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# Saudis join shale gas race

## If you can't beat them join them



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## Petchem exports up 5% in 10 months on year

**TEHRAN** — The value of Iran's petrochemical exports during the first 10 months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2019-January 20, 2020) rose five percent compared to the same period of time in the past year, IRNA reported on Sunday.

According to Seyed Hamid Hosseini, the spokesman of Iranian Oil, Gas and Petrochemical Products Exporters' Union (OPEX), the increase in petrochemical

exports during the mentioned time span was more due to the inauguration of new petrochemical plants in the country.

Mentioning the possible negative impacts of the coronavirus outbreak on the country's trade with the neighboring countries, the official said: "The virus outbreak could impact the exports of petrochemical products since most of Iran's exports are to the neighboring countries." **→4**

## U.S. in no legal position to determine Afghanistan's future: Tehran

**TEHRAN** — The United States is in no legal position to sign an agreement that determines the future of Afghanistan, says Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi.

"The U.S. has no legal status for signing a peace deal or deciding the future of Afghanistan," Mousavi said in a statement on Sunday.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran regards U.S. measures as attempts to legitimize

the presence of its forces in Afghanistan and it disagrees with them," he said.

He said the Islamic Republic believes reaching a deal to establish sustainable peace in Afghanistan will be achieved only through Afghan-Afghan talks and with cooperation of that country's political groups including Taliban and by taking into account the considerations of Afghanistan's neighbors. **→2**

## Iran's advisory urges Turkey to avoid unwise acts in Idlib

**TEHRAN** — Iran's Advisory Center (IAC) in Syria, in a statement issued on Sunday, condemned the Turkish troops' artillery attacks on the center's positions in northwestern Syria, urging Ankara to handle current developments in Idlib province logically and based on the Syrian people's interests.

The IAC said that the Turkish army has continued targeting the center's positions,

calling on Ankara to behave wisely.

The IAC, in its 10-paragraph statement, explains recent developments in Idlib province, including the Turkish troops' biased support for the terrorist groups, Turkish forces' attacks on the IAC positions. It added the Iranian forces are capable to conduct retaliatory attacks on the Turkish troops. **→2**



**ARTICLE**  
**Masoud Hossein**  
Head of the Sport Desk of the TehranTimes

## Sport victim of coronavirus outbreak

Sport has always been one of the strongest weapons to fight disease but newly discovered coronavirus is going to kill it.

So many sports events have been postponed or will take place behind closed doors due to the coronavirus concerns.

Asian Football Confederation (AFC) has postponed several Champions League's matches and rescheduled the women's Olympic qualifier between China and South Korea.

In Iran, sports leagues except football have been canceled. Iran Professional League (IPL) matches take place behind closed doors and the football-mad fans find it annoying.

Coronavirus has dampened enthusiasm for the games and situation may be worse than we know.

So many countries have closed the schools, cinemas, competitions and museums and the future remains unclear.

Persian New Year, called Nowruz, is approaching but the Iranians are not happy since the coronavirus has killed 43 people so far and closed their festivals.

More than 50 countries have been affected, including Iran.

On Saturday, Head of Hong Kong Football Association Pui Kwan-kay said it was "highly unlikely" that Hong Kong's 2022 World Cup Asian zone qualifier against Iran next month will go ahead because of the coronavirus outbreak.

The match slated for March 26 is a must-win game for Team Melli, however, the East Asian country is going to meet Iran in a neutral field.

Iraq leads the group on 11 points, followed by Bahrain (9), Iran (6) and Hong Kong (5) with Cambodia bottom on one point.

Sports, especially football is life for the most Iranian people but continuation of the situation would be chaotic in one word.

Around 83,000 coronavirus cases have been confirmed worldwide since the outbreak began in Wuhan, China.

Nearly 79,000 of the cases have been recorded in China, however the virus is now believed to be spreading faster outside the country.

Coronavirus has killed sports and hope for treating the novel coronavirus could be on the horizon since there is, so far, no cure or vaccine for the virus.

## The U.S. and a smart oligarchy

By Mohammad Mahdi Abbasi

**TEHRAN** — The Democratic primary is a serious test for the U.S., and one should wait and see how the remaining hopes for a free and fair presidential election in the U.S. and the real domination of democracy in the country will be destroyed by eliminating persons like Bernie Sanders.

The American people vote in practice and there is no change in their votes. The point is that the factor that determines the results is not the majority of votes, but an electoral system called the "Electoral College".

For example, in the 2016 election, the major candidate of Democratic Party Hillary Clinton won 65 million of people's votes, while Republican candidate Donald Trump won 62 million of people's votes, but he became

president with more electoral votes.

Such a thing previously happened in the U.S. in 2000. At the time, Al Gore won 500,000 popular votes more than George W. Bush, but Bush, the Republican candidate, became the U.S. president.

Despite all the weaknesses of the Electoral College system and arguments between its supporters and opponents, it cannot be identified as the main threat to democracy in America. Many believe that the significant role of wealth and power in American election engineering is the most important danger that has caused a safe election become a dream in this country.

This issue led many experts to refer to the American political system as a plutocracy (the superiority on rich minority over poor majority) or an oligarchy.

In this regard, Kevin Phillips, a prominent

American writer and political strategist in Richard Nixon's government said that the United States is not a democracy, but a plutocracy in which money and government are strongly intertwined.

Currently, the support of power and wealth holders for taking power in the U.S. political system is of the most importance. Groups that are known as "Super PAC" these days have a key role in empowering candidates in various American political positions.

George McGovern is one of the most telling examples in this regard. McGovern was a Democrat and Richard Nixon's rival in the 1972 presidential election. He was opposed by the Democratic Party because of his stance against the Vietnam War, cutting U.S. military budget and refusing the support of lobbyists and financial institutions. **→7**

## The violence in Delhi is not a 'riot'. It is targeted anti-Muslim brutality

Violence in India's capital has left more than 40 dead and hundreds injured after a Hindu nationalist rampage, stoked by the rhetoric of Narendra Modi's populist government.

In August 1958, gangs of white youths began systematically attacking West Indians in London's Notting Hill, assaulting them with iron bars and meat cleavers and milk bottles. One policeman reported a 300-strong mob shouting: "We will kill all black bastards. Why don't you send them home?" The attacks continued for a week before order was restored.

The incident is still referred to as the "Notting Hill riots". It was nothing of the sort. It was a vicious week-long racist attack. Mr Justice Salmon,

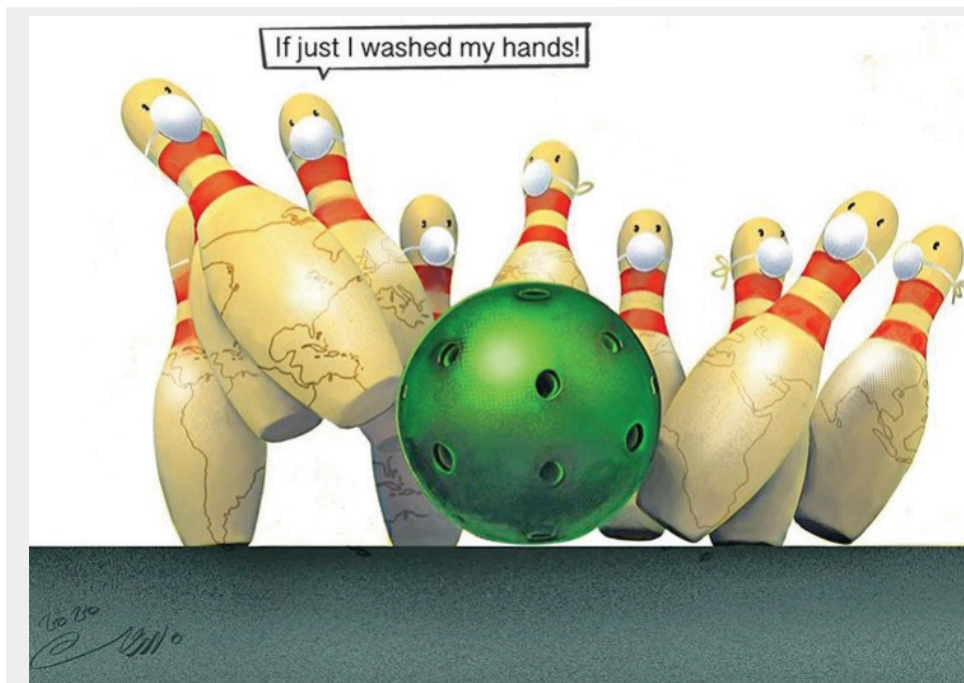
sentencing nine white youths at the Old Bailey, called it "nigger hunting". There is, though, a long history of describing racist violence as a "riot", to portray it as a general violent mayhem rather than as targeted attacks.

