's relationship with Indian Prime Minister Narendra D. Modi has already helped boost his standing among Indian-Americans.

Washington is wary of the emergence of China to the world stage, rise of Russia again as a major global power and Islamic Republic's influence in the region. Trump is seeking alliance with India in order to counter the rising powers.

Due to the scope of this article my focus will be on China. China is under political and economic pressure amid Hong Kong protests and the trade wars with U.S. and coronavirus outbreak.

India and China share a 4024-km (2,500-mile) border. China is the main supporter of Pakistan. Guadar Port is a deep sea port on the Arabian Sea at Gwadar in Balochistan province of Pakistan. It is located just 600 kilometers from the Strait of Hormuz. The port was made possible only after China lobbied for it because of its growing interest for landlocked Afghanistan and the region. **→ 7**



ARTICLE

Ramin Hossein Abadian
Mehr News Agency
journalist

Erdogan's bloody night in Idlib

The Syrian army attacked a Turkish convoy in the Jabal Al-Zawiya region, which was preparing to launch an offensive against Syrian forces. Turkey on Friday raised the death toll from a Syrian government airstrike on its forces in northwestern Syria on Thursday to 33. The earlier reported death toll was 29.

Turkey's diplomatic movements have increased dramatically after the Syrian air raid. Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu held talks with NATO Secretary General Jans Stoltenberg. Turkish presidential spokesman also spoke with the U.S. National Security Adviser on the developments in Idlib.

On the other hand, the Turkish army claimed that it has targeted Syrian army bases. Turkey insists it will retaliate by continuing its movements in Syrian territory. The Syrian Defense Ministry also reported that its air defense system destroyed two missiles fired from Syria into Latakia. Syrian sources also say that no casualties have been reported so far due to the Turkish invasion of Tall Rifatand Latakia.

Meanwhile, the latest news suggests that Turkey has blocked users' access to social media amid reports of number of casualties in an attack that carried out by Syrian government forces in Idlib. Sources say Internet providers in Turkey have restricted access to Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and the site "Ekşi Sözlük" (a collaborative hypertext dictionary in Turkey). These sites can still be accessed through VPN tools.

In the meantime Turkey has resorted to NATO so that it may be able to achieve some successes in Idlib and make up for its defeats. In this regard, after widespread consultations by Turkish officials with the NATO secretary general, Stoltenberg made remarks against the Damascus government and identified it as the main cause of the Idlib events. The secretary general called for a halt in the Syrian military operation in Idlib, as Ankara asked him to do so.

On the other hand, Turkey has pressured NATO to accompany Ankara in its movements in Idlib. In this connection, Middle East Eye new outlet stated that Turkey has threatened Europe and NATO that it will open its borders to Syrian refugees and remove all barriers to the refugee influx. **→ 7**



© Ministry of Defence

Disinfectant, face mask production lines launched

Production lines of disinfectants and face masks have been launched by the Ministry of Defense in a move to help curb the outbreak of the novel coronavirus, known as COVID-19, in the country.

The lines are projected to produce 20,000 liters of disinfectants and 20,000 face masks on a daily basis.

China sympathizes with Iran over coronavirus outbreak

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — The Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson, in her Twitter account on Friday, sympathized with Iran over the outbreak of coronavirus and vowed Beijing's more assistance to Tehran to overcome the disease.



"Sad to hear bad news in #Iran. 1st batch of Chinese assistance already arrived and more sure to follow. We are with you, Iran! Be strong, Iran! Hang in there, Iran! #COVID19," Hua Chunying wrote in her tweet.

Chinese Ambassador in Tehran Chang Hua said on Friday that China had delivered its first cargo of humanitarian aid to Iran to help combat the coronavirus outbreak in the country.

"China's first cargo has arrived in Iran and more is to come; be strong Iran," Chang wrote on his Twitter account.

Earlier on Wednesday, the Chinese ambassador said, "5,000 kits to detect coronavirus, which are contributed by China's embassy and Chinese companies in Iran, have been delivered to the Iranian side."

"Our efforts will continue," he added.

The virus first emerged in China last year and is now spreading in Europe and across the Middle East, sparking fears of a global pandemic. The virus is spreading rapidly in the region, with cases recorded in many countries.

The Iranian authorities have ordered the closure of schools, universities and cultural events in a bid to contain the outbreak. This is while free masks are being distributed among the people, with priority given to cities that have reported coronavirus cases.

According to the latest data, totally 388 Iranian nationals have been infected by the virus, out of which 34 patients have thus far lost their lives.

Vice president Ebtekar among officials infected by coronavirus

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Masoumeh Ebtekar, Iran's vice president for women's affairs, has also been diagnosed with coronavirus.

According to her deputy, she has quarantined herself at home. Ebtekar was at least the seventh Iranian official to test positive for coronavirus.



Deputy Health Minister Iraj Harirchi was the first official who tested positive for the virus.

Iran now appears to have the highest number of officials infected by the coronavirus in the world.

Mojtaba Zolnour, a senior lawmaker in the Iranian Parliament, along with three more MPs have been infected by the virus.

Mojtaba Zolnour represents the shrine city of Qom with the highest number of coronavirus fatalities.

On Thursday, Iran's former Ambassador to Vatican Hadi Khosroshahi died of the novel coronavirus infection.

Khosroshahi had been admitted to Tehran's Masih Dane-shvari hospital.

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According to the Health Ministry, general health condition of a sum of 73 infected patients has grown better.

The virus has affected 24 provinces of the country.

German lawmakers sue Merkel govt. for complicity in U.S. assassination of Gen. Soleimani

1 → The Left Party accused the Merkel government of "abetting" the U.S. assassination by its «negligence» on the matter.

A copy of the complaint posted on the website of Neu specifically targets Merkel along with Foreign Minister Heiko Maas, Defense Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, Interior Minister Horst Seehofer and "other members of the federal government".

In the early hours of January 3, General Soleimani, the IRGC Quds Force Commander, was assassinated by a U.S. drone strike shortly after arriving at Baghdad International Airport on a formal visit to the country.

Washington's unprovoked and illegal targeting of the senior Iranian official, who was also the region's most popular anti-terror commander, greatly heightened tensions, bringing the region to the brink of war.

The assassination also drew the condemnation of leaders across the region and beyond. Numerous major rallies commemorating General Soleimani were also held worldwide.

Iran has denounced the stance adopted by Germany on the U.S. assassination of General Soleimani.

On January 8, Iran officially responded to the U.S. assassination by firing a volley of ballistic missiles at the U.S.-occupied Ein al-Assad base in western Iraq.

Despite initial U.S. claim that the attack resulted in no casualties, the Trump administration has since gradually announced injuries from the Iranian retaliatory attack, most recently saying that 110 U.S. troops have suffered from "traumatic brain injuries".

Washington has also backed down from responding to Iran's retaliatory attack despite earlier remarks by President Donald Trump that the U.S. would «quickly & fully strike back, & perhaps in a disproportionate manner» to any Iranian operation.

Tehran says eyeing developments in Syria's Idlib

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Tehran has reacted to the recent developments in the northwestern Syrian province of Idlib, saying it is fully monitoring the recent developments in that area.

"We are carefully monitoring the developments on the ground and regional outcomes of the developments in Idlib, and we will continue our efforts to end the current tensions," Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said on Friday, Mehr reported.

Mousavi said Iran is ready to take every measure to help reduce tensions.

He underlined the need for the sides to properly manage the situation so as to ease the tensions immediately.

The spokesman further said Iran, in light of the previous decision by leaders of the Astana peace process to hold the next summit in Tehran, emphasizes the continuation of its efforts to hold the summit in the current critical situation, and believes that the summit may be a continuation of the efforts to combat terrorism, avoid any harm to civilians and resolve political conflicts in an effective step. Mousavi also denounced efforts by some



countries that try to tarnish the real outcomes of the summit.

On Thursday, state news agency Anadolu published images of Turkish airstrikes on Syrian troops, claiming that 1,709 Syrian targets had been attacked within the last 17

days of Ankara's stepped-up military campaign in the province.

Also on Thursday, Russian and Syrian media outlets reported that Turkish military forces have been firing shoulder-fired missiles towards Syrian and Russian military aircraft

Iran underscores peaceful settlement of conflict in Yemen

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iran's deputy foreign minister for legal and international affairs on Wednesday underscored Tehran's long-held policy that a comprehensive Yemeni-Yemeni dialogue would be the best choice to put an immediate end to the crisis in Yemen.

Addressing a UN Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, Switzerland, Mohsen Baharvand voiced Tehran's concerns over Riyadh's warmongering policy in Yemen.

He said the Yemeni crisis should be settled via dialogue and diplomacy.

In response to comments by Saudi Arabia's foreign minister who had criticized Iran for helping the people of Yemen, he said, "This is a war that you (Saudis) have started and still continuing it."

"Do not blame others for your own mistakes. The Islamic Republic of Iran has always supported negotiations for ending this war. You (Saudis) have no right to treat the people of the region as you wish and expect them not to respond to you," Baharvand was quoted as saying by the FNA.

In a meeting with Sweden's Special Envoy for Yemen Peter Semneby in Tehran in November, Ali Asqar Khaji, a senior aide to

the Iranian foreign minister, laid emphasis on Tehran's comprehensive efforts to restore peace and security to Yemen.

"An immediate stop to clashes, removal of siege on the country and holding Yemeni-Yemeni dialogue are some basic necessities" to end the five-year war conflict, Khaji said, adding that Iran would welcome continued cooperation with Sweden in this regard.

He highlighted Ansarullah's adherence to the Stockholm agreement, but criticized the Saudi-led coalition for failing to fulfil their commitments under the agreement.

Semneby, for his part, said that the Stockholm agreement is the first accepted deal among warring sides in Yemen.

"Sweden voices support for the Stock-

holm agreement as well as efforts made by the United Nations and UN special envoy for Yemeni affairs to attain comprehensive diplomatic solution," Semneby stated.

Saudi Arabia has been striking Yemen since March 2015 to restore power to fugitive president Mansour Hadi, a close ally of Riyadh. The Saudi-led aggression has so far killed more than 20,000 Yemenis, including hundreds of women and children. Despite Riyadh's claims that it is bombing the positions of the Ansarullah fighters, Saudi bombers are flattening residential areas and civilian infrastructure.

Yemen is the world's largest humanitarian crisis with more than 22 million people in need and is seeing a spike in needs, fueled by

Iranian diplomat Mohsen Baharvand tells Saudi foreign minister: "Do not blame others for your own mistakes. The Islamic Republic of Iran has always supported negotiations for ending this war. You have no right to treat the people of the region as you wish and expect them not to respond to you."

providing air cover for Syria's anti-terrorist operations.

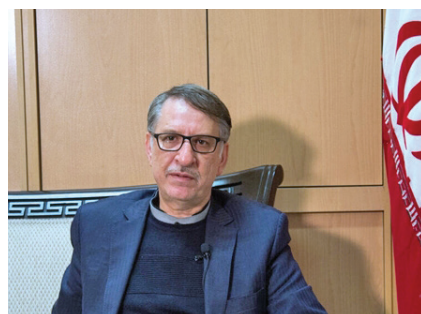
Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said that Russian President Vladimir Putin and Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan spoke by phone Friday to discuss the implementation of de-escalation agreements in Idlib.

"The conversation was detailed and devoted to the necessity to do everything," Lavrov told reporters at a news conference in Moscow. "There is always room for dialogue."

Lavrov said that the two countries were ready to continue coordination in the province.

A senior Russian lawmaker has warned that a full-scale Turkish operation in Syria will end badly for Ankara after Russia's Defense Ministry said Turkish soldiers killed in Syria were targeted after being deployed alongside terrorists.

Russia's Interfax news agency reported that Vladimir Dzhabarov, first deputy head of the Russian upper house of parliament's international affairs committee, made the warning against a possible escalation of Ankara's deployments in Syria's northwestern Idlib province on Friday.



ongoing conflict, a collapsing economy and diminished social services and livelihoods. The blockade on Yemen has smothered humanitarian deliveries of food and medicine to the import-dependent state.

The UN has repeatedly criticized the Saudi-led military coalition's bombing campaign and placed it on a blacklist of child rights violators last year.

A UN panel has also compiled a detailed report of civilian casualties caused by the Saudi military and its allies during their war against Yemen, saying the Riyadh-led coalition has used precision-guided munitions in its raids on civilian targets.

Rights bodies' silence over U.S. sanctions regretful: Iranian Judiciary

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Head of the Judiciary's High Council for Human Rights Ali Bagheri Kani on Thursday called on the relevant human rights bodies no to keep mum on the U.S. "cruel sanctions" on the Iranian people.

In a meeting with the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet in Geneva, Baqeri Kani said the world human rights bodies should not help legitimize the U.S. behavior through their silence.

In a speech to the Human Rights Council on Feb. 24, Bagheri Kani said those who impose sanctions on "life-saving medicine" are not eligible to be a member of council.

In late December, President Hassan Rouhani said Iran was passing "the worst days" of sanctions imposed by the U.S., praising the people for their resistance and patience.

Rouhani hailed the people for their firm stance and resistance in hard days.

Pointing to the consequences of sanctions on the country, Rouhani said, "If we were not engaged in an imposed-economic war, we could enjoy a sum of \$200 billion out of which \$100 billion was income of crude export. Now we

do not have that hefty amount of money."

"We are managing the country without that \$200 billion income. People are not living comfortably, however, we (the government) try as much as we can," he went on to say.

The president said if the sanctions against Iran were lifted, he would be ready to meet the leaders of the countries party to the 2015 nuclear deal.

"If they remove sanctions, we are prepared for talks at the level of 5+1 group's heads of state," Rouhani remarked.

The nuclear deal was signed between Iran and the 5+1 group (the five permanent members of the UN Security Council) plus Germany in July 2015.

Under the agreement, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and confirmed by the UN Security Council Resolution 2231, Iran was obligated to put limits on its nuclear program in exchange for the termination of economic and financial sanctions.

However, Donald Trump, a presidential candidate favored by hawks in the U.S. and Israel, started harsh attacks against the JCPOA, vowing to tear it up if elected president.

Finally, in May 2018, he officially abandoned the JCPOA and introduced the harshest ever sanctions in history against Iran.

The Trump administration not only returned the previous sanctions lifted under the nuclear deal it added new ones, including a total ban on Iran's oil exports.

Trump's administration has even threatened to penalize any country or company that does business with Iran.

In response to the abrogation of the JCPOA by the U.S. and a failure by the remaining parties, particularly the Europeans, to protect Iran's economy from the sanctions' effects, Iran has started to partially reduce its commitments to the JCPOA in accordance to the paragraph 36 of the multilateral agreement.

(Paragraph 36 provided a mechanism to resolve disputes and allows one side, under certain circumstances, to stop complying with the deal if the other side is out of compliance.)

Iran started to scale down its commitments after waiting for a full year that the remaining parties honor their obligations.

However, Tehran has insisted if sanctions are lifted it will immediately reverse its decisions.

NY Times: American intelligence officials have admitted Iran remains stable even under pressure

Former acting CIA chief Michael Morrell has said Pompeo had admitted U.S. policy is 'regime change' in Iran

Nearly two months after the assassination of Iran's top general Qassem Soleimani, the Trump administration insists its "maximum pressure" campaign against Iran is working. However, according to the New York Times, many allies are skeptical.

In a news analysis posted on its website on Feb. 27, the Times said "American intelligence officials who brief Congress have said that the Iranian government remains stable, even if under pressure."

Following is an excerpt of the news analysis:

The United States and Iran may have pulled back from the brink of war, but they have refused to stand down since the American drone strike in January that killed Maj. Gen. Qassem Soleimani.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo was scheduled to brief the House Foreign Affairs Committee on Friday about the administration's next steps against Iran.

Pompeo was to be asked about the decision to kill General Soleimani in a Jan. 4 strike in Baghdad after Iraqis had protested at the American Embassy.

But Congress appeared unconvinced of the urgency of the strike: Both the House and Senate have since voted to restrain Trump's war powers against Iran.

Over the last two months, the Trump admin-

istration has imposed more sanctions against Iran's oil exports, metals, manufacturing and textile industries, as well as against some of the country's military commanders, senior officials in its government and officials involved in its elections and nuclear program.

European allies and other world powers have opposed the sanctions against Iran — particularly the oil embargo — while Persian Arab Gulf States have supported them. But both sides are now united over worries that the American pressure campaign will end any hope of negotiating a new nuclear agreement.

In Europe, officials do not believe the maximum pressure campaign has curbed Iran's nuclear program.

One European diplomat said many Europeans remain concerned that the Trump administration is pursuing regime change — even though American officials insist that is not the goal.

Arab states have warned of widening violence in the region if Tehran feels pushed too hard by the United States.

Anti-American sentiments in Iraq are already on the rise, an American official said.

Anti-American sentiments in Iraq are already on the rise, an American official says.

Even Senator Lindsey Graham, Republican of South Carolina and an Iran hawk, has recognized that the Trump administration is offering nothing to entice Iran to come to the negotiating table. Graham has told people he is working on potential inducements for Washington to offer Tehran.

Two senior Middle Eastern officials who speak to the Trump administration regularly on Iran said they do not expect Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the supreme leader of Iran, to agree to start new negotiations with the United States.