And so it is with the violence that over the past week has engulfed parts of the Indian capital, Delhi. Journalists and politicians have talked of "rioting" and "communal violence". That's no more accurate than describing the attack on Notting Hill's black residents as a "riot". What Delhi witnessed over the past week is the Indian equivalent of "nigger hunting", targeted violence against Muslims, led by mobs of Hindu national-

ists, mainly supporters of the BJP, India's governing party, many chanting "Jai Shri Ram" ("glory to Lord Rama") and "Hindoon ka Hindustan" (India for Hindus).

The violence began after a local BJP politician, Kapil Mishra, told a rally last Sunday that unless police cleared the streets of protesters against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), he and his supporters would do it themselves.

The CAA is a new law that allows undocumented migrants from neighbouring countries to seek citizenship in India – except if they are Muslim. It's the first law since India gained independence that explicitly excludes Muslims, and has generated widespread protests. **→10**



## "Wash Your Hands!" to fight coronavirus: cartoonist Hamid Bahrami

**TEHRAN** – The spread of the new coronavirus in the world has provided inspiration for renowned Atlanta-based Iranian cartoonist and illustrator Hamid Bahrami to create his new work named "World, Go Wash Your Hands!"

The artwork published on his latest Instagram post promotes the key medical advice to prevent the spread of the virus. **→12**



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

## Iraqi parliament confidence vote to Allawi cabinet shrouded in ambiguity

**R**epeated postponement of a special session of the Iraqi parliament to give confidence vote to Mohammed Tawfiq Allawi's cabinet occurs amid Washington's attempts to create a political vacuum in Iraq.

The Iraqi parliament's special session to give confidence vote to cabinet members introduced by Prime Minister Mohammed Tawfiq Allawi has been postponed for several times. According to the latest news, a new parliament session was scheduled to be held on Sunday, March 1.

The main reason for the postponement has been reported the inadequate number of Iraqi members of the parliament to reach the quorum. This has led the parliament speaker for special sessions Mohamed al-Halbousi to postpone the sessions repeatedly. The latest session of the Iraqi Parliament on addressing the competence of the new cabinet created some tensions including al-Halbousi's argument with his deputy Hassan Al Kaabi.

The First Deputy Speaker of the Iraqi Parliament Hassan Al Kaabi noted in this regard, "what happened during the session of vote of confidence to Mohammed Tawfiq Allawi's cabinet was a violation of the constitution and a clear challenge against the will of people". He added, "The lack of participation of some political groups in the session in the hope of gaining Quotas and spoils is completely rejected."

Hassan Al Kaabi voiced his dissatisfaction regarding what happened in the last Parliament session and described the incident as a blatant violation of the constitution and demanded that representatives of the nation respect the constitution and the regulations of the upcoming session on the vote of confidence to the cabinet. He emphasized that not ignoring interests and Quotas by parties seemingly for national consensus in the issue of giving the vote of confidence indicates greed and bad intentions of the political groups. **→7**

## Next parliament intent on fighting social injustice: MP

**POLITICAL d e s k** TEHRAN — Lawmaker Abolfaz Abootorabi has said the next parliament will focus on fighting “social injustice” and irregularities in the incumbent administration.

Besides that, he said, the parliament will push through drastic reforms in the administrative system.



In an interview with the Mehr news published on Sunday, Abootorabi said major reforms are needed in administrative, insurance and tax system.

Abootorabi said rise in “social injustice” was the main reason which reduced participation in the recent parliamentary polls.

While the people suffer from unemployment and low income “some in state-run organizations are earning high volumes of income and the incumbent government is compromising with such inequalities,” he argued.

“The next Majlis must improve Iranians’ livelihood,” he stressed.

A total of 7,148 candidates, including dozens of religious minorities, ran for parliament in the February 21 elections.

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

In Tehran, all 30 candidates enlisted by the principlist camp won by a large margin.

The next parliament will start its work in late spring.

## Iran’s advisory urges Turkey to avoid unwise acts in Idlib

**1 →** The statement read that the IAC has been cooperating with the Syrian forces to liberate M5 highway (Damascus-Aleppo highway) based on the Damascus’ request.

It added that the IAC has assisted the Syrian Army to defend the M5 highway against the terrorist groups’ attacks after the highway was liberated.

The Turkish-backed Turkestani Islamic Party and Jabhat al-Nusra jihadist groups conducted their attacks with airstrike support from Ankara, according to the statement.

“Since the IAC presence in Syria, the Turkish centers have been within our forces’ fire range but based on the Astana agreement, none of the units of the resistance front attacked the Ankara forces’ positions. We have thus far refrained from targeting any Turkish center in the region,” the statement added.

“In the last four days the IAC forces have helped the Syrian soldiers ward off the militants’ attacks,” it said, adding, “But, the Turkish troops have conducted aerial and missile attacks on our positions.”

“We sent a message to the Turkish troops that we do not want to engage in any clash with them based on advice of our commanders,” the IAC said, adding that “we have announced to the Turkish commander not to put the life of their soldiers in danger.”

“Their [Turkish people’s] sons are targets to our fighters on the ground,” the statement warned, calling on the Turkish public to push its government to think “wisely” and end its presence in Turkey.

“We stay with the Damascus forces and government to free the remaining militant-held part of the country. We underline our support for Syria’s territorial integrity,” the statement added.

At least 33 Turkish soldiers were killed in Syria’s Idlib province on Friday after an airstrike blamed on Damascus, prompting reaction from Washington and a UN warning on the rapidly-rising risk of escalation.

Since Thursday, at least 74 soldiers of the Syrian army and popular forces supporting Damascus have been killed by the Turkish airstrikes, the London-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) reported on Saturday.

In a telephone conversation with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Saturday afternoon, President Hassan Rouhani announced that Tehran was ready to host trilateral summit between Iran, Turkey and Russia as the battle in Idlib was raging.

“Trilateral cooperation at different levels is of special importance and as has been announced earlier Iran is quite ready to host the next round of the trilateral summit,” Rouhani said, according the presidential media office.

Rouhani noted that the lives of the innocent people in Idlib province should be protected and at the same time the terrorists in the region must be purged.

“In view of the gathering of dangerous terrorists and the need to protect the lives of innocent people living in the region, the issue of Idlib is very complicated. On one hand, the lives of innocent people should be protected, and on the other hand, terrorists should be uprooted,” Rouhani said in his phone talks with Erdogan.

Rouhani went on to say that the Astana process engineered by Iran, Russia and Turkey for resolving the Syrian conflict must not be undermined.

The Iranian president went on to say that that the intensification of tension in the region will not benefit anyone, insisting on Tehran’s long-held policy that Syrian conflict must be resolved through dialogue.

“Surely, the intensification of tension in the region will benefit neither side, and we must resolve the issues through dialogue and do not allow the Astana process to be weakened.”

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

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said at the time that President Putin and 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.”

# Rouhani urges revitalization of Astana process on Idlib in phone talks with Putin

**POLITICAL d e s k** TEHRAN — In a phone conversation with Russian President Vladimir Putin late on Saturday, President Hassan Rouhani of Iran said the conflict in Syria must be settled politically.

The phone conversation took place as the war for control of the northwestern Syrian province of Idlib is going unabated between the Syrian forces and the Turkish-backed armed groups who have formed a coalition with the terrorists.

The Iranian president said it is not acceptable that certain parts of Syria remain under the control of terrorists.

Rouhani also said that the situation in Idlib is “worrisome”, calling for implementation of the Astana peace process as early as possible to pave the way for establishing peace and security in Syria.

He noted that Iran, Russia and Turkey have taken great strides in recent years in fighting terrorism and their victories against terrorism should not be undermined.

“We should preserve their outcomes, and regarding the situation in Idlib, we are completely ready to find a solution at political and security levels, which would be agreed by the three countries,” he said.

In line with their security cooperation, Iran, Turkey and Russia - three power brokers in Syria - launched the Astana peace talks on the Syrian crisis. The talks were launched in January 2017 with the aim of putting an end to the Syrian conflict.

Kazakhstan has hosted multiple rounds of talks on Syria since January 2017 most of which involved delegations from the Syrian



government and opposition.

**■ Putin calls Astana peace process ‘effective’**

Putin, for his part, said that the Astana peace process has been “effective”.

He attached great importance to maintaining Syria’s territorial integrity.

Rouhani also phoned Turkish president late on Saturday announcing that Iran is quite ready to host the trilateral summit to find a solution to the Idlib battle.

The presidents of Iran, Russia and Turkey hold regular summits on the Syria.

Rouhani noted that the lives of the innocent people in Idlib province should be protected and at the same time the terrorists in the region must be purged.

“In view of the gathering of dangerous terrorists and the need to protect the lives of innocent people living in the region, the issue of Idlib is very complicated. On one hand, the lives of innocent people should be

protected, and on the other hand, terrorists should be uprooted,” Rouhani said in his phone talks with Erdogan.

In a major escalation of the conflict in Idlib, at least 33 Turkish soldiers have died in a Syrian government attack on militants. The toll was the biggest military loss the Turkish military has suffered since it intervened in the Syrian conflict in 2016, and in response, Ankara said it struck scores of Syrian government targets and “neutralized” 2,212 “soldiers and elements”.

Russia, Syria’s key ally, says Turkish troops were attacked in Idlib province by Syrian forces while operating alongside jihadist (terrorist) fighters, BBC reported on Feb. 28. The EU has warned the crisis could escalate further.

“There is a risk of sliding into a major open international military confrontation,” EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell tweeted. “It is also causing unbearable humanitarian suffering and putting civilians in danger.”

The Turkish and Russian presidents spoke by phone on Friday. Erdogan and Putin both expressed concern and agreed on the need for “additional measures” to normalize the situation.

According to al Jazeera, forces loyal to Syria’s President Bashar al-Assad have renewed an offensive to capture Idlib from opposition forces, who are backed by Turkey. Since the operation intensified in December, Syrian government forces have rapidly advanced into the last opposition stronghold, retaking the strategic M5 highway and solidifying control over parts of Aleppo province, which borders Idlib.

## U.S. in no legal position to determine Afghanistan’s future: Tehran

**1 →** After nearly two decades of war, the United States and the Taliban signed an agreement on Saturday aimed at paving the way for complete withdrawal of American forces from Afghanistan.

The agreement came after months of negotiations in the Qatari capital of Doha, with U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who earlier arrived in Doha, witnessing the signing of the accord.

“The Islamic Republic of Iran has welcomed any development leading to peace and stability in Afghanistan,” Mousavi said, but he clarified that Iran only supports efforts that are led by the Afghans.

“The Islamic Republic of Iran believes that the presence of foreign forces in Afghanistan is illegal and is one of the main reasons behind war and insecurity in that country,” he said.

The spokesman also said the withdrawal of foreign forces is a prerequisite to reach peace and security in Afghanistan and any measure that enables the withdrawal of them will contribute to peace in that country.

He argued that the United Nations has the capacity to facilitate Afghan-Afghan talks and to oversee the implementation of any struck agreement.

“The Islamic Republic of Iran, while respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Afghanistan, is ready to offer any help for establishment of peace, stability and security in Afghanistan, in line with its own national security strategy,” Mousavi remarked.

“We hope that a government takes office in Afghanistan which will have friendly and brotherly relations with its neighbors and

will be able to root out terrorism,” he added.

Under the U.S.-Taliban agreement, the Taliban have agreed to sever ties with al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups and sit down for peace talks with the Afghan government. In return, Washington will start a phased withdrawal of troops.

According to the New York Times, the war in Afghanistan in some ways echoes the American experience in Vietnam. In both, a superpower bet heavily on brute strength and the lives of its young, then walked away with seemingly little to show.

Meanwhile, Mohammed Naeem, a Tal-

**“The Islamic Republic of Iran, while respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Afghanistan, is ready to offer any help for establishment of peace, stability and security in Afghanistan, in line with its own national security strategy,” the Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman says.**

## Army produces unique equipment to intensify coronavirus fight

**POLITICAL d e s k** TEHRAN — Army has produced unique equipment for diagnosing and countering COVID-19 in the shortest time possible.

Brigadier General Kiomars Heidari, the Army ground force chief, made the announcement in ceremony inaugurating anti-coronavirus base in Tehran.

He said, “Our experts working for the army’s self-sufficiency department have planned and built several unique equipment which should go under test by the Health Ministry. If everything goes well the equipment will be a great achievement in rapid diagnosis of the novel coronavirus.”

He further said, “One of the army’s capabilities, which was unveiled in the ceremony today, was turning anti-bacterial liquids into fog to spray it over vast regions.”

“We enjoy anti-pollution systems which are currently utilized by our forces across the country,” the commander said, adding,

“According to the pre-planned program, the Army’s Ground Force is in charge of sanitizing hospitals and medical centers in Tehran.”

On Saturday, President Hassan Rouhani, in a phone conversation with emir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, called on the entire nations worldwide to enhance cooperation to overcome the coronavirus outbreak.

“Today, outbreak of the coronavirus has turned into a global problem, therefore, the entire nations and governments around the world should stay with each other to overcome the epidemic disease as soon as possible,” Rouhani underscored in his phone call.

The virus first emerged in China in December 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.

## U.S. extends travel restriction on Iranians

U.S. Vice President Mike Pence announced that his country has extended travel restriction on coronavirus-affected countries, including Iran.

Pence was quoted by the CNN on Sunday as saying that an entry ban on travelers from Iran would be expanded to include any foreign nationals who have visited Iran in the last 14 days.

The United States on Saturday reported its first death from the disease, a man in his 50s in Washington state, where officials said two of the state’s three cases have links to a nursing home with dozens of residents showing disease symptoms.

Although most Americans face a low risk from the virus, more U.S. deaths could be imminent following the nation’s first, he added.

“We know there will be more cases,” Pence told CNN, echoing President Donald Trump’s earlier comments that ad-



ditional cases in America were “likely.”

Travelers from Italy and South Korea would face additional screening, Trump and top officials had told a White House news briefing, warning Americans against traveling to coronavirus-affected regions in both countries.

The United States may also restrict travel on its southern border with Mexico, officials said. However, they encouraged Americans to travel around the country, including states that have recorded some of its more than 60 cases.

## Rouhani hopes nuclear deal will be preserved through cooperation

**POLITICAL d e s k** TEHRAN — President Hassan Rouhani has expressed hope that the 2015 nuclear deal, known as the JCPOA, would be preserved through cooperation among its signatories.