Trump said he wants to strike a new deal with Iran that is more expansive than the 2015 nuclear treaty that the Obama administration brokered with world powers and Tehran — and from which Mr. Trump withdrew the United States in 2018. Trump administration officials say they are looking not only for tougher restrictions on Iran's nuclear program, but also for limits on its ballistic missile efforts and its support for regional militias.

Foreign diplomats said Secretary of State Mike Pompeo wants future negotiations to include more parties — adding Israel, Saudi

Arabia and the United Arab Emirates to the talks that were previously held among Britain, France, Germany, China, Russia, the United States and the European Union.

As a way around the American sanctions, European officials are creating a barter system to continue trade with Iran and, in turn, keep the 2015 nuclear deal alive, even though Iran has removed the boundaries of the agreement since Trump's withdrawal from it.

At a meeting on Wednesday of the deal's remaining signers, Iranian diplomats said they were eager to salvage the agreement.

Last year, on "Intelligence Matters," a podcast hosted by Michael J. Morrell, a former acting CIA director, Pompeo defined the goal of the pressure campaign as creating conditions to turn the opinion of Iranians against their government.

"Essentially, he admitted their policy is regime change," Mr. Morrell said.

American intelligence officials who brief Congress have said that the Iranian government remains stable, even if under pressure.

"I think the administration, in candor, does not even have a strategy for what would replace the regime," said Rep. Ro Khanna, Democrat of California and a member of the House Armed Services Committee. He called the American pressure campaign "purely punitive."

Leader thanks medical staff fighting coronavirus

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has hailed invaluable efforts made by the Health Ministry, doctors, nurses and medical staff in combating the outbreak of coronavirus.

"I express gratitude to the doctors, nurses and the medical staff as well as the Health Ministry and the minister, for their efforts in fight against the outbreak of the virus," Ayatollah Khamenei said on Thursday in a video message.

The video also featured Alireza Marandi, head of the Iranian Academy of Medical Sciences.

The Leader hoped that the virus will be controlled and defeated in the near future.

Kianoush Jahanpour, head of the Iranian Health Ministry's public relations department, announced on Friday that the death toll from the coronavirus outbreak, officially known as COVID-19, in Iran has risen to 34 with 338 confirmed cases.

According to the latest reports, coronavirus has caused 2,867 deaths, while 83,863 people have been diagnosed with the illness across the globe.

The virus is spreading in the Middle East, Europe and other parts of the world, as Brazil confirmed its first case in Latin America, while parts of China begin to lower their emergency response level as the number of new cases reported there continues to slow.

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has said countries should use quarantine against the deadly new coronavirus only when they are truly needed.

Addressing the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva on Thursday, Michelle Bachelet hailed medical teams around the world working to rein in the COVID-19 outbreak, but said respect for human rights needed



to guide the response.

"The rights of those under quarantine must be protected, including rights to food and clean water, the right to be treated humanely, access to health care,

the right to be informed and freedom of expression," the UN rights chief noted, adding, "All public health measures should be carried out without discrimination of any kind."

Iran-UAE flight permit will be issued soon

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — The Iranian Foreign Ministry is paving the way for the Iranian nationals residing in the UAE to return home from Dubai or Abu Dhabi.

"The Foreign Ministry and its representatives in Abu Dhabi and Dubai have been continuously in contact with Iran Civil Aviation Organization's officials, the United Arab Emirates Foreign Ministry and the Emirates embassy in Tehran to access flight permit for the country's airliners," Mousavi told reporters after the UAE unilaterally and surprisingly halted flights to and from Tehran.

"According to the latest information, a basic agreement has been reached for issuing

flight permit and the flights will be carried out soon," he added.

Mousavi underlined, "We use all our capacities to return our compatriots to home."

According to Al Jazeera, the UAE suspended all flights to and from Iran for at least a week on Tuesday over the outbreak of the new coronavirus after its spread was announced across multiple Middle East nations.

The UAE, home to long-haul carriers Emirates and Etihad, remains a key international transit route for Iran's 80 million people.

The UAE's General Civil Aviation Authority made the announcement on Tuesday via the country's state-run WAM

news agency, just hours after Dubai International Airport, the world's busiest for international travel, said there would be restrictions on flights there.

"All passenger and cargo aircraft traveling to and from Iran will be suspended for a period of one week, and could be up for extension," the authority said.

"The decision is a precautionary measure undertaken by the UAE to ensure strict monitoring and prevention of the spread of the new coronavirus."

Emirates, the government-owned carrier based in Dubai, flies daily to Tehran. Its low-cost sister airline, FlyDubai, flies to multiple Iranian cities, as does the Sharjah-based low-cost carrier Air Arabia.

The virus first emerged in China last year and is now spreading in Europe and across the Middle East, sparking fears of a global pandemic. The virus is spreading rapidly in the region, with cases recorded in many countries.

The Iranian authorities have ordered the closure of schools, universities and cultural events in a bid to contain the outbreak. This is while free masks are being distributed among the people, with priority given to cities that have reported coronavirus cases.

According to the latest data, totally 388 Iranian nationals have been affected by the virus, out of which 34 patients have lost their lives.

Swiss humanitarian channel for Iran finalized

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — The United States and Swiss governments have finalized the terms of a humanitarian trade agreement, which would allow companies to send food, medicine and other critical supplies to Iran.

The U.S. Department of the Treasury announced in a statement on Thursday that the Swiss Humanitarian Trade Arrangement (SHTA) is fully operational.

"The SHTA will further facilitate the flow of humanitarian goods to the Iranian people," the statement said.

"The SHTA is the first operational channel established under the framework announced by the U.S. Department of State and the Treasury in October 2019 to facilitate humanitarian trade with Iran. Initial transactions were successfully conducted in late January 2020 to demonstrate the viability and effectiveness of the SHTA."

According to the U.S. Treasury, while the United States maintains broad exceptions and authorizations for the conduct of humanitarian trade with Iran, the SHTA presents



a voluntary option for facilitating payment for exports of agricultural commodities, food, medicine, and medical devices to Iran in a manner that ensures the upmost transparency.

"Companies within Swiss jurisdiction may reach out to Switzerland's State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO)

at SHTA@seco.admin.ch for further details on requirements and instructions for participating in the SHTA. This includes entities that are owned or controlled by U.S. and third-country persons and domiciled in Switzerland. Parties may continue to avail themselves of existing exceptions and authorizations to conduct humanitarian trade with Iran outside of the humanitarian channel."

Earlier this month, Deputy Health Minister Karim Hemmati said the SHTA will not remove the impact of unfair U.S. sanctions on the import of medicine by Iran, as it is not capable of carrying money in large scale.

The Ministry of Health welcomes every mechanism that eases supply of medicine and medical equipment using all the available capacities to patients, especially those with cancer and rare diseases, Hemmati said.

However, the financial mechanism launched recently by Switzerland cannot solve the problem of supplying necessary medicines and transferring money to purchase them, he lamented.

Iran, Azerbaijan discuss naval cooperation

TEHRAN — Iranian Navy Commander Rear Admiral Hossein Khanzadi and Azerbaijani Deputy Defense Minister Major General Muhamedov Fuad who met in Tehran on Wednesday exchanged views on ways to expand naval cooperation between the two countries.

Khanzadi and Fuad discussed issues of mutual interest and conferred on the ways to promote naval cooperation.

According to Fars, Khanzadi said that Iran has established joint cooperation commissions with most of the countries and the number of the commissions with the neighboring states and those outside the region is increasing.

Iran's Navy chief said the more these diplomatic exchanges and joint commissions are held successfully, the more the region and the world will be safe.

Noting that face-to-face dialogues, especially between neighboring states, are very significant, he said, "Such interactions will help us know each other better and understand common interests and undivided interests and have more collective security."

The geopolitical zone of North of the Islamic Republic of Iran, where the Caspian Sea is located, is the most important component for the proximity and interaction of neighboring naval forces, he said, adding that many talks have so far been held on the Caspian Sea between the governments and naval forces of five countries and good agreements have been made.

Contending that the Caspian Sea needs security, Khanzadi said that the security should be ensured collectively and naval forces of the five littoral states hold talks in a safe and secure ambience.



Iran and Azerbaijan Republic naval forces boast good capacities for cooperation, he said, noting that they can exchange students and run courses in Persian, Azeri and English languages.

Fuad, for his part, said that there are many areas of cooperation between the two countries' naval forces.

He also invited Khanzadi to visit his country to help promote interaction between the two forces.

The second meeting of Iran-Azerbaijan Joint Military Commission was held on Wednesday at the Headquarters of the Iranian Armed Forces in Tehran, where Deputy Chief of the Iranian Armed Forces for International Affairs Brigadier General Qadir Nezami and Deputy Defense Minister of the Republic of Azerbaijan Muhamedov Fuad chaired the meeting.

Last month, Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Hossein Baqeri, in a meeting with First Deputy Prime Minister of Azerbaijan Shahin Mustafayev, underlined that Tehran considers strong military ties with Baku as a top priority.

"The Islamic Republic regards the solid ties between the two nations and military forces of its priorities," Major General Baqeri said in the meeting with Mustafayev in Tehran.

He added that some regional and trans-regional countries cannot tolerate the warm relations between Iran and Republic of Azerbaijan.

Also in the meeting the two sides reviewed various aspects of developing ties, particularly in field of the security and defense.

The Azeri official, for his turn, described the recent visit of General Baqeri to his country

as a turning point in expansion of mutual relations which facilitated strengthening of mutual cooperation.

Major General Baqeri had previously paid a two-day visit to Baku upon the official invitation of Azerbaijan's Minister of Defense Lieutenant General Zakir Hasanov in January 2019 to hold talks with the host country's defense minister and other military officials, as well as the president, prime minister and parliament speaker of the Eurasian country.

During his stay in Baku, Baqeri signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Hasanov to bolster defense cooperation between the two countries.

Baqeri told reporters after signing the agreement that both sides explored ways to bolster bilateral defense ties during the meeting.

He said Iran reiterated its support for the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and underlined the need for expanding cooperation in the fields of logistics and training as well as an exchange of military experiences.

Hasanov, for his part, welcomed Baqeri's visit, saying the two sides discussed "highly important" issues.

The Azeri minister expressed confidence that the visit would further enhance "mutual military cooperation to the highest level".

He further said Baqeri's visit provided the opportunity to review the activities of Iran-Azerbaijan Joint Defense Commission, saying necessary recommendation has been made to enhance its performance.

The joint commission held its first meeting in Baku in October 2017, with a high-ranking delegation from Iran's Defense Ministry in attendance.

Iranians suffering due to U.S. 'maximum pressure' policy: Russian envoy

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Russia's permanent representative to international organizations in Vienna has criticized the United States' "maximum pressure" policy against Iran, saying such approach has brought about many negative outcomes, especially suffering of the Iranian people.

"What are the results of US maximum pressure policy? Suffering of Iranian population, especially its most vulnerable segments," Mikhail Ulyanov said in a tweet on Friday.



He added that such policy has also contributed to the "tense situation in the Persian Gulf; problems with navigation there; suspended limitations on Iranian nuclear program, and weakened non-proliferation regime."

In another post on his Twitter account, Ulyanov referred to the 2015 nuclear deal (JCPOA) as the "masterpiece of multilateral diplomacy", which has been "half-ruined" due to Washington's hawkish policies.

"Is there any single positive and encouraging result of this US policy? Name it, please," he stressed.

The standoff between Iran and the U.S. began after U.S. President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew the U.S. from the 2015 nuclear deal that Tehran had sealed with the 5+1 nations, and imposed the most severe sanctions ever on the Islamic Republic under its maximum pressure policy.

In response to this move, on May 8, 2019, Iran announced that its "strategic patience" is over and started to gradually reduce its commitments to the JCPOA at bi-monthly intervals. At the time Iran announced if the European parties to the deal take concrete steps to shield Iran's economy from the U.S. sanctions it will reverse its decision.

However, seeing no action by the Europeans, on January 5 Iran took the last and final step by removing all limits on its nuclear activities.

Iran's moves are based on paragraph 36 of the JCPOA which "allows one side, under certain circumstances, to stop complying with the deal if the other side is out of compliance."

Despite taking the last step, Iran has reminded the Europeans to fulfill their commitments in order to keep the deal alive.

Iran and the U.S. came close to war last month after Qassem Soleimani, Iran's legendary commander in the fight against terrorism, was killed in an American drone strike. The IRGC Quds Force, commanded by General Soleimani, led Iran's fight against ISIS.

Newest decisions to contain coronavirus

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Government spokesman Ali Rabiei announced on Friday that Iran will face a rising number of patients diagnosed with coronavirus in the next two weeks and urged citizens to fully observe the Health Ministry advices to contain the spread of the disease.

"In the next one or two weeks we face a condition which the cooperation of people with the recommendation of officials will be very essential and effective," Rabiei said in a series of tweets.

The announcement by the government spokesman came as the National Headquarters for Campaign against Corona held a meeting on Friday in which Vice President Es'haq Jahangiri was also present.

Rabiei said reports show coordination between different bodies and that the Health Ministry has control over the situation.

He also said there will be changes in working hours. The spokesman said decisions were taken to limit entry into and exit from provinces in which coronavirus cases have been confirmed.

It was also decided to disinfect "special places" and provinces inflicted by coronavirus, scientifically called Covid-19.

Health Minister Saeed Namaki also said it was decided on Friday to close all schools across the country until Monday.

School week in Iran begins from Saturday until Wednesday.

He also urgently asked the citizen to seriously avoid unnecessary trips. The minister said if a passenger is diagnosed with coronavirus he will be quarantined for two weeks.

"If a suspicious case is noticed in entry or exit of cities that person will surely be quarantined for 14 days."

The Health Ministry has previously urged people to stay at home, restrict traffic, reduce interactions, avoid unnecessary travel, and cancel any nationwide gatherings.

It has also said observing "individual health tips are the only ways to control Covid-19".

Upon the advice of the Health Ministry, the Friday prayers in Tehran and 22 other provinces were also canceled to counter the spread of coronavirus.

The Health Ministry also placed restrictions on access to the Hazrat Masumeh shrine in Qom, where the coronavirus in Iran first emerged, and the Imam Reza shrine in Mashhad.

Until Friday, the Health Ministry confirmed 34 deaths and 388 cases of coronavirus in the country.

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	523851.0
IFX	6744.44

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	45,831 rials
GBP	54,328 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$50.55b
WTI	\$45.58/b
OPEC Basket	\$54.01/b
Gold	\$1,628.35/oz
Silver	\$17.22/oz
Platinum	\$877.20/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

South African rand to continuously weaken, bank research says

The South Africa Rand (ZAR) is likely to weaken back up to around 15 rand per U.S. dollar. According to an Absa Bank Research report the ZAR is to weaken to R15.16/D by the end of Q1 and reach R16.13/D by year end.



“We expect the ZAR to be particularly vulnerable to capital outflows during the first half of the year because we believe Moody’s is likely to downgrade South Africa’s local currency credit rating in

March (which in turn will eject SAGBs from the World Government Bond Index) at the end of March, while JP Morgan is scheduled to further reduce South Africa’s bond weighting within its emerging market bond index during the first half of 2020.

The “ZAR could weaken by more than we expect if the SARB cuts policy rates by more than the market currently expects and/or the economy falls back into recession.

Conversely, the ZAR might prove to be more resilient than we believe if global volatility levels continue to subside on the back of reduced global trade tensions, which in turn could rekindle the ZAR’s carry trade appeal.

Any further improvement in South Africa’s terms of trade might also support the ZAR”, stated the report.

The South African rand has been struggling over the year 2019 on the back of various social economic and political factors. However, the beginning of the year has not made it easy for the currency as analysts have predicted that the currency may further weaken on the setting of the forecasted global recession and the outbreak of the coronavirus.

■ South African reserve bank

In January, the South African Reserve Bank voted unanimously to trim its benchmark repo rate by 25bps to 6.25 percent during its January meeting, while markets had expected it to be kept steady, citing the country’s persistent economic vulnerability. It was the first rate cut since July, bringing borrowing costs to the lowest level since November 2015.

According to Trading Economics, policymakers noted that monthly inflation has been lower than the mid-point target and that inflation expectations continued to moderate gradually. In light of the unexpected interest rate cut, some analyst believe that the move will give a boost to the economy which may impact positively on the currency.

The “cut on the interest rates suggests the decision will boost South Africa’s economy, which may positively impact the currency. However, stability within the economy will still be needed commented,” Tatenda Nyachiga, an economic analyst.

(Source: southerntimesafrica.com)

European bond yields slip as coronavirus cases rise outside China

European government bond yields tumbled and investors ratcheted up bets on a rate cut earlier in the year from the European Central Bank as the spread of the coronavirus undermined risk sentiment.

China still accounts for about 96% of coronavirus cases, but more new infections are now being reported elsewhere. Investors fled to the safety of government debt as U.S. stock futures dropped to a three-month low.

“Going into the weekend ahead of us, maybe some market participants want to cover some short positions ahead of Friday as tomorrow could see another flight into quality,” said Commerzbank rates strategist Rainer Guntermann.

Yields on benchmark German 10-year maturities fell as much as 6 basis points to -0.56%, their lowest in 4-1/2 months.