In a phone conversation with Russian President Vladimir Putin on Saturday, Rouhani praised Moscow’s stance on the JCPOA.

He also said that Iran is prepared to expand cooperation with Russia in various areas.

U.S. President Donald Trump quit the nuclear deal in May 2018 and introduced the harshest ever sanctions on Iran.

Helga Schmid, secretary general of the European External Action Service (EEAS), said in a tweet on February 25 that all sides have a “collective responsibility” to preserve the nuclear deal.

The remaining parties to the JCPOA issued a statement on Wednesday reaffirming the need to keep the multilateral nuclear agreement alive.

The pledge was made as the JCPOA joint commission held a meeting in Vienna, where the agreement was struck in July 2015. The meeting was attended by diplomats from the European Union, Iran, Russia, China, Britain, Germany, and France.

“All participants reaffirmed the importance of preserving the agreement recalling that it is a key element of the global nuclear non-proliferation architecture,” part of the statement said.

EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said on February 16 that he will remain committed to keep the JCPOA alive. “As coordinator I remain committed to listen to all sides and keep the #NuclearDeal alive,” he said in a tweet.

In May 2019 Iran announced that its “strategic patience” is over and started to reduce its commitments to the JCPOA at bi-monthly intervals in response to the abrogation of the pact by the U.S. coupled with the European Union’s inaction to shield Iran’s economy from sanctions.

In its last step on January 5, Iran took the last and final step, removing bans on the number of its centrifuges.

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

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

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

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

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

# IRGC, Basij pledge to continue fight against coronavirus until full victory

**POLITICAL DESK** **TEHRAN** — The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps and Basij forces will remain active in the field until Iran fully overcomes coronavirus outbreak, IRGC announced in a statement on Sunday.

"Your children in the Guards and Basij, until fully defeating the disease and returning of normal conditions, will be ready and active in the field of cooperation and help," the IRGC said in the statement, IRNA reported.

"The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps, as a popular body coming from the pious and revolutionary society of Iran, has always been with you dear, kind and decent people and this companionship has been featured and witnessed in times of natural disasters and catastrophes such as flooding, earthquake, etc.," the statement read.

It also thanked efforts made by Health Minister Saeed Namaki as well as the country's medical staff.

Up until Sunday afternoon, the virus that showed up in the central Chinese city of Wuhan late last year has infected 978 people in Iran and claimed the lives of 54 across the country.

Iranian medical officials have assured that the country would, in the near future, rein in the outbreak, saying that the condition of many patients diagnosed with the virus has improved.

Defense Minister Amir Hatami has assigned his ministry's subsidiary organizations with the task of mass-producing liquid disinfectants and protective masks, which are currently in high demand and are being freely distributed by health centers countrywide.



On Thursday, Kianoush Jahanpour, head of the Health Ministry's Public Relations and Information Center, said screening process had gone underway at the entrance to some cities, adding that suspected cases would be quarantined for a space of 14 days.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi had said last week that around 20,000 testing kits were to be delivered to Iran by the Chinese government.

President Hassan Rouhani has also said coronavirus testing kits developed by Iranian experts were undergoing final tests and

would enter the mass-production stage in the near future.

Meanwhile, Tehran has denounced Washington's false expression of readiness to assist Iran in the fight against coronavirus outbreak as a "ridiculous" and "hypocritical" move and part of a political and psychological game.

In a statement on Friday, Mousavi responded to U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's claim about helping Iran in the battle with the infectious disease, which has been hugely publicized in the media and has been widely advertised before informing Iran.

"The claim of helping Iran in the fight against coronavirus, made by a country that has exerted massive pressures on the Iranian people with its economic terrorism and has even blocked the (Iranian) purchase of medicine and medical equipment, is a ridiculous claim and a political-psychological game," Mousavi said.

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."

Tehran has also categorically denied the BBC Persian's claim that at least 210 people have died from coronavirus.

Jahanpour said on Friday that the London-based channel is seeking to take political advantage of the coronavirus outbreak.

"Coronavirus has brought suffering and infirmity upon the people of the world. However, it has turned into a source of profit for such satellite channels and others with corresponding roles in Saudi Arabian and Albanian channels," Press TV quoted Jahanpour as saying.

It came hours after the London-based channel cited unnamed "hospital sources" as saying that 210 have died from the virus.

## Air defense units ready to counter possible threats despite coronavirus outbreak: commander



**POLITICAL DESK** **TEHRAN** — The commander of Iran's Air Defense Force said on Sunday that COVID-19 outbreak has had no effect on his forces' determination to defend the country's airspace against any possible threat.

"The army's air defense will continue its mission to keep the country's airspace safe and secure in all conditions. No incident can negatively affect our combat capabilities," Brigadier General Alireza Sabahifard said, pointing to the outbreak of coronavirus in the country.

The commander added, "The air defense units embarked on widespread implementation of pre-cautionary measures in the bases since the first second of coronavirus outbreak."

On Saturday, President Hassan Rouhani, in a phone conversation with emir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, called on the entire nations worldwide to enhance cooperation to overcome the coronavirus outbreak.

"Today, outbreak of the coronavirus

has turned into a global problem, therefore, the entire nations and governments around the world should stay with each other to overcome the epidemic disease as soon as possible," Rouhani underscored in his phone call.

The virus first emerged in China in December 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.

According to the Health Ministry's latest official data, totally 978 Iranian nationals have been infected by the virus, out of which 54 patients have lost their lives.

The health condition of a sum of 175 infected patients have improved, the ministry said.

The virus has affected 27 out of 30 provinces in Iran.

## Army designates 3 well-equipped hospitals for coronavirus patients



**POLITICAL DESK** **TEHRAN** — Rear Admiral Habibollah Sayyari, the deputy Army chief for coordination affairs, has announced that the

On Saturday Army designated three of its well-equipped hospitals for the treatment of coronavirus patients.

"The armed forces, including the Islamic Republic of Iran's Army, are at the forefront... in the battle against the coronavirus," Sayyari was quoted as saying by Tasnim news agency.

In relevant remarks, Brigadier General Kiomars Heidari, the Army ground force chief, announced on Sunday that the Army has produced unique equipment for diagnosing the virus in the shortest time possible.

He said, "Our experts working for the army's self-sufficiency department have planned and built several unique equipment which should go under test by the Health Ministry. If everything goes well the equipment will be a great achievement in rapid diagnosis of the novel coronavirus."

Heidari further said, "One of the army's

capabilities, which was unveiled in the ceremony today, was turning anti-bacterial liquids into fog to spray it over vast regions."

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The virus first emerged in China in December 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 Health Ministry's latest official data, totally 978 Iranian nationals have been infected by the virus, out of which 54 patients have lost their lives.

## Iran able to make U.S. presence in the region untenable: George Mason University professor

**POLITICAL DESK** **TEHRAN** — Professor of Government and International Affairs at George Mason University Edward Rhodes has said that Iran's retaliatory action against the U.S. assassination of General Qassem Soleimani shows the Islamic Republic has the conventional forces necessary to make the continued U.S. presence in the region untenable.

In an interview with ILNA published on Sunday, Rhodes confirmed that Iran's retaliation successfully conveyed two messages: "The first is that Iran does not seek to provoke a war with the United States and the second is a reminder that Iran does indeed possess the conventional forces necessary to make the continued U.S. presence in the region untenable, and that it has the ability to force upon the United States a decision either to withdraw militarily from the region or to go to war against Iran."

Rhodes added, "Certainly the Iranian people have legitimate grievances against the behavior of the U.S. government."

On January 3, U.S. President Donald Trump ordered air strikes that martyred General Soleimani and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the second-in-command of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), in Baghdad's international airport.

In the early hours of January 8, the IRGC fired dozens of ballistic missiles at a military air base hosting U.S. forces in Iraq as part of its promised "tough revenge" for the U.S. terrorist attack.

In an interview with the NBC News on February 14, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said Trump was misled to believe his country would get away with



the assassination of Soleimani.

Trump believed that the assassination would augment U.S. security but it worked the other way around, Zarif said.

"Iran responded in a proportionate way against the base from which the operations against Soleimani were carried out," said Zarif.

He explained that Iran's retaliatory attack was intended to show to the United States that they cannot bully Iran and that actions against Iran will have repercussions.

The Pentagon announced on February 21 the total number of U.S. service members who suffered brain injuries in the strike on the airbase has increased to 110.

Wendy Sherman, the former undersecretary of state for political affairs who led the U.S. negotiating team

that concluded the Iran nuclear agreement, has said that assassination of Soleimani was an extraordinary risk.

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

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

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

Bassam Abu Abdullah, an expert on international relations at Damascus University, has said that assassination of General Soleimani was a "miscalculation" by the United States.

"They thought this action will lead to annihilation of the axis of resistance, but if we study response to this assassination, we will see that Washington miscalculated," ISNA quoted Bassam Abu Abdullah as saying on February 23.

The professor said, "Iran targeted Ain al-Assad base and the United States kept silence while no country had targeted the United States' military bases since the World War Two."

"At first the United States announced that no one was injured. However, the Pentagon announced later that more than 100 military forces of the United States. Moreover, this action shows precision and power of their [Iran] missiles," he added.

## 'There is no term as blacklist in FATF'

**POLITICAL DESK** **TEHRAN** — Gholamreza Mesbahi-Moghadam, a member of the Expediency Council, has said that there is no term like "blacklist" in the FATF (the Financial Action Task Force) and Iran has been put on the list of "non-cooperative" countries.

"There is no term as blacklist in the FATF. At this juncture, we have been put on the list of non-cooperative countries again," he told ISNA in an interview published on Sunday.

He added, "Using the term blacklist has very negative effect on the public opinion."



Mesbahi-Moghadam noted that the countries and banks which are cooperating with Iran are well aware that Iran does not finance terrorism and does not do money laundering.

"So, it makes no sense to create a negative effect on the public opinion through media and make the people think that it is the end of the world," said the cleric who has a masters' degree in economy.

Elsewhere, Mesbahi-Moghadam said that Iran has observed 39 out of 41 recommendations of the FATF which have had no benefits for the country.

The government of President Hassan Rouhani, in a 9-paragraph statement last week, urged the Expediency Council to remove the existing barriers in the way of approving the CFT and Palermo bills.

The government's statement says approval of the bills will prevent the enemies to invent more excuses to put more pressure on the country.

In the statement, the government has laid emphasis on removal of any obstacle in ratifying the bills, noting that the government will do its best to solve the problem and improve the situation to prevent imposition of more losses on the country's national interests.

Rouhani said on February 23 that Iran has been a forerunner in fighting money laundering and did not deserve to be blacklisted by the FATF.

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

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

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

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

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

Mehdi Motaharnia, a political analyst, has said that the government must continue efforts to reduce consequences of being blacklisted by the FATF, ISNA reported last week.

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

Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said on February 21 that the blacklisting of Iran is "politically motivated".

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

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

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

However, Abdolnasser Hemmati, Iran's central bank governor, has argued the move will not affect the Iranian foreign trade and stability in foreign exchange market.

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

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

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

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

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	515584.0
IFX	6675.04

Sources: tse.ir, ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	46,316 rials
GBP	53,847 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$49.67b
WTI	\$44.76/b
OPEC Basket	\$51.89/b
Gold	\$1,588.90/oz
Silver	\$16.82/oz
Platinum	\$871.20/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

Value of trades at IME climbs 37% in a week

**ECONOMY d e s k** **TEHRAN** — The worth of trades at Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) has risen 37 percent during the past Iranian calendar week (ended on Friday), according to a report released by the Public Relations and International Affairs Department of IME.



The report says that 826,653 tons of commodities worth \$1.142 million have been traded at this exchange market in the past week, indicating 40 percent rise in the volume of trades.

On the domestic and export metal and mineral trading floor of IME, 277,652 tons of various products worth close to \$538 million were traded, the same report confirmed.

On this trading floor, 253,264 tons of steel, 11,160 tons of copper, 10,420 tons of aluminum, 250 tons of molybdenum concentrates, 18 tons of precious

metal concentrates, 540 tons of zinc ingot as well as 2,000 tons of coke were traded by customers.

The report declares that on domestic and export oil and petrochemical trading floors of IME, 548,341 tons of different commodities with the total value of \$605 million were traded.

On this trading floor, 132,820 tons of bitumen, 225,000 tons of VB feed stock, 95,764 tons of polymer products, 31,000 tons of lube cut oil, 41,423 tons of chemical products, 1,679 tons of base oil, 3,000 tons of slaps waxes, 100 tons of argon, 1,505 tons of insulation, as well as 16,050 tons of sulfur were traded.

Furthermore, the side market of IME experienced trading of 606 tons of various commodities.

As previously announced by IME's International Affairs and Public Relations Department, 2.874 million tons of commodities valued at \$3.397 billion were traded at this exchange market in January.

During the last month, the oil and petrochemical trading floor of IME hosted trading of 1,697,033 tons of commodities worth \$1.65 million, the same report confirmed.

On this trading floor, more than 543,118 tons of bitumen, 280,982 tons of polymer products and 149,505 tons of chemical products, 483,850 tons of VB feed stock, 170,240 tons of lube cut oil, 55,685 tons of sulfur, 5,595 tons of insulation, 2,000 tons of slaps waxes, 6,018 tons of base oil and paraffin waxes, and 40 tons of argon were traded by customers.

The IME report said that metal and mineral trading floor witnessed trading over 1.169 million tons of commodities worth more than \$1,737 million in the past month.

On this trading floor 1.09 million tons of steel, 17,750 tons of copper, 640 tons of molybdenum concentrates, 60 tons of precious metals concentrates, 39,960 tons of zinc, 20,940 tons of aluminum, 10 tons of lead ingot, as well as 87 kg of gold bullion were traded by customers.

Meanwhile, the side market of the IME experienced trading of 2,778 tons of polyester threads, a total number of 16,850 of empty barrel as well as 4,900 tons of phosphate concentrates during January.

Coronavirus weighs on South Korea February trade; ministry says worse to come

South Korea's monthly trade data, the first to be released among major exporting economies, provides an early guide to the health of global trade already taking a hit from the epidemic.

Overall shipments in February rose 4.5% year-on-year, trade ministry data showed on Sunday, beating a median forecast of a 3.4% rise, given 3.5 more working days from a year earlier. This compares with a 6.3% decline in January due to the Lunar New Year, a holiday which fell in February last year.

Average exports per working day, however, tumbled 11.7%, the steepest decline in three months, and a big swing from a 4.6% increase in January.

Exports to China dropped 6.6% from a year earlier, after falling 3.7% for the Feb. 1-20 period, but average exports to China per working day plunged 21.1%, the ministry said.

This follows data on Saturday that showed factory activity in China contracted at its fastest ever in February, even worse than during the global financial crisis of 2008.

"Per-day exports were seen subdued especially in the second half of February," said Lee Sang-jae, chief economist at Eugene Investment & Securities, noting that it's not over.

"If the decline in February was mainly driven by sapping Chinese demand, exports would fall even worse in March and April as negative perceptions over Made-in-Korea products spread," he said.

(Source: reuters.com)

Petchem exports up 5% in 10 months on year

**1 →** He underlined the fact that Turkey and Iraq are the two main destinations for Iran's petrochemical exports, noting that if the coronavirus is not contained and the closure of the borders between the mentioned countries with Iran continues it could significantly affect the petrochemical exports in the upcoming months.