Italian debt continued to underperform - Italy’s coronavirus outbreak is Europe’s worst. The yield spread between German debt and corresponding Italian bonds widened to a one-month high above 160 basis points.

Benchmark Italian bond yields rose as much as 11 bps to 1.10%, their worst day since early December.

The gap between Spanish and Portuguese 10-year bond yields and that of their German counterpart grew to their widest in five months..

(Source: reuters.com)

‘Iran establishes intl. banking ties beyond FATF’

1 → “The central bank, along with other economic sectors, will continue their efforts to meet the country’s sustainable business needs,” he added.

The official further noted that the country’s exporters have injected hundreds of millions of dollars into the domestic economic system, assuring that the recent rampant inflation in the forex rates will be curbed in the near future.

The Paris-based Financial Action Task Force (FATF) on February 21, placed Iran on its blacklist after Iran refused to comply

with the watchdog’s requirements.

Earlier this month, Hemmati had said that FATF blacklist is not going to cause any problems for the country’s foreign trade and stability of foreign currency market.

“During multiple periods of sanctions and maximum pressure, our monetary and financial system has become able to establish unsanctionable links with the world’s monetary and financial system outside the framework of the FATF, and this has largely curbed the U.S.’s threats and hostility,” he said.

TEDPIX climbs 10% in a week

ECONOMY TEHRAN — TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), rose 10 percent during the past Iranian calendar week (ended on Friday), IRNA reported.

The index went up 45,640 points to 524,394 during the past week.

As reported, the indices of Bank Mellat, Bank Tejarat, Iran Khodro Industrial Group, Saipa Group, Isfahan Oil Refinery, and National Iranian Copper Company mostly contributed to the rise of TEDPIX.

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

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

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 December 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.

Based on the WFE latest report, the TSE was the top performer in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.

A total of about \$66 billion worth of stocks were traded in TSE during 2019, registering a growth of more than 300 percent compared to the value of trades in the previous year.

According to the WFE report, the total value of trades at TSE reached \$320 billion at the end of 2019, while the total market value of WFE members amounted to more than \$74 trillion.

The coronavirus outbreak may have a two-quarter hit on China’s economy, says Stephen Roach

By Huileng Tan

The coronavirus outbreak is likely to hit China’s economy over the course of two quarters, Stephen Roach said on Friday.

The “Chinese economy is flat-lining right now,” said Roach, who is a senior fellow at Yale University.

The “impact of unprecedented quarantines and restrictions on travel have brought the Chinese economy right now to a virtual standstill,” Roach told CNBC’s “Squawk Box.”

He said that indicators of economic activity in China, such as coal consumption and transportation traffic, are “well below” the levels this time last year, or in the aftermath of any recent Lunar New Year holidays.

Beijing started imposing large-scale lockdowns and quarantining cities in late January, which halted factory and economic activities that are gradually coming back online.

The outbreak of the coronavirus has struck over 82,000 globally, according to the Feb. 27 figures from the World Health Organization. Known formally as COVID-19, the virus has spread beyond



China, pummeling markets.

Still, Roach said he hoped the Chinese government will not let up on efforts to contain the coronavirus outbreak even though there will be short-term economic impact.

A “premature relaxation of quarantines and travel restrictions could lead to a relapse that would be far more dangerous than the outbreak at present,” said Roach, who lived in China from 2007 until 2012 during his tenure as chairman of Morgan Stanley Asia.

The Western Gateway to deliver £56b to UK economy by 2030

A new partnership between eight cities across south Wales and west England has launched a new website and prospectus setting out a vision to boost local economies.

The Western Gateway, originally launched by Cabinet Ministers in November 2019 is the third powerhouse in the UK after the Northern Powerhouse and the Midlands Engine and is set to deliver more than £56b to the UK economy by 2030.

With an exciting economy of £107bn, home to 159,650 businesses and 2.1 million jobs, it boasts an economic performance ahead of the UK average excluding London and has key growth opportunities in clean energy and low carbon and the health and life sciences industry.

Chair of the Western Gateway, Katherine Bennett CBE said in the prospectus foreword:

“Working together across borders we offer a unique proposition to UK plc: to propel transformative, inclusive and greener growth as part of building a new future for the British economy.

“Whilst we are an economic high performer, we are also a region of contrasts, with significant pockets of deprivation, low skills and low pay in some of our cities and rural areas.

“Through harnessing the Western Gateway’s innovation and geographical assets we can make a huge difference to people’s



lives. We can release the untapped potential of our cities, towns and villages, and provide real amplification and additionality to existing projects, infrastructure and industrial strategies.

“Delivering this vision will add more than £56bn to the UK economy by 2030, helping us lead the UK’s transition to a net zero future.”

Three ambitions set out in the prospectus, “Propelling a greener, fairer, stronger Britain”, are Connectivity – working on housing growth and transitioning into net zero, Global Gateway – becoming a gateway to global markets through export and investment and Innovation – sparking collaborate and innovation in high-tech sectors.

Included in the partnership are eight key cities and three city regions, towns and countryside; Swansea, Cardiff, Newport, Bristol, Bath, Weston-super-Mare, Salisbury, Swindon, Gloucester and Cheltenham.

(Source: publicsectorexecutive.com)



Iran’s Opposition to join the FATF grew after the U.S. abrogated the 2015 nuclear deal and imposed the harshest ever sanctions in history against Iran.

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.”

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

Production by major automakers exceeds 790,000 in 11 months

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Three major Iranian carmakers, namely Iran Khodro Company (IKCO), SAIPA Group and Pars Khodro, manufactured 793,924 vehicles during the first 11 months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2019-February 19, 2020), IRNA reported citing the data released by Codal website.

According to the data, during the mentioned period IKCO manufactured 357,859 vehicles of which 45,402 were produced in the ninth Iranian calendar month of Bahman (January 21-February 19).

As reported, the mentioned carmakers, manufactured a total of 706,823 vehicles during the first ten months of the current Iranian year (March 21, 2019-January 20, 2020).

Based on the data released by the mentioned website, major carmakers had manufactured 103,677 vehicles during the tenth Iranian calendar month of Dey (December 22, 2019-January 20, 2020).

Last week, Iranian Industry, Mining and Trade Ministry announced that Iranian carmakers manufactured 612,000



passenger cars during the first 10 months of the current year.

The ministry’s data indicated that car manufacturing in Iran has fallen 18.5 percent in the 10-month period of this year compared to the same period of time in the previous year.

Iran has been following a program for supporting domestic manufacturing of auto parts since due to the U.S. sanctions the country’s automakers have been facing some problems in supplying their needed parts and equipment.

Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Reza Rahmani has said that the policy of domestic manufacturing of auto parts should be seriously followed up and in this due capable manufacturers should be supported.

rate,” he said.

That is because the Chinese and the world economy was already growing more slowly than in 2002-2003 when severe acute respiratory syndrome hit.

The “upside of any V-shaped recovery is likely to be shallower than it was 17 years ago,” he said.

Although governments are already pushing out stimulus packages to help cope with the economic impact of the outbreak, Roach said it was “ludicrous” to imagine that fiscal and monetary policy would be able to arrest the downside of physical measures taken to contain the spread of the epidemic.

“These measures are basically insensitive to policy action,” he said.

Instead, “what fiscal and monetary policy can do would be to attempt to stabilize markets — which is certainly important — but most importantly, to underwrite the upside of this subsequent recovery once economies like China and elsewhere go back to work. So they’re playing for the other side of the virus-related impacts, not the downside,” said Roach.

(Source: cnbc.com)

First Latin America virus case sends currencies into tailspin

The first coronavirus case in Latin America sent currencies tumbling across the region Thursday as investors became increasingly risk averse.

All Latin American currencies were among the worst performers in emerging markets, with Brazil’s real reaching an all-time low despite the central bank intervention and the Mexican peso dropping to the weakest since early December. Both the Colombian and Chilean pesos were on track to reach their all-time lows.

The bloodbath underscores fears about the impact of the virus outbreak to a region that is already suffering from weak growth and had been spared the illness until this week.

Brazil reported Latin America’s first coronavirus case Wednesday and said there are 20 more suspected cases in the country.

The “market had a narrative of contained regional effects; now that narrative has changed and we have seen broad de-risking across the board,” said Juan Prada, a currency strategist at Barclays in New York.

The “Mexican peso had been shielded by carry, but now positions are being unwound, the Colombian peso had been resilient despite lower oil, but now we see some capitulation there.”

While local assets had already been dragged down amid the global sell-off, in-



vestors are now assessing the direct impact of the illness on earnings and the economy.

Shares of travel-related companies were among the worst performers in Brazil, Mexico and Chile over the past two days, with airline companies such as Gol Linhas Aereas Inteligentes SA and Azul SA plunging about 20% and Latam Airlines Group SA down over 10%.

Bonds followed suit. Ten-year dollar notes from all major Latin American countries fell and five-year credit default swaps spreads rose, led by a 17 basis point jump in Brazil.

“As long as there’s uncertainty regarding the magnitude of the shock to global growth, Latin American currencies can remain weak,” said Armando Armenta, a New York-based economist and strategist at AllianceBernstein LP. “Low levels of inflation mean central banks are comfortable with the observed level of depreciation and would not act with conviction to try to lean against the wind.”

(Source: finance.yahoo.com)

‘National gas network fully stable, operational despite floods’

E N E R G Y **TEHRAN** — National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC) Dispatching Director, Mehdi Jamshidi Dana, says the national gas network is completely stable and operational despite the recent floods reported in various regions across the country.

“No accidents have been reported regarding the gas transmission network due to the recent floods; the supply to power plants and industries is also ongoing smoothly,” Jamshidi Dana told IRNA on Wednesday.

He noted that 125 million cubic meters (mcm) of gas is supplied to the power plants on a daily basis, adding that gas supply to all the country's industrial units is also uninterrupted.

He further underlined the significant decline in the country's gas consumption following the increase in the temperature, noting that the country's total gas consumption in excluding the power



plants, has reached 450 mcm.

Iran's daily natural gas consumption hit a record high of nearly 600 mcm a day due to the unprecedented snowfall and cold weather which blanketed the country during January and early February.

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

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

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

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

110,000 KWh of electricity to be offered at IRENEX today

E N E R G Y **TEHRAN** — Iranian private power suppliers are due to offer 110,000 kilowatt hours (KWh) of electricity at the country's Energy Exchange (known as IRENEX) on Saturday, IRNA reported.

MAPNA group's Parand Power Plant Company and Saba Power and Energy Group are the two major providers of the mentioned offerings.

Offerings of electricity in the stock exchange have been following an upward trend so that in October 2019, the offering of the electricity nearly doubled and reached 500 million kilowatt-hours (kWh).

The government has also been providing incentives for private power companies to encourage them to offer their generated electricity at the energy exchange.

Earlier this month, IRENEX's Managing Director, Seyed Ali Hosseini, said offering electricity at the energy exchange would centralize the country's electricity trades and consequently balance the prices.

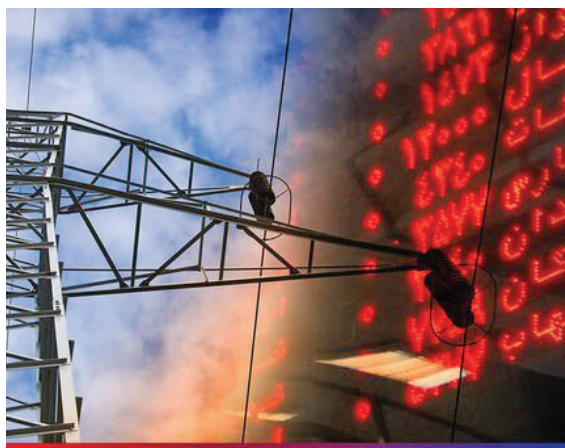
According to Hosseini, balancing the electricity prices at IRENEX can result in providing electricity to industrial buyers at a lower price and would optimize electricity consumption.

“When such trades are concentrated in the energy exchange and economically motivated buyers and sellers start operating in a transparent environment, we will achieve a balanced price. This may be lower for some consumers than the current price,” the official told IRNA.

Hosseini further stated that currently, there is no coherent market for trading electricity, underlining that electricity is being offered at IRENEX on a regular basis.

In October 2019, Hosseini had announced that utility companies that offer electricity at the energy bourse will be eligible for a 10 percent tax exemption.

“This will ensure mutual benefit for both sides as power producers get a 10 percent tax break and buyers get electricity cheaper from IRENEX”, he said.



Oil prices fall again, on track for biggest weekly drop in over 4 years

Oil prices fell for a sixth straight session on Friday and were on track for about a 12% weekly fall, the biggest in more than four years, as the spread of the coronavirus outside China raised fears of slowing global demand.

The virus, which has killed more than 2,700 people in China, has been found in another 46 countries and caused 57 deaths. Investors worry the epidemic could turn into a pandemic and deliver a damaging blow to the global economy.

The most active Brent crude contract for May LCOc2 was down 90 cents, or 1.7%, at \$50.83 a barrel by 0141 GMT, a 14-month low. The front-month April contract expires today.

The international benchmark, which fell about 2% on Thursday, has shed around 12% this week and is on track for its steepest weekly decline since mid-January 2016.

West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures CLc1 fell 73 cents, or 1.6%, to \$56.36 per barrel. U.S. crude has fallen about 13% for the week, the biggest weekly decline since November 2014.

With new infections reported around the world now surpassing those in mainland China, the World Health Organization said on Thursday that all countries need to prepare to combat the coronavirus.

“Oil prices are moving tangentially to news flows around the deluge of secondary cluster outbreaks,” said Stephen Innes,



chief market strategist at AxiCorp.

“And for the oil market, none more so worrying than those reports emanating from the U.S. market, which is the biggest consumer of oil on the planet by a long shot.”

U.S. health officials urged Americans to begin preparing for the spread of coronavirus in the United States earlier this week.

The oil market is hoping for steeper supply cuts by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and its allies including Russia, who have said they will take a responsible approach in the wake of the virus outbreak.

The producer group known as OPEC+, which is currently reducing output by roughly 1.2 million barrels per day to support prices, is set to meet in Vienna on March 5-6.

“We now believe the group needs to make much steeper cuts than the 600,000 barrels per day (bpd) recommendation from their technical committee to support prices,” Jefferies analyst Jason Gammel said.

(Source: reuters.com)

Australia added 6.3 GW renewables in 2019, similar growth expected this year

Australia installed 6.3 GW of renewable energy capacity in 2019, including 3.9 GW of utility-scale power plants and 2.4 GW of residential and commercial rooftop solar systems, for a 24% year-on-year increase.

Capacity additions in 2020 are expected to be at a similar level of between 6 GW and 6.5 GW.

“This ongoing growth demonstrates the RET has not acted as a cap on renewable investment. On the contrary the market is finding a way to maintain investment levels,” David Parker, Chair of the Clean Energy Regulator (CER), said as the government body released its Quarterly Carbon Market Report—Quarter 4 2019.

The RET aimed to secure 33,000 GWh of renewable power generation in 2020. CER says this volume will be surpassed, with renewables output reaching 35,000 GWh-37,000 GWh this year. The volume would have been higher if developers did not face grid constraints and increasing lag time to connect new plants.

A “Second wave of renewables investment can be unlocked if the necessary grid work can be progressed quickly, and changes are made at a distribution level to enable high levels of annual rooftop solar capacity



additions to continue,” CER said.

Total electricity generated or displaced from RET incentivized renewables was 44,000 GWh in 2019, up from 37,000 GWh in 2018. It is expected to rise to 56,000 GWh in 2020. The electricity in the National Electricity Market (NEM) last year was 25% renewable.

CER's quarterly report also shows that Australian Carbon Credit Units (ACCUs) issuance under the Emissions Reduction Fund (ERF) reached nearly 15 million in 2019, and 16 million more are expected this year.

The RET and ERF carbon markets have together delivered over 50 million tons of carbon dioxide (CO2) equivalent abatement towards the Paris Agreement targets in 2019, the regulator calculates. In 2020 abatement is estimated to surpass 59 million tons.

(Source: renewablesnow.com)

Saudi Arabia seeks bigger oil cut as coronavirus slashes demand

Saudi Arabia is pushing to make a substantial cut in oil production when OPEC and its allies meet next week, as global energy producers scramble to respond to the coronavirus outbreak that has crippled demand.

The kingdom is asking producers including Russia to sign up to a collective production cut of an additional 1m barrels a day, according to five people familiar with the talks, a significantly higher amount than provisionally discussed when the so-called Opec+ group agreed to convene.

The plan, which was discussed during a visit by OPEC secretary-general Mohammad Barkindo to Riyadh in recent days, is designed to show oil producers are able to respond to the sharp reduction in demand created by a virus that has paralysed global supply chains and stifled international travel.

Under the proposal, Saudi Arabia would account for the bulk of the new 1m bpd cut, while Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates and Russia would split the rest. The deal has not yet been agreed, however, with Moscow still hesitant to participate in a substantial cut when the full extent of the coronavirus impact is not yet known.

Earlier this month a technical meeting of the top OPEC and non-Opec members of the alliance recommended reducing production by an additional 600,000 bpd to help balance the market, but that was before the coronavirus had spread far beyond China's borders.

The market is a falling knife. We don't know what will happen to demand in Europe or Asia.