As a major petrochemical supplier to the world markets, Iran is currently producing nearly 70 million tons of petrochemical products annually.

Turkey, Iraq, China, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Afghanistan and India are among the major export destinations of Iranian petrochemical products.

ICCIMA establishes coronavirus containment headquarters



**ECONOMY d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) has set up Coronavirus Containment Headquarters in the chamber for cooperation with organizations that are responsible battling the virus.

As reported by ICCIMA portal, in a letter to the secretary-general of the chamber, ICCIMA Head Gholam-Hossein Shafeie ordered the establishment of the headquarters, urging daily meetings among its staff to assist responsible organizations and fellow citizens.

Shafeie has also called on the heads of chambers of commerce across the country to establish Corona Containment Headquar-

ters to carry out their social responsibility and to help people and organizations.

Iranian medical officials have assured that the country would, in the near future, rein in the outbreak, saying that the condition of many patients diagnosed with the virus has improved.

The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) has also expressed preparedness to help fight the outbreak, and Defense Minister Brigadier General Amir Hatami has assigned his ministry's subsidiary organizations with the task of mass-producing liquid disinfectants and protective masks, which are currently in high demand and are being freely distributed by health centers countrywide.

‘Participation of companies in Iran’s exhibitions abroad up 157%’

**ECONOMY d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Managing director of Iran International Exhibitions Company (IIEC) says the number of companies that participate in international exhibitions held by IIEC in foreign countries has increased by 157% in the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 19) compared to the previous year, ILNA reported.

"Holding exhibitions abroad and at home is one of the most important goals of IIEC and in this regard the average area allocated to Iran's exhibition spaces increased by about 16 percent compared to the previous year," the portal of Industry Ministry quoted Bahman Hosseinzadeh as saying.

Underlining the Industry Ministry's programs for promoting domestic production and non-oil exports, Hosseinzadeh noted: "promoting non-oil exports, development of domestic production, supporting and promotion of technology and knowledge-based companies and the improvement of the business environment are the main axes of the ministry's



programs and the International Exhibition Company has made every effort to achieve these goals."

Underlining the fact that IIEC has also focused its programs on the aforementioned issues the official added: "Some of

How coronavirus may bring China’s debt pile to the global economy

By William Pesek

Amid surging uncertainty about the coronavirus, one thing seems clear: China will report that its economy grew close to 6% in 2020.

A sharp slowdown is the last thing China's leaders can afford. So, expect Beijing's fiscal engineers, municipal governments, central bank policymakers and statisticians to pull out all the stops to create the impression gross domestic product gets as close to this year's target as humanly possible.

When temperatures fall and face masks come off, though, the global economy will confront a China that's not as healthy and more systemically risky than ever before. The number that matters most isn't 6%—it's 34 trillion. That's how much worth of public and private debt in U.S. dollar terms China had as of 2019. This bookend is useful because it marks the price tag from Beijing's last effort to beat economic gravity.

The 10 years between 2009 — just after Wall Street crashed — and 2019 saw humankind's greatest stimulus campaigns. That explosion of multilane highways, international airports, stadiums, city halls, university campuses, five-star hotels and museums kept growth north of 8% and helped the country's

leaders maintain legitimacy.

A slow and opaque response

But the coronavirus is loosening the rug beneath the feet of China's policymakers in two ways. One, a slow and opaque response to an outbreak skirting pandemic status is denting their legacy. Two, it's piercing the veil of economic inevitability on which Beijing has dined for many years.

True, short sellers don't make tend to make much money betting against China Inc. Yet so-called Minsky moments—when credit-fueled booms go awry—come whether or not you're ready. Here, think Japan in the 1980s, Latin America, Asia and Russia in the 1990s and the U.S. in 2008. Policymakers can't easily control the fallout when economies hit a wall.

This doesn't mean China is going to crash anytime soon. The closed nature of its financial system does indeed afford China's government a variety of unique shock absorbers—not least of which \$3.2 trillion of foreign exchange reserves. There's no getting around the fact, though, that China's financial system will end 2020 on weaker footing than it entered it.

With half a billion of its citizens on lockdown and supply chains reeling, China probably won't reach 6% this year. A better reading



Back in December 2019, President Hassan Rouhani had stressed the significant role of petrochemical industry in the country's economy in the face of U.S. sanctions, saying that it is at the forefront of the country's

non-oil exports

According to the Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh, Iran's annual petrochemical output is expected to reach more than 100 million tons by 2021, despite U.S. sanctions.

Growth returns to TSE, IFB



**ECONOMY d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), which is Iran's major exchange, and Iran's over-the-counter (OTC) market witnessed growth of their indexes on Sunday after they had experienced some sharp fall on Saturday (the first day of Iranian calendar week).

TEDPIX, the main index of TSE, climbed 9,782 points to 515,583, as 6.296 billion securities worth 45.026 billion rials (about \$1.07 billion) were traded at this exchange.

The first market's index rose 5,873 points and the second market's index went up 116,150 points.

TEDPIX had risen 45,640 points, or 10 percent, to 524,394 during the past

Iranian week.

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 in the past week when the index experienced a noticeable rising trend and hit the record high of half million points.

On Sunday, Iran's over-the-counter market, known as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB), also experienced growth of its main index, IFX.

The index rose 140 points to 6,675 as 2.885 securities valued at 27.959 trillion rials (about \$665.6 million) were traded at this market.

the most important measures taken by the company have been to increase the share of knowledge-based companies in our exhibitions and also supporting startups to have special booths in most of the national and international exhibitions."

He further mentioned holding demand-based exhibitions inside the country with the aim of boosting domestic production and meeting the needs of industrial production units through domestic companies as another important measure taken by the IIEC.

Iran's first exhibition of domestic production opportunities and manufacturing boom was held at Tehran permanent international fairground in late July 2019.

In recent years, IIEC has been holding international exhibitions in the neighboring countries like Iraq, Afghanistan, Turkey and Russia, all of which have been greatly welcomed by domestic and foreign companies.



will have no choice but to default or delay payment on their cash obligations to staff, banks and suppliers, and to curtail their capex plans this year."

Even this, of course, could prove optimistic. If so, the \$1.7 trillion rout U.S. stocks suffered the first two days of this week could be a harbinger of things to come. It's the risk Trump didn't consider when tossing sand into China's export engine: how the economic trauma would boomerang back America's way.

Bad enough China is facing a potential health crisis. Even worse it's doing so in a weakened position. Global investors have plenty of reasons to worry. Thirty-four trillion, in fact.

(Source: forbes.com)

Britain’s economy dangerously exposed as coronavirus fear grips global markets

A sense of panic was palpable in all corners of the international financial system on Friday as coronavirus cases spread relentlessly across Europe, the Americas and reached sub-Saharan Africa for the first time.

Determined efforts of the Chinese authorities to contain the outbreak failed to settle frayed nerves after the World Health Organization (WHO), reacting to the news that four continents had at least six affected countries, raised its im-

pact risk alert from "high" to "very high."

Oil prices slumped to below \$50 a barrel for the first time since the summer of 2017 and stock markets saw a week's worth of frenzied trading translate into a \$5 trillion loss — equal to an 11% fall in the value of all listed companies.

This massive sell-off, the worst since the 2008 financial crash, triggered a rush to buy assets considered safe havens in times of stress — including government bonds and gold. The

interest rate on U.S. treasury bonds, considered the safest of such havens, dropped to the lowest level on record.

The extent of the panic and the potential for widespread global economic damage brought a response from central bankers, led by Bank of England governor Mark Carney and Jerome Powell, chair of the U.S. Federal Reserve, who took the unusual step of issuing a statement to reassure Americans.

(Source: theguardian.com)

# NIOC’s exploratory drillings surpass 13,000 meters

**E N E R G Y** **TEHRAN** — National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC)’s Exploration Directorate has managed to drill nine exploratory wells with a total depth of 13,281 meters in the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 19), Shana reported on Sunday, quoting an official with the company.

According to Mohammadreza Hor, the deputy director for technical affairs at NIOC’s Exploration Directorate, the mentioned directorate currently has seven active drilling rigs and according to the development plans the number of the rigs is planned to increase to eight in the coming months.

He announced the completion of drilling

operations of three wells in Forouzan, Mansouri and Deng fields after conducting preliminary tests in February, and said: “Currently, operation trials are underway for Arman exploration well in the region.”

Drilling work has been started in West Marun, Ram and Chelengar onshore fields, Hor said, noting that the drilling work will also be conducted jointly by NIOC and Pars Oil and Gas Company (POGC) for offshore Siri and Yalda fields.

National Iranian Drilling Company (NIDC) which is a subsidiary of NIOC, completed digging operation of 100 oil and gas wells during the first ten months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2019-February 19, 2020), the company’s



deputy head for drilling operation has announced.

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

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

## OPEC leaning towards larger oil cuts as virus hits demand

Several key OPEC members are leaning towards a bigger than previously expected oil output cut, four sources with knowledge of the talks said, as oil prices fell to \$50 per barrel on fears the coronavirus outbreak will hit oil demand badly.

Members including Saudi Arabia are considering agreeing an output cut of 1 million barrels per day for the second quarter of 2020, more than an initially proposed cut of 600,000 bpd, the sources said.

The Financial Times newspaper was first to report the deeper cut idea. The virus has caused almost 2,800 deaths in China and has spread to dozens of other countries.

Oil has slid by almost 25 percent this year on lower demand and slower expected economic growth, alarming OPEC members.

OPEC and allies including Russia, a group known as OPEC+, are curbing oil output by 1.7 million barrels per day (bpd) until the end of March.

They are scheduled to meet on March 5-6 in Vienna to decide further policy. Meanwhile oil prices slumped for a sixth day in a row on Friday to their lowest in more than a year, causing futures to drop by the most in a week since 2016, as the spread of coronavirus stoked fears that a slowing global economy would hit energy demand.

The coronavirus spread further, with cases reported for the first time in six countries across three continents, battering markets and leading the World Health Organization (WHO) to raise its impact risk alert to “very high.”

### ■ Its lowest since July 2017

The most active Brent future for May LCOc2 delivery fell \$2.06, or 4.0 percent, to settle at \$49.67 a barrel, its lowest since July 2017.

Brent LCOc1 futures for April delivery, meanwhile, lost \$1.66, or 3.2 percent, to settle at \$50.52 a barrel, while U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude CLc1 fell \$2.33, or 5.0 percent, to settle at \$44.76. That is the lowest closes for both Brent and WTI since December 2018.

For the week, Brent lost almost 14 percent, its biggest weekly percentage decline since January 2016, while WTI fell over 16 percent in its biggest weekly percentage drop since December 2008.

Coronavirus panic also sent global stock markets and industrial and precious metals prices tumbling, with losses amounting to \$5 trillion.

“Virtually all fixed assets are attempting to accurately discount GDP and demand impact from the coronavirus that still appears to be spreading rather than contracting,” Jim Ritterbusch, president of Ritterbusch and Associates in Galena, Illinois, said in a report.

Mainland China reported 327 new cases, the lowest in more than a month, but the



outbreak surged elsewhere. The latest WHO figures indicate over 82,000 people have been infected, with over 2,700 deaths in China and 57 deaths in 46 other countries.

Benchmark Brent crude’s slump should focus minds on this week’s meeting between the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and allies including Russia, collectively known as OPEC+.

### ■ A deeper production cut

“OPEC+ will have to deliver a deeper production cut as oil prices remain in free-fall,” Edward Moya, senior market analyst at OANDA in New York, said in a report.

Several key OPEC members are leaning toward a bigger than previously expected oil output cut, four sources with knowledge of the talks said.

Saudi Arabia, the biggest producer in OPEC, and some other members are considering a cut of 1 million barrels per day (bpd) for the second quarter of 2020, up from an initially proposed cut of 600,000 bpd, the sources said.

OPEC+ is due to meet in Vienna over March 5-6.

In a related development, Russian oil production, including gas condensate, stood at 11.29 million barrels per day (bpd) over Feb. 1-27, a source familiar with preliminary data told Reuters, as markets await news on whether Moscow will join OPEC in making further production cuts.

The preliminary figure is broadly in line with the 11.28 million bpd pumped in January but higher than Russia’s average output last year. Russia’s highest monthly oil production of 11.45 million bpd was recorded in December 2018.

From late last year Russia was allowed to exclude production of gas condensate, a form of light oil, from its quota in the existing oil supply pact between OPEC and its allies—known as OPEC+—but it continues to report a combined figure with no breakdown.

Russia’s current oil production quota stands at 10.33 million bpd excluding gas condensate. It was not immediately clear from the preliminary figures how Moscow complies with its obligations under the OPEC+ deal. Russia reports official February data on March 2. The energy ministry did not reply immediately to a Reuters request for a comment.

(Source: thenews.com.pk)

## Floating wind, carbon capture and hydrogen to lead Norwegian oil’s energy transition

By Darius Snieckus

Floating wind power, carbon capture and storage (CCS) and hydrogen will be looked to spearhead the Norwegian oil & gas industry’s transition as it targets cutting its emissions by 40% by the end of the decade and to “near zero” by 2050, according to a new climate strategy report from cross-sector body KonKraft.

The plan, developed by industry bodies Norwegian Oil & Gas, the Norwegian Shipowners Association (NSA), the Federation of Norwegian Industries (FNI) and a number of the country’s unions, will major on greenhouse gas reductions — from offshore platforms and coastal refineries but also from the fleet of service vessels supporting offshore operations on the Norwegian continental shelf — while shaping a “forward-looking energy industry” increasingly focused on renewable energy projects.

The “expertise and technological innovativeness in the Norwegian petroleum industry, its operators, suppliers and the maritime sector, are part of the solution to the global challenges of the 21st century,” said the KonKraft report authors. “They will contribute to meeting the Paris agreement’s targets and the UN sustainable development goals.

“Long-term efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions have ensured that oil & gas production in Norway has one of the lowest carbon footprints in the world. Nevertheless, this is not enough. The Norwegian petroleum industry sees the need for a change of pace in the work to reduce global warming.”

### ■ Norway’s world-class wind resources

The combination of Norway’s world-class wind resources — gusts travel over the country’s water at an average of 10 meters per second — and the country’s long-established maritime, offshore and land-based industrial industries, in KonKraft’s view, mean sea-based wind “will become a large and important new [domestic] industry.”

The “oil & gas sector will work to ensure that this strong position is further developed and that Norway takes a leading role in developing floating wind farms as well as securing larger market shares for bottom-fixed offshore wind power.”

KonKraft sees “big synergies” between the petroleum sector and offshore wind power, pointing at contractor Aker Solutions’ investment in floating wind technology developer Principle Power and rival Kvaerner’s expertise with concrete structures transferring to spar hulls, and Aibel and ABB jointly developing offshore wind converter stations.

In concert with the offshore wind sec-

tor — which will get steel in the water first with the 88MW Hywind Tampen floating array that will power an emissions-reduction pilot on the Snorre-Gullfaks oil & gas field — the KonKraft strategy involves the Norwegian oil & gas industry progressing the role of CCS, the demonstration of hydrogen as a fuel in shipping, and the use of this gas for electricity generation “over the coming decade”.