Brent crude, the international oil benchmark, has fallen to a



year-low of close to \$50 a barrel this week, dropping more than 10 per cent as coronavirus outbreaks have spread to northern Italy, South Korea and parts of California. On Friday Brent crude was trading at \$50.75 a barrel.

Oil traders fear demand for fuel will be severely curtailed if western governments decide to impose further lockdowns on towns and cities affected by outbreaks. China's consumption slumped by about a quarter earlier this month at the peak of the country's quarantines and travel restrictions.

OPEC, which has been co-operating with Russia since 2016, has been struggling to respond to the sudden collapse in oil demand. Prices had been trading as high as \$70 a barrel as recently as early January.

Analysts have become increasingly gloomy about global oil demand growth this year, with some predicting it will flatline. Earlier forecasts predicted an expansion of at least 1 per cent, or more than 1m bpd.

Adding a further 1m bpd to existing production cuts would take the Opec+ group's total reduction to more than 3.1m bpd, its biggest curtailment since 2008, following the global financial crisis. But traders say the group needs to respond quickly or risk prices dropping even further.

“The market is a falling knife,” said Roger Diwan at IHS Markit, a consultancy. “We don't know what will happen to demand in Europe or Asia.”

OPEC members including Saudi Arabia wanted to bring next week's Vienna meeting forward to late February, but Russia would not agree. Russian companies are less keen on cutting output but have gone along with the production deal since 2016 as it has been supported by President Vladimir Putin, who sees an oil-based alliance with Saudi Arabia as a way of increasing his country's clout in the Middle East.

Saudi Arabia's de facto ruler, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, has pushed for the alliance with Russia as the two energy-dependent countries have seen their revenues slashed by the rise of the US shale industry in the past decade.

If the 1m bpd extra cut is agreed it would come on top of 2.1m bpd of cuts announced by the producer group in December, when producer countries moved to bolster what was already expected to be an oversupplied market in the first half of 2020.

Saudi Arabia, which tried to surprise traders in December by announcing a bigger cut than widely floated before the last meeting, could again push for an even larger cut, according to a person close to the kingdom.

(Source: Financial Times)

Water, electricity networks back to normal in flood-hit regions

E N E R G Y **TEHRAN** — Head of Iranian Energy Ministry's Crisis Management Office, Meisam Jafarzadeh, said electricity network is back in normal operation after the recent floods in western and southwestern provinces.



All the villages of Lorestan province have been re-connected to the electricity network and the province's network is stable, the official said.

“Only 15 of the 80 villages that have suffered disruption in their water networks still don't have access to the water network, however, operational teams deployed in the area are working to fix the problem,” Jafarzadeh added.

Torrential rain in recent few days has triggered flooding in several western and southwestern provinces of Iran.

Provinces of Lorestan, Khuzestan, and Ilam, are among the regions which have been affected by the incident for the past few days.

The floods had caused some damages to the mentioned region's electricity and water networks, especially in rural areas.

Crude demand destruction accelerates

Crude oil traded into the \$47 per-barrel handle as it reports that the Coronavirus hit 47 countries. Coincidence? I think not.

The spread of the virus is spreading not only fear but oil demand destruction and horror thinking about potential demand destruction to come.

Jet fuel demand has taken a considerable hit, and according to the Energy Information Agency (EIA) is down 8% over a year ago.

Now more flights canceled and OPEC plus Russia still thinking debating how to respond with production cuts, it is hard to make a strong case for a bottom, even though technically we should be near one.

Still no sign that Russia wants to join OPEC in a production cut. Reuter's reported that “Russia is very satisfied” with its cooperation with Saudi Arabia and wants to continue it within OPEC and non-OPEC frameworks, as well as bilaterally, according to Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak.

There were hopes that President Trump, in his press conference, could offer assurances that the virus was under control.

President Trump said the risk to Americans from the virus is “very low. He put Vice President Mike Pence in charge overseeing the Coronavirus team. Trump wanted to reassure the American people that a significant U.S. outbreak is not a sure thing.

Oil demand destruction is real

Yet oil demand destruction is real, and while we all know as the President said that this is going to end, the question is still when. Reuter reported that tanker charter rates have plunged more than 80% as the Coronavirus outbreak slams the brakes on major economies, costing the sector hundreds of millions of dollars in lost business, a senior shipping industry official said.

While some of the revenue is gone for good, a trade rebound could put the sector back into calmer waters later this year, International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) Secretary-General Guy Platten told Reuters in an interview on Wednesday. The ICS is the primary trade association for merchant shipowners and operators, representing more than 80% of the world's merchant fleet.

Platten called the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus “hugely disruptive” for the shipping sector, triggering a massive decrease of raw material imports in economic powerhouse China because factories had stopped and are only starting to recover, according to Reuters.

Demand fears overshadowed the EIA report that actually has some bullish elements to it, but not enough to overcome oil demand destruction fears.

The EIA reported that crude oil inventories increased by only 500 thousand barrels from the previous week.

That puts the U.S. supply 3% below the five-year average for this time of year.

Total motor gasoline inventories decreased by 2.7 million barrels last week and are about 2% above the five-year average for this time of year. Finished gasoline and blending components inventories both decreased the previous week.

Distillate fuel inventories

Distillate fuel inventories fell by 2.1 million barrels last week and are about 5% below the five year average for this time of year.

Demand-based on total products supplied over the last four-week period averaged 20.3 million barrels per day, down by 2.2% from the same period the previous year. Over the past four weeks, motor gasoline product supplied averaged 8.9 million barrels per day, up by 0.3% from the same period last year.

Distillate fuel product supplied averaged 4.0 million barrels per day more than the past four weeks, down by 5.1% from the same period the previous year. Jet fuel product supplied was down 8.3% compared with the same four-week period last year.

The EIA also reported that in 2019, U.S. annual wind generation exceeded hydroelectric generation for the first time, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration's Electric Power Monthly.

Wind is now the top renewable source of electricity generation in the country, a position previously held by hydroelectricity. Annual wind generation totaled 300 million megawatt hours (MWh) in 2019, exceeding hydroelectric generation by 26 million MWh. Wind generation has increased steadily during the past decade, in part, because the Production Tax Credit (PTC), which drove wind capacity additions, was extended.

Annual hydroelectric generation has fluctuated between 250 million MWh and 320 million MWh in the past decade, reflecting a stable capacity base and variable annual precipitation.

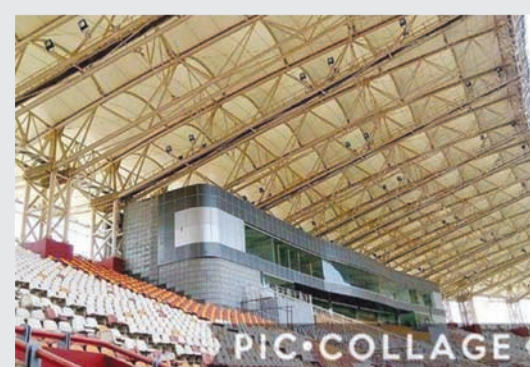
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Trump's India visit to counter China

Oil and weapons deal amid sectarian riots

➔ On January 14, Gwadar port officially started taking cargo under the Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA). However, the port is far from being operational.

Gwadar port lies 172.2 kilometers (107 miles/92.98 nautical miles) to the west of Chabahar Port. To counter China's influence in the region the development of the Chabahar Port got waiver from Trumps "Maximum Pressure" sanctions on Iran.

During an interview with the Tehran Times in 2017 the former Indian Ambassador Saurabh Kumar pointed that Chabahar Port is an important part of North-South Transport Corridor (NSTC), the multi-model sea, rail road route to move freight between India, Russia, Iran, Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia will benefit India and Iran economically. He added that "the private sector will be major Indian investor and it needs a lot more exposure to Chabahar and the facilities there."

On February 2, India allocated \$14 million to Chabahar port, report the Financial Tribune. Last year India opened a special account on its annual budget for Chabahar Port and allocated \$22.5 million for the development of the port. In May 2016 Indian government agreed to equip two terminals at the port with equipment worth \$85 million. India's EXIM bank has also promised \$150m credit for the development of phase 1 of the port.

Chabahar is considered as India's answer to China's One Belt One Road policy under which it is developing via Gwadar port in Pakistan. Worth mentioning is that the Islamic Republic has cordial ties with all the above-mentioned countries.

Due to anxieties about Beijing's intentions and its alliance with Iran and Russia, Washington has steadily deepened security and defense ties with New Delhi. In the past decade India and America have started an annual foreign and defense ministers' dialogue, upgraded a trilateral relation with Japan and revived quadrilateral dialogue that includes Australia.

Economic agenda

Trump's visit comes at a turbulent time for India, Asia's third largest economy. The country is battling a severe economic slowdown. Growth has tumbled for six consecutive quarters to a six-year low of 4.5 percent. The recent outbreak of coronavirus will impact recovery negatively.

India has the largest number of Trump towers outside North America, but the sales are cool in an ailing market for luxury real estate.



Donald Trump and Narendra Modi in India on Monday. India has signed agreements with the US to enhance military co-operation and intelligence sharing. (Photo: AP)

Trump's visit did not come amid intentions of signing bilateral trade deals. The U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer cancelled a planned trip to India this month, reports Financial Times. Lighthizer had earlier dropped out of a visit for negotiations with Indian Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal.

Last May Trump stripped India of Special Trade Status that exempted billions of dollars of its products from American tariffs, part of a deepening clash with India's projections for its markets. The measure hit some Indian exports and products like textiles, jewelry, auto parts and agricultural products.

However, India signed a deal on Tuesday to buy \$3.5 billion arms deal, which would see the sale of 24 Sikorsky MH-60R Sea Hawk multi-role helicopters for the Indian Navy and six Boeing AH-64E Apache Guardian attack

helicopters for the Indian Army. The Arms deal came through as Washington seeks a counterweight to China. While making the announcement Trump urged India to look at the U.S. as its "premier defense partner".

Energy deal

Today U.S. has become world's largest crude producer. In 1917 India bought 1.9m tons (38,000 bpd) of crude from U.S. The Business Standard of India quoted the U.S. Energy Secretary Dan Brokville on Tuesday that India's sixth largest oil supplier is now the U.S. Indian imports of U.S. oil jumped 10 fold to 250,000 bpd in the last few years said. In the first six months of the current fiscal year (2019-20) U.S. supplied 5.4m tons of crude to India.

Obviously during his trip to India Trump did not forget his energy secretary.

Iraq is India's top crude exporter, supplying one fourth

of India's needs at 26m tons during April to September. Saudi Arabia has traditionally been India's top oil source, but has been relegated to second spot, exporting 20.7m tons in first six months of fiscal year.

Nationalist agenda

The leaders of the world's two largest democracies should exemplify the virtues of democracy and respect for universal right, yet Trump and Modi are pursuing dangerous, nationalist version at odds with their countries' founding values.

Trump and Modi have been known to be good friends. After all, they must have something in common.

When Trump came to power in 2016 he clearly manifested his nationalist far right supremacist agenda. Trump implemented a travel ban targeted at Muslim countries, ripped away children of migrants from their parents, defended white supremacists who attacked a crowd at a rally in Charlottesville, regularly demonizes immigrants and told members of the U.S. Congress (all of whom are Americans) to "go back" to their countries just because they are not white.

Since being re-elected to a second term in 2019, Modi has brazenly embraced an agenda that discriminates against Muslims and minorities. India has been at boiling point since December, when Modi's government enacted the controversial Citizenship Amendment Act, making millions, mainly Muslims, stateless. The act lays out a fast-track path to citizenship for followers of all South Asia's major faith – except Islam – from neighboring three countries.

Trump's first visit to India coincided with four days of protests against CAA in New Delhi. At least 38 people were killed and over 200 injured in the sectarian riots not seen in decades.

Last August, Modi terminated the enshrined autonomy of Jammu and Kashmir, India's only Muslim-majority state, implemented the longest communications blackout in the history of any democracy, and detained political leaders there for months without charge.

Pramila Jayapal, an Indian-American congresswoman from Seattle, is pushing a bipartisan resolution urging New Delhi to restore Kashmir's internet services and free hundreds of Kashmiri political and civil society leaders who have been detained without charge since August.

Senator Bernie Sanders, a Democratic presidential candidate, posted on Facebook that "shutting out U.S. lawmakers who are standing up for human rights is what we expect from authoritarian regimes – not from India".

Nana Asma'u bint Usman bin Fodio and her 'Yan Taru' socio-cultural group

By Yusuf Abdullahi

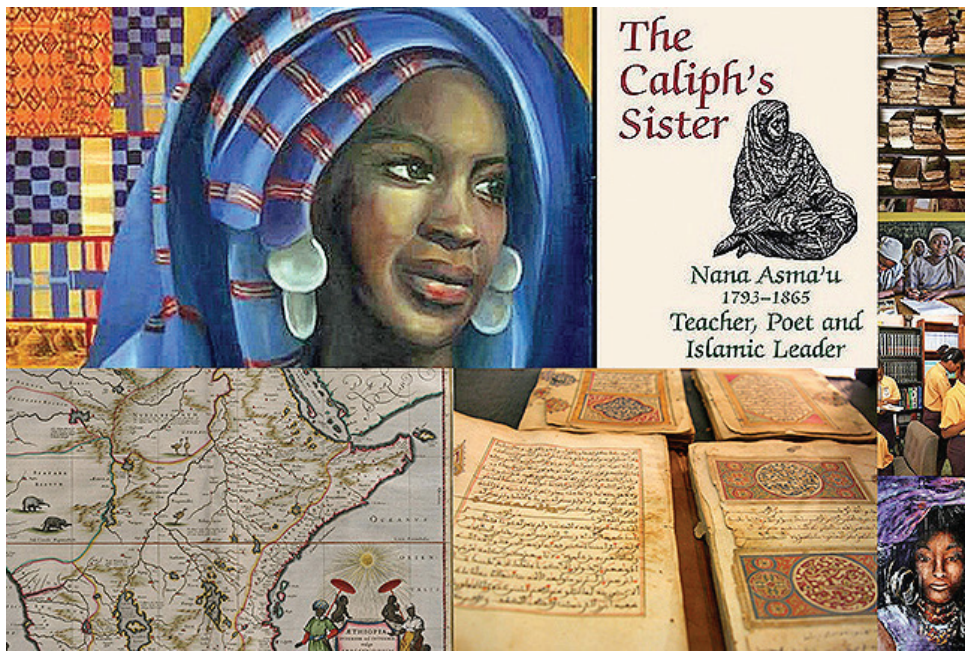
NIGERIA/ KATSINA — In the name of Allah who states "O men! We have created you all out of a male and a female, and have made you into nations and tribes, so that you might come to know one another; verily, the noblest among you in the sight of Allah is the one who is deeply conscious of Him. Behold, He is all knowing, all aware. Q49:13

May the everlasting peace and blessings of Allah be upon His chosen servant, our master Muhammad and his purified progeny.

The international women's day as marked by late Imam Khomeini of blessed memory. Consequent to the light of the grand Islamic cleric, the day is colorfully celebrated in Iran, Lebanon, Iraq, Bahrain, Azerbaijan, Yemen and other Shi'a awakened societies. The magnitude of the celebration by the Islamic Movement in Nigeria is largely and influential. On the other hand, the UN celebrates same on the 5th of March yearly. However, in most cases in the annual event, the accusing finger is pointed at Islam whenever issues on sexual and gender-based violence are concerned. The oft discussed issues revolve around polygamy, women's education, inheritance and the like.

From the Islamic point of view, superiority has nothing to do with sexes as the above verse expresses. The criterion for Allah's reward is based on individual's performance accordingly "we will give a pure and wholesome life to every one man or woman who acts righteously and has faith and we will reward them in accordance with the best of what they used to do" Q16:97

The Islamic revivalism and societal reform led by Shaikh Uthman Bn Fodio was unarguably great. According to Professor Y. Adamu in a paper: Learning and scholarship in the Sokoto Caliphate: Legacies and Challenges. Consequent to the reform in the first quota of the 20th century, colonial records have shown that there was an estimate of 19,073 (Adamu, 2003, p. 216) to 25,000 Muslim schools (Crampton, 1975, p. 98) with an enrolment of 143, 312 which, then, was three times that of Mission schools in 1918 (Adamu, 2003 p. 216). The above statistics apparently indicated the caliphate's level of commitment to learning and scholarship especially as it affected women. The Shehu set to fight the misinterpretation of Islam and the tyranny of Hausa leaders and transformed



the society on the teachings of Qur'an and Sunna. The Ulama of the time, otherwise called Ulama al - su' by the Jihad leaders in their attempt to maintain status quo posed a great challenge to the Shehu intellectually.

According to Suleiman, 1978, p. 78, the Shaikh said "the evil of leaving women in ignorance, not knowing what is incumbent upon them, nay, not knowing Islam at all, is greater than the evil of their mixing with men, for the first evil relates back to religion, which is faith, Islam and good works (Ihsan) and the second evil relates to genealogy". Generally speaking, education was highly improved based on the Islamic stand that knowledge acquisition is compulsory for all. The Ulama were well respected and students were supported by both caliphate and community. In the cause of scholarship many went outside the caliphate in search of knowledge. Nothing like the today's Almajirci existed at all. So, students in the Qur'anic sciences and other disciplines like theology, Jurisprudence and languages were sufficiently and honorably taken care of. And as attested by the colonialists, to a great extent the society was lit-

erate as Ajami - Fulfulde/Hausa correspondence using Arabic alphabets - was very prevalent even among sizeable female.

One of the most obvious achievements of the reform was evident in the Sheikh's family. Nana Asma'u, his popular daughter authored tens of poems which significantly contributed not only to the academic and moral excellence of women but men inclusive. As we mark the International women's day otherwise known as Mother's Day, this is our topic for this week. Who was Nana Asma'u? Born in 1793, she was well educated and made great impact in the whole reform. Her scholarly position and discipline were not unconnected with the wonderful training she received from her father, Sheikh Usman Bn Fodio, the great scholar and leader of the jihad. On her personality, Beverly B. Mack and Jean Boyd wrote in their book One Woman's Jihad: ... was active in politics, education and social reform; she was a prolific author, popular teacher and renowned scholar and intellectual ... during warfare, she was an eyewitness to battles which she reported in her written works ... An accomplished author, Asma'u was well educated, quadrilingual

(in Arabic, Fulfulde, Hausa and Tamashek), and a respected scholar of international repute who was in communication with scholars throughout the sub-Saharan African Muslim world. Mack and Boyd further discussed: the many books written by leaders of the [Sokoto] Caliphate ... along with Asma'u's poetic works were meant as practical guides to individuals at every possible level of social status and degree of academic achievement, from the illiterate to the scholarly. Those who could not read them could hear them; those who could not listen to Arabic or Fulfulde heard Hausa phrases, or particular messages in Hausa. Asma'u, like her colleagues, wrote for the betterment of the community and promotion of the 'Sunna', not for personal fame or gain.

Boyd also wrote: ... the state of my knowledge and that of most people, about Asma'u was sketchy. She was certainly famous, but the known facts were few and were limited to the following: she was the Shehu's daughter and the sister of Bello, whom she had helped, in a miraculous way, when she was making his final attack on Alkalawa; she wrote poetry and her five compositions in Arabic were included in the standard list of Jihad literature. Everyone knew of her but no one I spoke to was able to tell me any details about her life".

A very significant methodology for moral and academic promotion was her women's education classes held as part of the 'Yan Taru movement. She commenced the classes in her room from Gidado's home which developed tremendously to a regular system where women from the surrounding villages came to receive extended education who in turn taught others leading to significant societal reform. Though her teaching of women and children experienced some setback with her demise in 1864, the classes continued beyond 1870's with her sister Mariam and niece Ta Modi. Asma'u was a twin whose brother passed away in childhood. Beside an in-depth scholarly activity, she was engaged in, she was equally inflicted with the enemies' persecution from childhood. She was married out to Gidado dan Laima who became one of her brother's lieutenants - Caliph Muhammad Bello. The way of the pious, written in 1820 on morality, was one of her first books, after which she wrote many poems and prose to the end of her blessed life. Asma'u's writings, were contemporarily exposed from her famous book,

The Caliph's Sister, when Boyd wrote on her in a chapter needed about women published on the 2nd World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC) in August 1975.

The Nana's books collected and compiled by Jean Boyd are easily obtainable in Britain and America than Nigeria. The impact of her works on women's education of her time and to date. Boyd and Mack (1997, p. 7) described her contributions as being "in transforming the women's organization that had existed among the non-Muslim women prior to their capture, and channeling their interests and needs into organizing representative of the Jihadic community's values. Through her organization of itinerant women teachers of other women (the 'Yan taru). Nana Asma'u made working of the community both desirable and honorable. Her legacies are with other Jihad leaders and the caliphate itself. According to Professor Yusuf Adamu, on learning and scholarship in Sokoto Caliphate, he cited 56 selected works of Nana Asma'u compiled by Jean Boyd, which she and Mack in 2000 categorized the areas of her interest as: eschatology; 18 politics; 8 women as sustainers; 12 history; 18 the family; 12 health; 4 the caliphate and idealism; 4 theology; 4 Sharia law and women; 4 women and Bori 4 and theology; 8.

In contrast to the West's incessant criticism against Islam on women's rights, the religion attaches unique attention to the morality and education of female who grow to become mothers as the moral standard of every society largely depends on its women. As such, they should be given more support and enlightenment so that they can play more significant role in the development of social, economic and political arenas. While commending the sisters' forum of the Islamic Movement for their efforts in pursuance of moral and academic excellence, I strongly urge the society to give the womenfolk more respect - as mothers, wives, sisters - educate, protect and empower them for the socio - economic growth and stability of our nations.

As usual, the Movement has observed the memorable occasion across the country reiterating the urgent need for the unconditional release of its leader Sheikh Ibraheem el-Zakzaky (IH), whose spiritual and fatherly guidance are not only instrumental to his disciples but the society at large.

Erdogan's bloody night in Idlib

➔ In addition to NATO, Turkish officials have also resorted to U.S. terrorists to save themselves from the Idlib quagmire. According news sources, Turkey's presidential spokesman Ibrahim Kalin on Friday held a phone conversation with U.S. National Security Advisor Robert C. O'Brien.

Some U.S. senators have also called for the creation of a no-fly zone in Idlib to help Turkey. On the other hand, U.S. Ambassador to NATO Kay Bailey Hutchison was present at a news conference when news of the deaths of Turkish soldiers was

released. She tried to attribute this issue to the purchase of the S-400 defense system, saying "I hope that President Erdogan will see that we are the ally of their past and their future and they need to drop the S-400".

"They see what Russia is, they see what they're doing now, and if they are attacking Turkish troops, then that should outweigh everything else that is happening

between Turkey and Russia," she said.

According to some reporters present at the news conference, the U.S. ambassador has refused to answer reporters' questions about invoking Article 5 of NATO's Treaty (the principle of collective defense).

Syria is witnessing developments, mostly in Idlib, while Turkish forces are present in the country without the

permission of the Damascus government, a move which is considered as an obvious occupation. Therefore, the measures taken by Damascus to protect and protect its territorial integrity and national sovereignty fall within the framework of international law, and Turkish officials cannot practically have any objection.

Russia had earlier warned that Turkish troops were fighting alongside the Takfiri

terrorists in Idlib and could therefore be targeted during the Syrian army's counter-terrorist operations. "Turkish soldiers who were in the battle formations of terrorist groups came under the fire of Syrian troops," said the defense ministry said in a statement.

The Russian Defense Ministry stated that Moscow has done everything to impose a full cease-fire by the Syrian re-

gime since the country learned of Turkish casualties. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan is trying to cover up Turkey and its terrorists' defeats in Idlib by twisting the reality.

The Turkish president has recently made remarks, claiming that the situation in Idlib is in Turkey's favor! This is while, he has resorted to the U.S., NATO and the West to get Ankara out of Idlib's quagmire.

In any case, it seems that the Syrian resistance forces have send this message to Erdogan that Turkey does not have the power to bring Syria to its knees.

Analysis reveals prehistoric migration from Africa, Asia, Europe to Mediterranean

Populations from Africa, Asia and Europe were migrating to the Mediterranean islands prior to the establishment of seafaring civilizations in the Mediterranean, according to new analysis of ancient DNA.

For the study, scientists sequenced the DNA of prehistoric individuals recovered from Sicily, Sardinia and the Balearic Islands. The study increased the number of analyzed genomes from individuals from the Mediterranean islands from five to 66.



The genetic analysis, described this week in the journal *Nature Ecology and Evolution*, revealed a complex pattern of immigration from Africa, Asia and Europe to the three islands. The timing and direction of the prehistoric migrations were different for each island, but the patterns showed people were moving across the Mediterranean in significant numbers prior to the establishment of the region's major seafaring civilizations.

For example, genetic data suggests people of steppe pastoralist ancestry, mostly from Iberia, made it to Sicily by approximately 2200 BC. People of Iranian-related ancestry migrated to the island by the mid-second millennium BC.

Despite regularly trading with Mediterranean populations, the people of Sardinia maintained a mostly local Neolithic ancestry profile until the end of the Bronze Age. Though, one Sardinian individual from the second half of the 3rd millennium BC. boasts a large proportion of North African ancestry.

The discovery reinforces the findings of previous genetic studies that showed significant numbers of migrators traveled across the Mediterranean Sea from North Africa to southern Europe.

"Our results show that maritime migrations from North Africa started long before the era of the eastern Mediterranean seafaring civilizations and moreover were occurring in multiple parts of the Mediterranean," Ron Pinhasi, co-senior author of the study and a professor of evolutionary anthropology at the University of Vienna, said in a news release.

Despite the expansion of Greek and Phoenician colonies in the West Mediterranean islands during the Iron Age, scientists were surprised to find the genomes of the two Sardinian individuals showed no evidence of relation to the seafaring peoples.

But while Sardinians maintained a significant portion of their Neolithic heritage, the DNA of younger prehistoric people suggests the island hosted increasingly complex migration patterns.

"Major immigration into Sardinia began in the first millennium B.C. and, at present, no more than 56 to 62 percent of Sardinian ancestry is from its first farmers," researchers wrote in the paper. "This value is lower than previous estimates, highlighting that Sardinia, similar to every other region in Europe, has been a stage for major movement and mixtures of people."

Analysis of the DNA from individuals recovered from the Balearic Islands showed some of the islands were populated by the ancestors of eastern European people who made their way to Iberia.

"One of the most striking findings is about the arrival of ancestry from the Steppe north of the Black and Caspian Seas in some of the Mediterranean islands," said co-senior author and Harvard University researcher David Reich. "While the ultimate origin of this ancestry was Eastern Europe, in the Mediterranean islands it arrived at least in part from the west, namely from Iberia."

(Source: UPI)



ROUND THE GLOBE

Lower Valley of the Omo

The Lower Valley of the Omo is located in south-western Ethiopia. It extends over an area of 165 km².

The age old sedimentary deposits in the Lower Omo Valley are now world renowned for the discovery of many hominid fossils, that have been of fundamental importance in the study of human evolution.

The Lower Omo Valley includes the Konso and Fejej pale-



ontological research locations with sedimentary deposit going back to the plio-pleistocene period.

These have produced numerous hominid and animal fossils, including fragments of *Australopithecus*. The deposits of human vertebrae fauna, and paleo-environmental evolution, shed light on the earliest stages of the origins and development of *Homo sapiens* of Africa.

The discoveries of ancient stone tools in an encampment also offers evidence of the oldest known technical activities of prehistoric beings, thus making the property one of the most significant for mankind.

To ensure Omo's position as the yardstick against which all other ancient deposits in East Africa are measured, researched evidence from the site has established bio-stratigraphical, radiometric and magneto-stratigraphical scales spanning between one and 3.5 million years.

Since 1966, scientific research has proved that the site significantly contributes to prominent archaeological, geological, paleo-anthropological and paleo-environmental studies.

(Source: UNESCO)

Virus worries forces cancelation of travel fairs

By Afshin Majlesi

TEHRAN – Dozens of travel fairs and conferences have so far been postponed worldwide due to concerns about the coronavirus outbreak, disrupting deals worth billions of dollars.

Iran has canceled its participation in the 27th Moscow International Travel & Tourism Exhibition (MITT), which is scheduled for March 17-19, due to coronavirus-related concerns.

The B2B meeting between Iranian travel agencies and Russian counterparts that was supposed to take place on the sidelines of MITT has been rescheduled to May. And more importantly, the Islamic Republic was intending to visa-free travelers between the two neighbors.

Iranian tourism minister Ali-Asghar Mounesan announced earlier this month that the country would follow up on the issue of visa-free travel for mutual tourist groups with Russia during the exhibit.

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, Mounesan said.

Moreover, Iran's participation in the upcoming ITB travel and tourism trade show in Berlin is up in the air.

Although most of the preliminary work for Iran's participation has been done, and considering the cancelation of outbound flights from Iran, it is probable that some of the participants would fail to make it to the fair in time, according to Khashayar Nikzadfar, who is in charge of Iran's pavilion at ITB.

On one hand, six exhibitors from China have so far annulled their participation in ITB fair, at the time of writing, on the other German tour operator Schauinsland-Reisen has cancelled its traditionally packed-out ITB party, scheduled for Friday March 6, in view of the situation.



An undated photo depicts Iran's pavilion at the International Tourism Fair (ITB) in Berlin, Germany.

Officials are currently discussing whether the International Tourism Fair (ITB), which is scheduled to be held March 4, should be cancelled. A spokeswoman for the federal health ministry has said it was up to local authorities to decide whether to call off the event.

Amongst other canceled or rescheduled tourism-related events are:

- Singapore Airshow, Feb. 11-16: The aviation leadership summit scheduled on the eve

of the event was canceled. The show itself will go ahead as planned, but on a smaller scale.

- National Association of Travel Agents Singapore (NATAS) travel fair 2020, Feb. 21-23: Moved to May because exhibitors were concerned about turnout at the fair.

- Food & Hotel Asia in Singapore, March 3-6: Organizers of the biennial trade show have postponed its first leg to July. The event attracted more than 80,000 attendees when it was last held in 2018.

World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTTC) estimated on Thursday that the coronavirus outbreak will cost world tourism at least \$22 billion.

More than 83,000 people in at least 53 countries have been infected till Friday. Iran's coronavirus death toll rises to 34 at the time of writing on February 28. The Islamic Republic has the highest number of deaths from coronavirus (COVID-19) outside China, where the virus emerged in late 2019.

COVID-19 to cost world tourism no less than \$22 billion: WTTTC

TOURISM DESK **TEHRAN** – The global outbreak of the new coronavirus, known as COVID-19, will cost world tourism at least \$22 billion owing to a drop in spending by Chinese tourists, World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTTC) Director said on Thursday.

"It is too soon to know but the WTTTC has made a preliminary calculation in collaboration with (research firm) Oxford Economics which estimates that the crisis will cost the sector at least \$22 billion," Gloria Guevara told *El Mundo* daily, AFP reported.

"This calculation is based on the experience of previous crises, such as SARS or H1N1, and is based on losses deriving from Chinese tourists who have not been travelling in recent weeks," she said, adding, the Chinese are the tourists who spend most when they travel.

The loss figure, which equates to about 20.2 billion euros, is the most optimistic scenario envisaged by the study which was published on February 11 by Oxford Economics, taking the hypothesis of a 7.0 percent drop in overseas trips by Chinese nationals.

But the losses could more than double,

reaching as much as \$49 billion if the crisis lasts as long as the SARS outbreak, which erupted in November 2002 and was brought under control in July 2003. And it could spiral to \$73 billion if it lasted longer than that, Oxford Economics said.

The economies most likely to suffer would be those most dependent on Chinese tourism, such as Hong Kong and Macau, Thailand, Cambodia and the Philippines, researchers found. On Wednesday, the WTO urged countries to avoid taking health measures that would cause "unnecessary interference with international traffic and trade" saying travel restrictions needed to be proportionate to ensure they did not have "negative repercussions on the tourism sector".

The New York Times on Friday announced that over 83,000 people in at least 53 countries have been infected. "More new cases have been recently reported outside China, where the outbreak began in December, than within in the country. China enforced a lock down of 700 million people to control the spread of the virus."

"European and Asian markets tumbled on Friday, following Wall Street's plunge on



An Iranian couple wearing protective masks to prevent contracting a coronavirus walk at Grand Bazaar in Tehran, Iran, February 20, 2020. Photo credit: WANA (West Asia News Agency)

Thursday as investors became even more concerned about the potential harm to world-

wide economic growth from the spread of the newly emerged coronavirus."

Shahr-e Sukhteh, Iran's archaeological gem

By Zahra Mirzafarjouyan

TEHRAN (MNA) – Shahr-e Sukhteh is a lost jewel in Iran which archeologists consider it as the world's first city in terms of urban texture, population and urban planning. It is the remains of an ancient city and archaeological site of a sizable Bronze Age in southwestern Iran.

Ranked among the most ancient countries of the world, Iran is house to numerous old, mysterious and peculiar civilizations. Sistan and Baluchistan Province is an old province in Iran. It has many monuments including Shahr-e Sukhteh.

The civilization of Shahr-e Sukhteh is one of the wonders of the ancient world. The archeological findings in this area testify to the emergence of the first human settlements in eastern Iran. Shahr-e Sukhteh, meaning burnt city, which dates back to more than 5000 years ago, is one of the heritages of Iran. It is located near Zabol road to Zahedan in Sistan and Baluchistan Province, southeast of Iran. The city was built in 3200 B.C and people were living in four eras between 3200-1800 B.C.

The total area of the city is 280 hectares and is divided into residential, central and industrial area, as well as cemetery and monuments. The residential area of the city is 80 hectares where people lived in this part at that time.

It is built in a completely non-earthquake zone and during the history, it was completely burnt 3 times before being abandoned in 1800 BCE. Once in the initial level of its growth and the other times are at the moment of its destruction. However, in 2100 BC, the city was suddenly evacuated without any signs.

The site was discovered and investigated by Aurel Stein in the early 1900s. It was excavated in 1967, and has been under constant exploration by Italian and Iranian



archaeologists until the 1970s. Shahr-e Sukhteh remained under a 20-centimeter thick layer of ash and dust for around 4000 years before being discovered. The dry desert climate of the region also helped to preserve the remaining of this civilization.

It is not only the extent of this city that has made Shahr-e Sukhteh as one of the largest ancient cities in Iran and the Middle East. The discoveries demonstrate a great deal of development and advancement of these civilizations which sound really incredible.

There were various industries such as textile, masonry, jewelry, etc. in this city which made it one of the most advanced cities in the world. 12 kinds of fabric are found among the ruins of the Shahr-e Sukhteh that indicate the textile industry of the city.

The world's first known artificial eyeball, with 2 holes in both sides and a golden thread to hold it in place, has been unearthed from the skeleton of a woman's body in Shahr-e Sukhteh.

One of the most wonderful things which discovered in this city is the oldest signs of brain surgery. The skeleton of a 14-years-old girl was discovered in the graveyard of this city which shows that doctors did a brain surgery for her 4800 years ago.

A 10-centimeter (3.937-inch) ruler, accurate to half a millimeter has been found in Shahr-e Sukhteh which means people who lived in this city had a lot of developments in mathematics.

There was a well-managed pottery system in the city for water supply and sewage. It is interesting to know that the people of Shahr-e Sukhteh played with backgammon in that period.

Around 21000 graves have been discovered in the west and south part of the city and analyzing the remains of the dead bodies has led to very unique and absorbing findings. One of the biggest skeletons of the world has been unearthed here with 5 meter and 21 centimeter height which belongs to a 35 to 40-year old man.

During the archaeological excavations at Shahr-e Sukhteh in 1970s was found a pottery vessel which has pattern of a goat and tree on it. The artifact bears five images depicting a wild goat jumping up to eat the leaves of a tree. When the vessel is twisted you can see the images merge and make a "bounce back" animation telling the story of the goat eating from a tree. This also means that the world oldest cartoon character is a goat.

Shahr-e Sukhteh is one of the UNESCO's world heritage centers in this region which is associated with Jiroft culture, one of the oldest civilizations on earth along with Helmand culture. It was registered in the UNESCO World Heritage List in June 2014.

The best time to visit Shahr-e Sukhteh is in winter and spring and visiting this palace will take one hour to one day.

Iran to produce COVID-19 diagnostic kits next week

SOCIETY
d e s k

TEHRAN — The Iranian Defense Ministry will produce diagnostic kits for the novel coronavirus, known as COVID-19, by the next week, Kianoush Jahanpour, head of the Iranian health ministry's public relations department, has said.

"COVID-19 diagnostic kits, produced by technological department of the Defense Ministry, will be supplied to the health sector by the next week," he wrote on his Twitter account, IRNA reported on Friday.



Chang Hua wrote on his Twitter account on February 26, adding that "our efforts will continue.

Previously, Jahanpour said that there are three stages to diagnose coronavirus, adding that the last stage is for the novel coronavirus.

Any person suspected of coronavirus infection initially undergoes a standard polymerase chain reaction (PCR), then if the test was positive, the novel coronavirus test will be conducted on the patient, he explained.

On February 2, Iran announced that it has received the fourth batch of test kits, special for diagnosing the coronavirus, with the assistance of Christoph Hamelmann, World Health Organization (WHO) Representative in the country.

Meanwhile, China has delivered 250,000 face masks and 5,000 COVID-19 diagnostic kits to Iran.

Some 5,000 coronavirus test kits, a gift from the Chinese embassy and Chinese companies in Iran, was delivered to the Iranian side, China's Ambassador to Iran

Amazon people turn to water tanks after environmental disaster



Romelia Mendúa was handing out plantain drinks served in aluminium bowls. Guests were seated in a hammock and on the bare wooden floor. Beyond the window was the lush vegetation of Ecuador's north-eastern Amazon.

Chocula, as the drink is called, is made by mashing plantains into water, and is a common refreshment in the Amazon. But the water in Mendúa's chocula was no ordinary water. It came through a tap in her kitchen connected to two tanks outside collecting and filtering rainfall.

"The tanks were installed three years ago," said Mendúa, an indigenous Kofan. "I use them every day – for drinking, cooking, washing the pots and pans."

More than 6,000 people in almost 80 villages stretching across 5m acres of the Ecuadorian, Colombian and Peruvian Amazon now have similar tanks. The area includes the ancestral territories of the Secoya, Siona and Waorani indigenous peoples, as well as the Kofan.

The first tanks were installed in 2012 and Mendúa's village, Baborei, was one of the first to benefit. One of her neighbours, José Criollo, said: "When it's raining, we use them a lot. Sometimes if there's been two weeks of sun we can't use them and so we borrow from other families who

don't drink much."

Criollo said the water from the tanks was for drinking, cooking and washing up – but never for laundry or bathing. "There's the Aguarico River or Baborei creek for that," he said.

Sixty years ago the Kofan had no need to collect rainfall, given the Amazon's many rivers, streams, creeks and springs. But then oil companies arrived. After decades of operations involving billions of gallons of wastewater being dumped into the environment and millions of barrels of oil spilled, Ecuador's north-east Amazon has undergone an environmental catastrophe.

Mendúa's husband, Emergildo Criollo, claims his two sons died from the contamination. "Everything totally changed when the companies arrived," he said.

The impacts on the Kofan and other indigenous peoples in the region are impossible to convey. Swathes of their territories have been colonised, forest cleared, game and other wildlife decimated and fish, soil and water sources contaminated. The result has been a decades-long public health crisis affecting tens of thousands of people, including high cancer rates, spontaneous miscarriages, childhood leukaemia and birth defects.

(Source: The Guardian)

Climate change, water crisis hurting Africa's poorest



The largest water and sanitation sector gathering in Africa ended Thursday in Uganda with a call for governments to invest in climate-resilient water systems and irrigation to reduce vulnerability to climate change.

African Water Association (AfWA) Program Director Dr. Simeon Kenfack said as governments implement ambitious national climate action plans and strategies, they must show the world that Africa is able to work as a family to address risks of climate impacts using existing knowledge and solutions.

"Already, an increasing but fragmented knowledge base exists in Africa. Africa's youth are climate-educated, engaged and eager to drive development across the continent," he said.

He said that AfriAlliance, a climate change project between Africa and Europe to support African stakeholders, is forging partnerships necessary to accelerate universal access to water and sanitation in Africa.

Uganda's Water Minister Ronald Kibuule said with rapid urbanization in Africa, there is high per capita water consumption and demand continues to climb, adding that the risk of water shortage remains because water crisis is partially climate induced.

"Everyone needs to become water wise

alongside water-saving initiatives we are putting in place. We believe the water crisis is solvable. By working together, we can take one step closer to a world free from water crisis," he said.

Many African countries have extremely high water risk, with one in every three people in Africa facing water scarcity, according to the World Resources Institute.

Sub-Saharan Africa, where some of the world's poorest live is hardest-hit by the water crisis, with 90% of the rural population depending on agriculture as the main source of income and more than 95% of arable farming relies on rainfall.

Rising temperatures and unpredictable rainfall caused by climate change have lowered crop yields. It is poor communities that often face greater exposure to climate hazards, because they have fewer resources to cope.

Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni said management of water sources is a challenge.

"We must protect the wetlands and recover those that have been encroached on. Wetlands play a huge role in providing safe, clean and regular water flows, reduce soil erosion and help keep water free of sediment," he said.

(Source: Anadolu Agency)

Coronavirus won't stop education: minister

SOCIETY
d e s k

TEHRAN — Education Minister Mohsen Hajimirzaei has said that the closure of school in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak will not stop education in the country.

"Students will follow up on their education through programs which will be broadcast by the national media," the minister wrote on his Twitter account, IRNA reported.

Deputy education minister Alireza Kamrei said Amoozesh (Education) channel of the state TV will start broadcasting programs on Saturday for students all over the country and this trend will continue even after the situation is back to normal.

73 infected persons recovered

Deputy health minister Kianoush Jahanpour said that at least 388 people have so far been infected in the country. Of the total figure, 73 have been recovered and 34 have died.

\$25m allocated to disinfect schools

The Budget and Planning Organization has allocated one trillion rials (about \$25 million) to disinfect and prepare schools against the coronavirus.

Authorities have ordered universities closed until the end of the Iranian year on March 21. Schools in highly affected areas will be shut down for three days. All cultural and sports events will be stopped for another week.

Call to end logging of 'protective' native forests in wake of bushfire crisis

A group of forestry and climate scientists are calling for an immediate and permanent end to the logging of all native forests across Australia as part of a response to climate change and the country's bushfire crisis.

In an open letter, the group said forestry workers involved in logging in native forests should be redeployed to support the management of national parks.

A briefing document to back the letter, coordinated by The Australia Institute thinktank, argues logging in wet eucalypt forests promotes more flammable regrowth.

Dr Jennifer Sanger, a forest ecologist who is in Canberra today to deliver the letter told Guardian Australia: "As we face this climate crisis, we see our forests are worth far more standing.

"We have to start taking this climate emergency more seriously and protective native forests is a simple step we could take and in my mind, a logical call."

Some experts told Guardian Australia they disagreed, saying it could effectively rule out one potential response to managing forests in the face of climate change.

Among the signatories to the letter are University of Tasmania's distinguished conservation ecologist Prof Jamie Kirkpatrick, James Cook University ecologist Prof Bill Laurance, and Prof Tim Flannery, of the University of Melbourne.

The letter says: "We write to ask you to respond to the climate, fire, drought and biodiversity loss crises with an immediate nationwide cessation of all native forest logging."

Large old-growth trees are important for capturing and storing carbon, the letter said, adding that native forest logging "is heavily subsidised by our taxes, which can be better spent on fire mitigation".

Government data shows that 5m hectares of native forests are open to logging and that annually, 73,000 hectares are harvested.

According to the briefing document, 12% of logs harvested in Australia come from native forests, and an end to native forest logging would directly impact 3,250 workers.

"The best economic use for native forests would be to leave the forests intact and push for inclusion in a carbon trading scheme," the document said.

When wet eucalypt forests are cleared the regrowth and understorey is drier and more flammable, according to the document. Species that live in forests make up 80% of all Australia's threatened species.

Sanger added: "Native forest logging just isn't beneficial. It is not profitable, and there are not a lot of jobs that rely on it.

"Ecologically [forests] are under a lot of stress from other impacts, including climate change and habitat destruction, and it does not make sense to be logging these forests."

(Source: The Guardian)

WORDS IN THE NEWS

War Markets

(March 26, 2003)

Military developments have affected the world's financial markets. Oil and gold prices have risen; the dollar and European stock markets have fallen. This report by Andrew Walker.

There is a clear pattern to the way financial markets are responding to military developments. The **underlying principle** is that **investors** want it all to be over quickly, **to dispel** the uncertainty that is **clouding the economic outlook**. Any sign that it might **drag on** - and developments over the weekend are being interpreted in those terms - makes investors more reluctant to take financial risks.

Shares are a **relatively** risky asset, so they have fallen. The dollar too has fallen, because, unusually in this war, it too is seen as relatively risky by foreign investors. Gold is **the long favored safe financial refuge**, so it has risen.

And the prospect of a relatively long conflict also affects the oil price, because there may be an increased risk of **substantial disruption to supplies**. All these market price moves are reverses, but only **partial reverses**, of **the shifts** that happened when the conflict started last week. Shares are overall still higher and oil lower than they were shortly before the hostilities began.

Words

underlying principle: the cause

investors: people who buy shares or pay money into a bank in order to receive a profit

to dispel: to dispel a feeling means to stop people feeling it
clouding the economic outlook: making it difficult to understand the future economic situation

drag on: if a situation drags on it lasts longer than seems necessary
relatively: compared with other things
the long favored safe financial refuge: the investment that people have thought of for a very long time as secure
substantial disruption to supplies: severe problems with (oil) supplies

partial reverses: a reverse is a move in the opposite direction; a partial reverse means the reverse is not complete
the shifts: the (market price) moves

(Source: BBC)

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → ب

Iran capable of manufacturing any medicine in two years

Iranian pharmaceutical industry and scientists are capable of producing any kind of medicine over a two-year period, Mohammad Reza Shanehsaz, head of Food and Drug Administration, has said. Some medicines are not currently manufactured domestically as their production is not economically justifiable because of low consumption, he added, IRNA reported.

In some cases, medicines are new pharmaceutical molecules that have recently been produced worldwide, he noted.

"The U.S. has sanctioned medicine as far as possible, but we have been able to provide patients with the required medicine, and currently there is no shortages," he explained.

ایران می تواند هر دارویی را ظرف دو سال تولید کند

رئیس سازمان غذا و دارو گفت هر دارویی را می توانیم طی ۲ سال در داخل کشور تولید کنیم.

به گزارش ایرنا، محمدرضا شانه ساز روز دوشنبه گفت این یک بلوف نیست و صنعت داروسازی و دانشمندان کشور توان تولید همه داروها را دارند.

به گفته شانه ساز، برخی اقلام دارویی که اکنون در داخل تولید نمی شود به علت کم مصرفی است زیرا توجیه اقتصادی ندارد یا مولکول های دارویی جدیدی هستند که به تازگی در دنیا تولید شده اند.

او ادامه داد: آمریکا هر دارویی را که توانسته تحریم کرده اما ما توانسته ایم از راهپایی که می دانیم داروهای مورد نیاز بیماران را تامین کنیم و اکنون دارو به میزان کافی در سراسر کشور وجود دارد.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

"hyp- or hyph- or hypo-"

■ **Meaning:** under, beneath, low

■ **For example:** The sequence shows *hypogeal* germination of peas.

PHRASAL VERB

Pop off

■ **Meaning:** to die suddenly; to say something quickly and without thinking

■ **For example:** You're all just waiting till I pop off so you can get your hands on my money.

IDIOM

Bring someone to heel

■ **Explanation:** if you force someone to behave in a disciplined manner, you bring them to heel

■ **For example:** The boy had always behaved badly, but the new headmaster managed to bring him to heel.

Mongolian president placed under quarantine after returning from China - state media

Mongolia's President Battulga Khaltmaa and other government officials have submitted to a 14-day quarantine after returning home from their visit to China, the state news agency Montsame reported on Friday.

Battulga is the first head of state to visit China since the country began implementing special measure to curb the coronavirus outbreak in January.

He arrived in Beijing with Foreign Minister Tsogtbaatar Damdin and other senior government officials on Thursday, and held a meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Keqiang.

They were taken into quarantine as soon as they arrived in Mongolia as a precautionary measure, Montsame said.

(Source: Reuters)

Japan hopes Chinese leader Xi's planned visit will be meaningful

Japan hopes a planned visit this spring by Chinese President Xi Jinping will prove to be meaningful, Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi told China's top diplomat, Yang Jiechi, on Friday.

When the two leaders met last June on the sidelines of a G20 summit in Osaka, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe invited Xi to visit Japan at the "time of the cherry blossoms" this spring, which is typically from late March to early April.

As the diplomats met on Friday, Motegi told Yang he wanted to have a solid exchange of views to ensure Xi's visit was meaningful.

"President Xi's visit to Japan as a state guest is extremely important," he said at the start of the meeting, which was open to reporters. "We need to make it a fruitful visit."

As the neighbors grapple with a fast-spreading coronavirus outbreak, fears are growing that Xi's visit may be affected, however.

On Thursday, Japan said the preparations for Xi's state visit were going ahead, despite its call for sports and cultural events to be scaled down and a closure of the school system from Monday to help rein in the spread of the virus.

(Source: Reuters)

Almost 60 confirmed cases of coronavirus in Germany South Korea coronavirus cases surge to 2,337

There are almost 60 confirmed cases of coronavirus in Germany, a spokeswoman for the Health Ministry said on Friday, adding that number included people who were now healthy again.

Asked how many confirmed cases of coronavirus in Germany there were, she said: "At the moment in Germany we have almost 60 but it's a very dynamic situation, as we keep saying."

The German government is not currently planning a stimulus package, a spokeswoman for the Economy Ministry said, but added that the tax framework needed to be improved.

Government spokesman Steffen Seibert said the economic impact of the coronavirus outbreak could not be seriously estimated at the moment.

A spokeswoman for the Health Ministry said the government's crisis committee would not make recommendations on the possible cancellation of the ITB travel trade fair in Berlin, due to run March 4-8, and added that it was a decision for local authorities.

On Wednesday, Health Minister Jens Spahn said Germany was at the beginning of a coronavirus epidemic after new cases emerged which could no longer be traced to the virus's original source in China.

On Friday, Germany's central bank governor, Jens Weidmann, joined a number of European Central Bank policymakers in saying it was too early to gauge the economic fallout of coronavirus, but he acknowledged the Bundesbank's prediction of a 0.6% gross domestic product expansion this year, which had already been halved from the previous forecast, may be out of date.

■ South Korea

Meanwhile, South Korea reported 571 new coronavirus cases on Friday, its biggest daily increase in infections that takes its total to 2,337, the largest outbreak outside China where the epidemic began late last year.

The outbreak, which has killed 16 people in South Korea since its first patient was confirmed on Jan. 20, has also dented the popularity of President Moon Jae-in, a poll showed.

More than half of South Korea's cases are linked to a branch of the Shincheonji Church of Jesus in the southeastern city of Daegu and a hospital in Cheongdo county.

A 61-year-old woman, known as "Patient 31" attended religious services at the church before testing positive on Feb. 18, according to the Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (KCDC).

The government circulated a list of about 310,000 Shincheonji members to local governments instructing that they all be checked for the virus, vice health minister Kim Gang-lip told a briefing.

As of Thursday, health authorities had contacted 110,000 of them, 1,638 of whom have shown symptoms and would be tested for the coronavirus, Kim said.

Daegu Mayor Kwon Young-jin said charges of criminal violation of the Infectious Disease Control and Prevention Act would be brought against the church for refusing the release of a full list of its members.

The church later denied the accusation, saying it had provided full information and urged an end to "slander and oppression" against its followers.

(Source: agencies)

Death toll from Delhi's worst riots in decades rises to 38

→ 1 On Wednesday the US Commission on International Religious Freedom, which advises Washington but does not set policy, voiced "grave concern" about the violence as president Donald Trump was visiting.

Anurima Bhargava, a commissioner appointed by Democrat house speaker Nancy Pelosi, also expressed alarm at reports that Delhi police "have not intervened in violent attacks against Muslims".

Trump, asked at a news conference in the capital about the violence, said the issue was "up to India" and praised Modi's "incredible" statements on religious freedom.

(Source: Guardian)

33 Turkish soldiers killed by airstrike in northwestern Syria

Russia says Turkish troops killed among terrorists



→ 1 A statement issued by Russia's Defense Ministry said the Turkish troops had been deployed alongside terrorists and that Turkey had failed to notify Moscow of their presence despite being in regular communication with the Russian military.

The Turkish troops "shouldn't have been there", it added.

The statement stressed that the Turkish fatalities had been solely due to Syrian artillery fire and that Russian aircraft had not carried out any airstrikes at the time.

It added that after being informed of the Turkish presence in the area, Moscow did everything it could to ensure that Syrian forces stopped shelling in order to allow Turkey to evacuate dead and injured troops.

The ongoing Syrian government offensive in Idlib was launched in August last year after terrorists failed to honor the Sochi de-escalation zone agreement brokered between Russian and Turkey in September 2018.

The deadly attack on Turkish forces, however, comes as Ankara has begun directly intervening against Syrian forces as part of a bid to help terrorist groups halt Damascus' advances in Idlib.

On Thursday, state news agency Anadolu published images of Turkish airstrikes on Syrian troops, claiming that 1,709 Syrian targets had been attacked within the last 17 days of Ankara's stepped-up military campaign in the province.

In another development on Thursday, Russian and Syrian media outlets reported that Turkish military forces have been firing shoulder-fired missiles towards Syrian and Russian military aircraft providing air cover for Syria's anti-terrorist operations.

Seeking to address the heightening

tensions, Russia announced the deployment of two warships off the Syrian coast on Friday.

"The frigates Admiral Makarov and Admiral Grigorovich -- armed with highly accurate Kalibr-NK missile systems -- are carrying out a planned transit from Sevastopol," fleet spokesman Alexei Rulev told the RIA Novosti and Interfax news agencies.

The vessels had earlier left the port of Sevastopol on the peninsula of Crimea, which Russia annexed from Ukraine in 2014, and were transiting the Bosphorus and then the Dardanelles straits.

■ Putin and Erdogan discuss Idlib

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said that Russian President Vladimir Putin and Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan spoke by phone Friday to discuss the implementation of

de-escalation agreements in Idlib.

"The conversation was detailed and devoted to the necessity to do everything," Lavrov told reporters at a news conference in Moscow. "There is always room for dialogue," he added.

Lavrov said that the two countries were ready to continue coordination in the province.

The comments come as the US-led North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is set to hold urgent talks regarding Syria later in the day after a request by Turkey.

Ankara has also called for the imposition of a no-fly zone over Idlib and announced that it will no longer stop Syrian refugees from reaching Europe on Friday.

Turkey has repeatedly raised the prospects of loosening border controls on immigrants seeking to enter Europe

when asking for incentives from European states.

■ Syria has every right to fight terrorists in Idlib

Damascus has the right to fight back when attacked by terrorists and Moscow is in no position to stop Syrians from doing what the UN Security Council endorsed, Russia's foreign minister has said after the latest Idlib flare-up.

■ Refugees head towards Greece as Turkey opens borders over Syria crisis

Hundreds of Syrian refugees in Turkey have begun preparing to travel towards the country's borders with Greece and Bulgaria after Ankara's sudden decision to no longer impede their passage to Europe.

The move comes after an airstrike on Thursday night in Syria's Idlib province killed at least 33 Turkish soldiers recently deployed to support the Syrian opposition in the face of a blistering Russian-backed Syrian government offensive.

Turkish police, coastguard and border security officials were ordered to stand down overnight on Thursday, Turkish officials briefed reporters.

Turkey often threatens to reopen the migrant route from the Middle East, which at its peak in 2015 saw thousands drown in the Mediterranean and a million people reach Greece and Italy, where many still live in miserable displacement camps.

Thursday's decision, however, effectively reverses a 2016 deal Turkey struck with the EU to cut the numbers of migrants entering Europe. It appears to be calibrated to force the EU and Nato to support Ankara's new military operation in Idlib.

Under the impression that the window to leave Turkey may be short-lived, some of the 3.6 million Syrians currently living in the country began to move quickly.

Democratic leaders willing to risk party damage to stop Bernie Sanders

Interviews with dozens of Democratic Party officials, including 93 superdelegates, found overwhelming opposition to handing Mr. Sanders the nomination if he fell short of a majority of delegates.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senator Chuck Schumer, the minority leader, hear constant warnings from allies about congressional losses in November if the party nominates Bernie Sanders for president. Democratic House members share their Sanders fears on text-messaging chains. Bill Clinton, in calls with old friends, vents about the party getting wiped out in the general election.

And officials in the national and state parties are increasingly anxious about splintered primaries on Super Tuesday and beyond, where the liberal Mr. Sanders edges out moderate candidates who collectively win more votes.

Dozens of interviews with Democratic establishment leaders this week show that they are not just worried about Mr. Sanders's candidacy, but are also willing to risk intraparty damage to stop his nomination at the national convention in July if they get the chance. Since Mr. Sanders's victory in Nevada's caucuses on Saturday, The Times has interviewed 93 party officials — all of them superdelegates, who could have a say on the nominee at the convention — and found overwhelming opposition to handing the Vermont senator the nomination if he arrived with the most delegates but fell short of a majority.

Such a situation may result in a brokered convention, a messy political battle the likes of which Democrats have not seen since 1952, when the nominee was Adlai Stevenson.

"We're way, way, way past the day where party leaders can determine an outcome here, but I think there's a

the battlefield.

"To the U.S. government, to the U.S. military, we say you were very heavy-handed against the Afghan people. You bombed our villages, brought immense suffering to the Afghan people," he said.

"So 18 years on, we have mixed feelings of gratitude to the international

community for providing the taxpayers' money to Afghanistan and one of anger at the way we were treated as a people," said Karzai, his signature long green stripped coat draped over his shoulders.

It's time now for Afghans to take responsibility for their future, he said.

"We must begin to put our own house in order. We must begin to sit



vibrant conversation about whether there is anything that can be done," said Jim Himes, a Connecticut congressman and superdelegate, who believed the nominee should have a majority of delegates.

From California to the Carolinas, and North Dakota to Ohio, the party leaders say they worry that Mr. Sanders, a democratic socialist with passionate but limited support so far, will lose to President Trump, and drag down moderate House and Senate candidates in swing states with his left-wing agenda of "Medicare for all" and free four-year public college.

Mr. Sanders and his advisers insist that the opposite is true — that his ideas will generate huge excitement among young and working-class voters, and lead to record turnout. Such hopes have yet to be borne out in

U.S.-Taliban peace deal closer than ever, important step toward Afghan peace: NATO Afghan ex-leader welcomes peace deal; criticizes U.S. legacy

→ 1 He complained often and bitterly about night raids on rural villages carried out by U.S. forces and their Afghan allies hunting Taliban insurgents. He often said it was tactics used by the Americans - and by their Afghan fighting partners who used American troops to exact revenge - that drove many Taliban who had returned to their homes back onto

the battlefield.

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"We must begin to put our own house in order. We must begin to sit

down and talk with one another and find the best ways for our country's future stability and prosperity," said Karzai.

"With U.S. forces leaving Afghanistan, we, the Afghan people must see it as an opportunity for us to take responsibility for our own country and to make it better and to live by our own means."

(Source: agencies)

Pakistan's Imran Khan holds talks with Qatari emir in Doha

Pakistan's prime minister has held talks with Qatar's emir, signing agreements on trade, investment and tourism, according to statements from both governments.

Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan arrived in the Qatari capital Doha for a one-day visit on Thursday, accompanied by Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi and his advisors on petroleum and overseas citizens, a Pakistani foreign office statement said.

He met with Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani following delegation-level talks between the two countries.

"[The two leaders] exchanged views on the existing excellent bilateral relations as well as regional and international issues of mutual concern," said a Pakistani foreign ministry statement following the talks.

The talks focused on economic issues, investment and energy, a Qatari foreign ministry statement said.

Prime Minister Khan also lauded the Qatari govern-



ment's role in helping mediate between the United States and the Afghan Taliban. A historic peace agreement between the two parties is due to be signed in Doha on Saturday.

"Prime Minister Imran Khan reiterated Pakistan's

continued support for an Afghan-owned and Afghan-led peace process," said the Pakistani statement.

"The two leaders expressed the hope that all Afghan stakeholders would seize this historic opportunity to reach an inclusive political settlement for the establishment of durable peace and stability."

Pakistani Foreign Minister Qureshi will attend the signing of the peace agreement, the foreign office said in a separate statement.

In addition, Khan briefed the Qatari leader on the situation in the disputed territory of Kashmir, where India revoked the special constitutional status of the portion it administers last August and has imposed strict security controls since then.

Pakistan and India claim Kashmir in full but administer separate portions of the mountainous territory, over which the two countries have fought two of their three wars.

(Source: al Jazeera)

Persepolis a step closer to fourth successive title

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Persepolis saw off Shahr Khodro 3-1 to take a step closer to Iran Professional League (IPL) title for the fourth successive time.

On Thursday, the Reds hosted their powerhouse rivals behind closed doors in Tehran's Azadi Stadium.

Vahid Amiri gave Persepolis an early lead in the ninth minute after receiving a pass from Mehdi Torabi in the six-yard area.

Persepolis second goal came after a throw-in led to a quick exchange of passes which freed Basharr Resan to fire his shot into the roof of the net in the 16th minute.

Shahr Khodro pulled a goal back in the 52nd minute courtesy of a header from Farshad Faraji.

Two minutes after the hour mark, Torabi was brought down in the penalty area and he converted his penalty to seal a 3-1 win for Persepolis.

Shahr Khodro created several scoring chances but Persepolis goalie Bozidar Radosevic made several noteworthy saves.

Earlier on the day, Esteghlal suffered a 1-0 loss against Gol Gohar in Sirjan.

Sepahan were held to a 1-1 draw by Zob Ahan in Isfahan derby, Foolad defeated Shahin Bushehr 1-0 and Machine Sazi lost to Nassaji 3-0 in Tabriz.

On Thursday, Paykan were held to a 1-1 draw by Naft Masjed Soleyman. Shahrar Moghanlou gave the visiting team a lead in the 46th minute and with two minutes remaining Emad Mirjavan levelled the scoreboard.

Saipa lost to Sanat Naft 2-1 in Tehran. Milad Jahani scored for the visiting team in the 32nd minute but Mohammadreza Soleymani equalized the match in the 58th minute.

One minute later, Taleb Reykani scored the winning goal to seal a 2-1 win for the visiting team.

Pars Jonoubi also edged past Tractor 1-0 thanks to a goal from Nima Entezari from the penalty spot.

Persepolis remain top of the table with 47 points. Sepahan and Tractor are second and third with 37 points both.



FIFA orders FFIRI to postpone elections

S P O R T S **TEHRAN**— FIFA has sent a letter to the Football Federation Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI) emphasizing that the FFIRI General Assembly, scheduled for 15 March 2020, to hold the FFIRI elections, should be postponed.

In the letter, which dates back to Feb. 24, 2020 but has been released recently by the Iranian Football Federation, FIFA hinted that the current version of the FFIRI statutes contains several particularly problematic provisions, such as art. 22.1, and art. 22.2, which foresee that: "The President of the Sport & Youth Ministry can participate in the General Assembly as a member with a right to speak and voting rights but without the right to be elected" and that "The Professional & Championship Sport Deputy of Sport & Youth Ministry can participate in the General Assembly

as a member with a right to speak and voting rights but without the right to be elected."

Referring to the above-mentioned articles, FIFA reminded the direct representation of governmental authorities, with voting rights, in a sports association's supreme body contravenes the basic principles of independence of sports set out by the Olympic movement as well as goes against the obligations imposed on our Member Associations by the FIFA Statutes (d. art. 14 par. 1 i) and art. 19 of the FIFA Statutes).

Also in the letter, it is mentioned that FIFA and the AFC had undertaken a revision process of the FFIRI statutes together with the FFIRI administration on 12 and 13 August 2019.

Following this revision, the FIFA and AFC administra-

tions sent the drafts of the FFIRI statutes, electoral code and standing orders of the General Assembly to the FFIRI administration on 30 August 2019.

The FFIRI administration informed the FIFA and AFC administrations that it needed some additional time to finalize the draft but after several reminders (on 7 October, 18 October, 11 December 2019 and 16 January 2020), the FFIRI failed to provide feedback on the drafts and stated that the approval would have to take place after the FFIRI elective General Assembly," the letter reads.

Consequently, FIFA and the AFC have taken a clear position toward the FFIRI elective General Assembly and insisted that the assembly should be postponed until after the draft FFIRI Statutes and electoral code are finalized and adopted by the FFIRI general assembly.

IPL: Persepolis awarded 3-0 win over Sepahan

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Persepolis football team were awarded a 3-0 win over Sepahan after the latter failed to show up for the match in Iran Professional League Matchday 20.

The hectic match was scheduled for Sunday in Isfahan's Naghsh-e Jahan Stadium but the hosts arrived in stadium one hour after the kick-off time.

Sepahan said they intended to play but the fans don't let them to leave the hotel but

the Football Federation of Iran Disciplinary Committee said there were "no obstacles" holding up the team bus.

With this three points, IPL leaders Persepolis moved 10 points clear at the top and take a big step closer to winning the title for the fourth time in a row.

Sepahan didn't want to meet Persepolis after the Iranian federation announced that the match would be played in the empty stadium due to coronavirus concerns.

Tokyo 2020 unveils kinetic sport pictograms – a Games first

The Tokyo 2020 Organizing Committee of the Paralympic and Olympic Games today (26 February) unveiled official Paralympic and Olympic kinetic sport pictograms, the first time in the history of the Games that these have been created.

There are a total of 23 pictograms covering 22 Paralympic sports and 50 covering 33 Olympic sports. Their innovative designs aim to reflect the modern era symbolized by the year 2020 and enhance spectator enjoyment of events, both at venues and via TV broadcasting to national and global audiences.

Static sport pictograms were first introduced at the Tokyo 1964 Games and arose from a need to communicate visually with an increasingly international group of athletes and spectators.

The Tokyo 2020 sport pictograms, unveiled in 2019, are designed to subtly communicate the characteristics and athleticism of each sport, as well as artistically highlight the dynamism of the athletes.

The new kinetic sport equivalents honor the legacy of past Paralympic and Olympic Games, while emphasizing that the Tokyo 2020 Games will be the most innovative Games ever.



In order to reproduce the original pictograms dynamically, the Tokyo 2020 kinetic sport pictograms appear as a series of three movements: appear, static, and disappear.

These recreate the three-dimensional movement of athletes in two dimensions, and are able to express more dynamic movements such as twists. Japanese motion designer Kota Iguchi oversaw the development of the

kinetic sport pictograms.

He commented, "For the first time in the history of Paralympic and Olympic Games, we have taken on the challenge of animating the sports pictograms. It took more than a year to create them, with input from so many people helping us add movement to the static pictograms, which were developed by a team led by graphic designer Masaaki Hiromura.

"The new kinetic sport pictograms will broaden the appeal of each sport by means of their beautiful and more easily conveyed expressions. I hope that they will brighten up each of the events and, while a creation of the Tokyo 2020 Games, I hope they will be passed on to future Games as a legacy for the future, as well as inspiring video designers in other countries."

The kinetic sport pictograms will be used to depict individual sports at competition venues and during the broadcast of events. They will also be used on the Tokyo 2020 website and social media channels as well as featuring in digital signage, aiming to showcase some of Japan's more innovative technologies to the world.

(Source: Paralympic)

AFC calls for emergency meetings with National and Club representatives

The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) is to call further emergency meetings with the representatives of MAs and its Leagues from both the East and West regions next week as the AFC continues to manage the worldwide impact of the Covid-19 outbreak.

The meeting of the East Zone representatives will be held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on Monday and the West Zone meeting will follow on March 7 and 8, 2020.

Dato' Windsor John, the AFC General Secretary, said: "These are unprecedented and challenging times, but the AFC is working tirelessly to monitor the situation, including the various travel restrictions, while being in constant contact with our Member Associations, Leagues and Clubs.

"We are grateful for the support we have

received from all our stakeholders, including our Commercial and Broadcast partners and agencies, as we try to protect the safety and well-being of all our players, officials and spectators while also ensuring the integrity of the competitions."

The AFC has also been working with FIFA to assess the potential impact on the upcoming FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 and AFC Asian Cup China 2023 Asian Qualifiers matches scheduled to take place in March.

As a result of the Covid-19 outbreak, the following matches will be postponed to later dates:

■ **AFC Champions League:**

Match Day 3

March 2, 2020 (West):

Group A: Al Wahda FSCC (UAE) v

Esteghlal FC (IRN);

Group A: Al Ahli Saudi FC (KSA) vs Al Shorta (IRQ) (updated)

Group C: Persepolis FC (IRN) v Al Taawoun FC (KSA)

March 3, 2020 (West):

Group B: Shabab Al Ahli Dubai (UAE) v Shahr Khodro FC (IRN);

Group B: Al Hilal SFC (KSA) v Pakhtakor (UZB) (updated)

Group D: Sepahan FC (IRN) v Al Nassr (KSA)

March 3, 2020 (East):

Group E: FC Seoul (KOR) v Chiangrai United (THA)

Match Day 4

April 6, 2020 (West):

Group D: Al Nassr (KSA) v Sepahan FC (IRN)

The AFC has also agreed to the proposal by both Ulsan Hyundai FC and Perth Glory to swap their AFC Champions League Group F tie originally scheduled to take place on March 4, 2020 at the Ulsan Munsu Football Stadium to April 7, 2020. Perth Glory's home tie against Ulsan Hyundai FC will now take place at the Perth Rectangular Stadium on March 18, 2020.

Meanwhile, the two-legged Women's Olympic Qualifying Final Round play-off between Korea Republic and China PR, which was originally scheduled to take place on March 6 and 11, 2020 has been rescheduled.

The first leg between Korea Republic and China PR is now scheduled for April 9 with the return leg on April 14.

(Source: the-afc)

Sohrab Moradi snatches gold at West Asian C'ship

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Sohrab Moradi seized a gold medal at the 96kg at the West Asian Weightlifting Championship in Dubai, the UAE.

Moradi, who won gold at 94kg in Rio but has suffered two serious injuries during qualifying, participated in the competition as the only Iranian lifter.

He took a gold medal with a total of 370kg (167 snatch and 207 clean & jerk).

A weightlifter from Saudi Arabia won the silver medal with 302kg and Uzbekistan's weightlifter claimed the bronze with 290kg.

Moradi badly injured his spine a year ago then dislocated a shoulder last July.

He also is hopeful of a good performance at the Asian Championships in Kazakhstan in April.

Moradi is way down in 78th place in the current rankings and would probably need to lift close to world-record levels in both those competitions to make it – but he is the world record holder in snatch and total at 96kg, both set when he won the 2018 world title.

Iran was supposed to participate in the competition in Dubai with seven weightlifters but their flight was cancelled due to coronavirus threat.

Wrestler Hassan Yazdani recovers from injury

TASNIM — Iranian freestyle wrestler Hassan Yazdani has fought back from a knee injury.

He tore the meniscus in his knee during the training for the 2019 World Wrestling Clubs Cup held in Bojnurd, northeast of Iran in December.

Yazdani underwent successful surgery on his torn meniscus in Tehran's Arman Hospital and is now ready to resume his training.

He will represent Iran in the 2020 Olympic Games.

Yazdani became Olympic champion in the 74kg category at the 2016 Summer Olympics after defeating Russian wrestler Anuar Geduev in the final.

The following year he became World Champion at the 2017 World Wrestling Championships in the 86 kg category.

FIFA punishes Persepolis over unpaid debt

TASNIM — Persepolis has faced a punishment from FIFA for non-payment of wages owed to former forward Mario Budimir.

The Croatian player joined Persepolis in January 2019 until the end of the season but Persepolis did not pay him his wage. Budimir then filed a complaint for nonpayment of wages, with FIFA, against his former club.

FIFA has ordered Persepolis to pay 475,000 euros to Budimir within 45 days.

The club's former coaches Branko Ivankovic and Gabriel Calderon have already filed complaints over their unpaid wages.

Olympic swimming champion Sun Yang shocked by eight-year ban

LAUSANNE, Switzerland (Reuters) — China's top swimmer Sun Yang said he was shocked and would appeal after being handed an eight-year ban on Friday for a dope test violation that rules him out of the Tokyo Games.

The Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) earlier accepted an appeal from the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) against a decision by swimming body FINA to clear Sun of wrongdoing for his conduct during the 2018 test.

CAS said the eight-year ban was imposed because Sun, 28, already had an earlier anti-doping rule violation against him from 2014.



Sun protested his innocence and said in a statement that he was angered by the decision.

"I have entrusted a lawyer to appeal to the Swiss Federal Supreme Court in accordance with the law. I will let more people know the truth," he added. "I firmly believe in my innocence! Believe that facts must overcome lies!

"I will fight to the end to defend my legitimate rights and interests."

Sun and members of the 28-year-old's entourage had smashed vials containing blood samples taken at an out-of-competition test in September 2018.

The Chinese is reigning world and Olympic champion in 200m freestyle and won two gold medals at the 2012 London Games and another at Rio de Janeiro in 2016 but is also a controversial figure in the sport.

At the Rio Games, Australian rival Mack Horton accused him of being a "drug cheat".

At last year's Gwangju world championships in South Korea, 400m freestyle silver medalist Horton refused to share a podium with Sun, who won the gold while competing under the shadow of the appeal.

The gesture drew applause from other swimmers but a warning from FINA.

The case has attracted huge interest in China, where Sun is currently training at the Zhejiang College of Sports in Hangzhou, and the swimming world.

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GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

An evil-eye magic and good omen are true, but ill-omen and contagion of misconduct are not right.

Imam Ali (AS)

Veteran actress Malakeh Ranjbar dies at 81

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — The veteran stage and screen actress Malakeh Ranjbar, who was famous for her role in the popular comedy TV series “Under the Sky of the City”, died at a Tehran hospital on Thursday. She was 81.



Actress Malakeh Ranjbar in an undated photo.

She was suffering from several diseases of old age, the Persian media announced.

Ranjbar was born in Rasht. She began her career as an actress in plays in theater halls in her hometown when she was only six.

She has played in over 50 movies and TV series, including “The Sinners” by Faramarz Qaribian, “Bread, Love, and Motorcycle 1000” by Abolhassan Davudi and “Left Handed” by Arash Moayerian.

The funeral was held in Tehran’s Behesht Zahra cemetery on Friday, but there won’t be any memorial services due to the new coronavirus epidemic.

Iranian actor Shahab Hosseini receives France’s Chevalier of Legion of Honor

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — Shahab Hosseini, the star of Asghar Farhadi’s Oscar-winning movies “A Separation” and “The Salesman”, received France’s Chevalier of the Legion of Honor (Chevalier de la Légion d’honneur) medal on Thursday.



Iranian actor Shahab Hosseini poses after receiving the Chevalier of the Legion of Honor medal at the Embassy of France in Tehran on February 27, 2020.

He received the honor from French Ambassador Philippe Thiebaud during a ceremony held at the Embassy of France in Tehran.

The medal is one of the most coveted trophies in the world of art and culture awarded by the French government.

Hosseini is mostly famous for his role in Farhadi’s “The Salesman”, which brought him the Palme d’Or for best actor at the Cannes Film Festival in 2016.

Chevalier of the Legion of Honor medal has been awarded to over 30 Iranian artists, including painter Aidin Aghdashlu, actress Leila

Hatami, calligrapher Gholamhossein Amirkhani, cartoonist Kambiz Derambakhsh, vocalist Shahram Nazeri and filmmaker Abbas Kiarostami.

In 2014, Iranian composer and tar virtuoso Hossein Alizadeh declined to accept the award, stating that he doesn’t need decorations and that he derives satisfaction from his good name.

Iranian animations to hit silver screens in France

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — Restored versions of three Iranian animated movies will go on screen in France’s theaters on March 25, the Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (IIDCYA), which is the producer of the animations, announced on Friday.

Organized by Les Films du Whippet, a Paris-based children film distributor and DVD publisher, “One Day a Crow” by Abdollah Alimorad, “The Crow Who Wanted to Be the Strongest” by Mohammad-Ali Soleimanzadeh and “The Sparrow and the Cotton Seed” by Morteza Ahadi will be screened under the title of “The Crow and an Amazing Sparrow”.

To celebrate the company’s 15th anniversary, Films du Whippet has organized the screening of the animations, which went on screen in France in 2007.

The company, which has screened over 40 Iranian animations in France since 2001, has also released the animated movies on DVDs.

“Shekarestan” returns in Noruz with coronavirus concern

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — Masud Safavi, the producer of the popular Iranian animated series “Shekarestan”, has said that a selection of 15 episodes of the series will be dedicated to the new virus epidemic.

“The 2-minute episodes centering on the coronavirus concern are currently under production and will be completed before Noruz,” Safavi said in a press release published on Friday.

He added that the season is composed of 100 episodes, part of which are being prepared for broadcast on an IRI channel during the Noruz holiday in March.

Like the previous year, the Palme d’Or winning actor Shahab Hosseini has lent his voice to the storyteller for the series in this season.

Hosseini also dubbed the series last year. He has replaced actor Morteza Ahamdi who died in 2014.

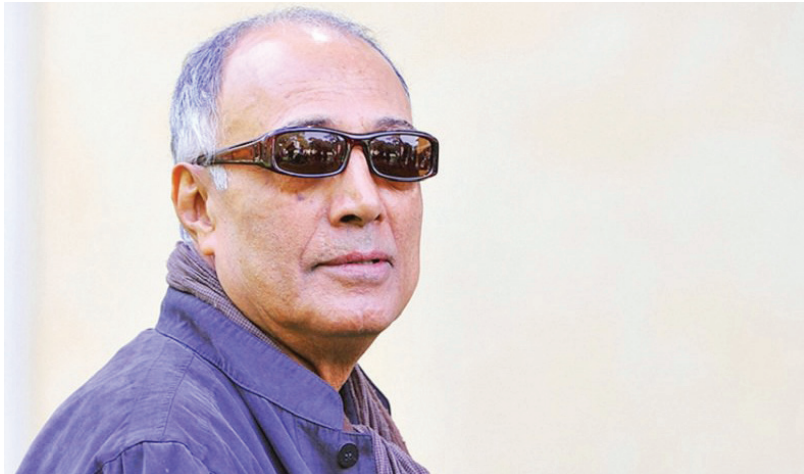
“Shekarestan” features stories inspired by ancient Persian proverbs and anecdotes.

Veteran actor Ahmadi gave his voice to the storyteller in the previous seasons of “Shekarestan”. He appeared in over 30 films and also voiced many animation characters over his 65-year career. He was famous for his voice of the sly fox that tricks Pinocchio.



A scene from the popular Iranian animated series “Shekarestan”.

India’s Alliance to acquire Abbas Kiarostami’s film collection



Iranian filmmaker Abbas Kiarostami in an undated photo.

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — India’s Alliance Media & Entertainment plans to acquire a collection of works by Iranian filmmaker Abbas Kiarostami from France’s MK2 Films for distribution in the country.

The collection includes 33 features, documentaries and shorts from Kiarostami’s oeuvre including “Taste of Cherry”, “The Wind Will Carry Us” and “Where Is My Friend’s Home,”

variety has announced on its website.

The negotiations took place at the European Film Market and the Berlin Film Festival, which ended on Thursday.

A winner of the Palme d’Or at the Cannes Film Festival in 1997 for his “Taste of Cherry”, Kiarostami died of cancer on July 5, 2016 at the age of 76.

Alliance had previously acquired the Pedro Almodovar catalogue from France’s TFI and Pathe Films.

Virus fears lead K-pop superstars BTS to cancel Seoul shows

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — K-pop superstars BTS canceled an upcoming concert series in South Korea’s capital as the country that exports entertainment worldwide tries to contain a soaring virus outbreak.

It follows a near-shutdown of entertainment in hard-hit parts of China, the world’s second-biggest economy and second-biggest box-office market.

BTS, which performed at the Grammys and at New York’s Grand Central Terminal for “The Tonight Show” in recent weeks, is seen as an emblem of South Korea’s cultural and economic power. Local media said the canceled concerts were the inaugural leg of the band’s new world tour.

“We regret to announce that the BTS MAP OF THE SOUL TOUR ... has been cancelled,” the band’s agency Big Hit Entertainment said in a statement.

The management agency said the COVID-19 outbreak in South Korea, which has more than 2,000 cases so far, made it impossible to predict the scale of the outbreak by April.

The seven-member boy band was scheduled to perform April 11-12 and April 18-19 at Seoul’s Olympic Stadium. The agency said it had to consider the health and safety of the artists, the production crews and the more than 200,000 concertgoers expected.

The South Korean government and others affected by the epidemic have pushed to restrict massive public events to try to avoid situations where the virus might spread.

Disney said Friday its parks in Tokyo would close for two weeks, adding to closures of its parks in Shanghai and Hong Kong.

Cinemas in China already were shuttered, which affected the Chinese release of “Sonic the Hedgehog” and the



Photo: In this Jan. 5, 2020, file photo, members of South Korean K-Pop group BTS pose for photos during the Golden Disk Awards in Seoul, South Korea. (AP Photo/Ahn Young-joon, File)

Beijing premiere and a promotional tour of the James Bond film “No Time to Die” among other impacts.

The Walt Disney Co.’s anticipated live-action “Mulan” remake is due to open in China on March 27.

The U.S.’s National Symphony Orchestra canceled performances in Japan, after earlier canceling concerts in Beijing and Shanghai. That followed cancellations by the Boston Symphony Orchestra and Hong Kong Philharmonic.

South Korean agencies have been canceling K-pop events at home and abroad in response to requests from fans about artists’ safety.

Artists such as Taeyeon and boy bands WINNER and NCT Dream had previously canceled shows in Singapore and Macao, and GOT7 postponed concerts in Bangkok and Singapore.

U.S. band Green Day postponed upcoming Asia shows as well, citing health and travel concerns in its announcement on Twitter.

BTS has a large international following and was the first K-pop act to debut atop the Billboard Album chart in 2018 with “Love Yourself: Tear.”

Iran extends cancelation of cultural events on coronavirus concern



CULTURE d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iran’s Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance has extended the cancelation of all art, cultural and cinematic events across the country for one more week amid growing concerns over the new coronavirus outbreak.

In a press release published by the ministry on Thursday, the ministry said, “Following strict health advice in the current situation to protect society’s health condition, the cancelation of all art and film events will continue for one more week.”

It is obvious that further information will be released by the ministry in the coming days.

The cancelation includes all theater performances and film screenings, as well as concerts, art galleries and public events.

Coronavirus disease, known officially as COVID-19 (the virus itself is officially known as SARS-CoV-2), first appeared in the Chinese city of Wuhan in December and has since spread globally. The World Health Organization has declared it a global health emergency.

Opera star Domingo cancels Madrid shows

MADRID (Reuters) — Spanish opera star Plácido Domingo has withdrawn from planned performances of “La Traviata” at Madrid’s Teatro Real following complaints he harassed women, defending himself in a statement on Thursday in which he partly walked back an earlier apology.

Domingo had apologized on Tuesday to the women who accused him of sexual misconduct after an investigation by the American Guild of Musical Artists (AGMA) labor union concluded he had behaved inappropriately with female performers.

But the 79-year-old singer said the apology had since created a “false impression” as European venues weighed whether to cancel planned engagements with him.

“My apology was sincere and heartfelt, to any colleague who I have made to feel uncomfortable, or hurt in any manner, by anything I have said or done,” Domingo’s new statement said. “But I know what I have not done and I’ll deny it again. I have never behaved aggressively toward anyone, and I have never done anything to obstruct or hurt anyone’s career in any way.”

He said he was withdrawing from the Teatro Real engagements scheduled for May in order to spare his friends and colleagues “harm or any additional inconvenience.”

The announcement came hours before the opera house’s executive committee had planned to meet to discuss its future with Domingo.

“The Teatro Real reaffirms its policy of zero tolerance towards harassment and abuse of any nature, and its continuing solidarity with the victims,” it said in a statement confirming Domingo’s decision to withdraw.

The AGMA investigation found that some of Domingo’s female colleagues, including singers and other performers, had feared retaliation if they complained



Opera singer Plácido Domingo speaks during an event at the Manhattan School of Music in New York, U.S., May 11, 2018. (Reuters/Shannon Stapleton)

about his misconduct, which stretched back decades.

The investigation began after an Associated Press report last year.

Many U.S. institutions, including the Metropolitan Opera in New York and the San Francisco Opera, cancelled planned engagements with Domingo soon after, and he resigned as general director of the Los Angeles Opera.

In Europe, however, many venues stood by the singer, at least until this week.

Since the AGMA report and Domingo’s original apology, Spain’s culture ministry has cancelled his performances in the operetta “Luisa Fernanda” at Zarzuela Theatre in Madrid. The organizers of the Salzburg Festival in Austria also said they were reconsidering plans to have Domingo perform in August.

He was still due to perform at some of Europe’s most prestigious opera houses this year, including London’s Royal Opera House and La Scala in Milan. However, in his statement on Thursday, Domingo offered to withdraw from other engagements if the venues would “find it difficult” to have him perform.