The “Norwegian oil & gas industry has acquired particular expertise and experience where carbon storage is concerned. Such technology has been used in full scale on both the Sleipner and Snøhvit fields since 1996 and 2007 respectively, with a total of 25 million tons of CO2 injected for secure storage in geological formations beneath the seabed,” said KonKraft.

### ■ Beneath the northern North Sea

The report authors highlight the CCS technology advances at Norcem Heidelberg’s cement plant in Brevik, Fortum’s energy recovery plant in Oslo, and the Northern Lights project, a collaboration project between the oil giants Equinor, Shell and Total piloting transport, handling and permanent storage of CO2 in a geological formation beneath the northern North Sea as examples of the role to be played by carbon capture.

The offshore energy transition spelled out in the KonKraft strategy report would also have hydrogen demonstrated as a fuel in shipping by 2025.

A 40% drop in Norwegian oil sector emissions by 2030 would equal an absolute reduction of 5.4 million tons of CO2 from levels in 2005, which corresponds to 10% of the country’s total emissions in 2018.

To “realize these goals, the industry will work to build a culture where good ideas are encouraged, picked up and adopted,” said KonKraft. “Oil and gas produced with a low [greenhouse gas] footprint in Norway will have a competitive advantage in the future, and its ambitious climate targets will help the petroleum sector to continue creating major value for Norwegian society.”

KonKraft said the NSA, FNI, Norwegian Oil & Gas and the unions will in 2020 jointly establish “specific quantitative targets” for emission reductions by 2030, and publish an updated climate strategy for the oil & gas industry in Norway “no later than 2025.”

The KonKraft plans mirrors that of the part-state-owned energy company Equinor, which is striving for a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from its domestic offshore oil & gas field operations and onshore plants in Norway by 40% by 2030 when compared to 2005 levels, by 70% by 2040, and to “near zero” by 2050.

(Source: rechargenews.com)

## Why is everyone talking about First Solar stock?

By Alison Hedley

First Solar (NASDAQ:FSLR) surprised investors with a fourth-quarter loss, and its results had a lot of information to unpack. But the company’s earnings and guidance are just a few of the reasons the company is a major topic of conversation in the renewables investing community. Here’s a look at some of the factors that could affect the company’s prospects as a long-term investment.

First Solar’s surprising Q4 loss was largely the result of timing issues tied to asset sales and revenue recognition, and adverse weather, including a typhoon in Japan that damaged projects. The company has also seen some hiccups related to closing out manufacturing of its Series 4 solar modules in favor of ramping up production of the higher-capacity Series 6 version.

The company manufactures the modules used to build solar projects and also develops and builds the projects itself, but said at the time of its Q4 results it is considering a sale of its development arm.

On the company’s Q4 conference call, management said challenges related to the business over the last few months have had “significant impact” with respect to revenue and gross margin. “These challenges relate to both project sale and completion timing as well as higher expected cost due to adverse weather impact,” Chief Executive Officer Mark Widmar said.

### ■ For the potential boost

A sale could be a positive, not only for the potential boost to the company’s already robust balance sheet, but also to refine the company’s focus. Unloading the unit would allow First Solar to focus on its primary business, module production, particularly during the critical time when it launches its Series 6 model, which the company said is “largely sold out through the second quarter of 2021.”

The company has been working to expand its manufacturing footprint for the Series 6 modules, which it touts as having higher energy yields at a more competitive cost. For 2020 the company expects to produce 5.7 gigawatts of Series 6 volume, which would represent a year-over-year increase of over 50%. “On the demand side, we ended 2019 with net bookings of 6.1 gigawatts and the current contracted backlog of 12.4 gigawatts,” the company said on its earnings conference call.

“Our opportunity pipeline continues to grow going into 2020 with the global opportunity set of 18.1 gigawatts including mid-to-late stage opportunities 8.2 gigawatts.”

Earlier this year First Solar disclosed the settlement of a class-action lawsuit. The suit, brought by a hedge fund controlled by Maverick Capital, alleged the company misled investors about the extent of manufacturing difficulties that ultimately affected earnings and share price for those who bought shares between April 2008 and February 2012. First Solar settled the suit for \$350 million but did not admit wrongdoing.

It will pay out the settlement in the first quarter. The significant amount paid out by First Solar in the suit may not do a lot for investor confidence, but it is a positive for the company going forward because it eliminates one uncertainty that has been lingering for a few years.

### ■ Clean energy development

First Solar recently marked 20 years since it launched operations. During that time it has underperformed the S&P 500 slightly, even as it benefited from federal subsidies for renewable energy and an unprecedented clean energy development boom. Over the past year things have been worse, with the company off by roughly 20 percentage points.

Investors would be wise not to panic based on Q4’s surprises as the company was hurt by a typhoon, an issue that should not affect earnings on a recurring basis. It also saw problems in the development unit it is now looking to sell. More concerning is the fact that the company has been around for more than 20 years but does not yet pay a dividend despite excess cash on the balance sheet, and has failed to consistently turn a profit.

On the other hand, renewables demand shows no signs of slowing down, particularly as more corporations switch to 100% clean energy and states increase renewable energy mandates.

So as the company puts a long-standing lawsuit behind it, pursues a significant sale, and prepares to launch a new line of panels, its best days could be ahead and it may be ready to show investors more stability and reward.

Would-be investors would be wise to keep the company in their sights until the initial ramp-up of Series 6 panel production is complete to see if the launch translates into improved profitability for First Solar.

(Source: fool.com)

## Data centers are not the energy hogs we thought

Data centers ran 550 percent more applications in 2018 than they did in 2010, but they only used 6 percent more energy to do so, according to a paper published on Sunday in the journal Science.

Data centers accomplished that, according to lead author Eric Masanet of the University of California Santa Barbara, by improving energy efficiency.

The “paper finds that the energy use of global data centers is lower than commonly thought, despite recent rapid growth in demand for data,” Masanet told me via email.

The study disputes recent predictions that data centers will cause rapid and unavoidable near-term growth in energy demand.

According to Masanet and his co-authors—including Nuoa Lei from Northwestern University and Arman Shehabi of the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory—that growth in energy demand may be avoidable.

Prior authors extrapolated energy use from data demand without considering simultaneous gains in efficiency, the new study says. Their predictions suffered from a lack of “bottom-up” information on data center types, locations, equipment, and energy-efficiency trends.

Masanet’s team included that information and then examined the global increase in compute instances—a measure of the energy-intensive applications run on servers. They also looked at data volume, measured by IP traffic, and found it increased 11-fold since 2010.

Energy use increased only 6 percent, however, to about 205 terawatt hours. That’s still a hefty number—about 1 percent of global electricity consumption.

(Source: forbes.com)



## Malaysia scraps cross-border Brunei projects

Malaysia has pulled out of a cross-border agreement with Brunei to develop offshore oil and gas reserves.

Malaysia’s state-owned Petronas oil company halted discussions earlier this month, according to sources, on collaboration over several drilling projects along the maritime boundary or inside the Malaysia-Brunei Commercial Arrangement Area.

The delays will reduce oil and gas production and reduce income for both the Malaysian and Bruneian authorities.

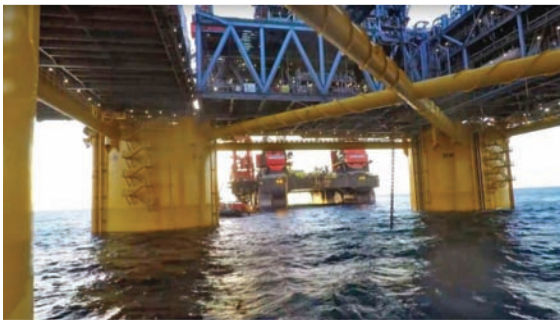
The Malaysian government has purportedly complained about the revenue split, which was agreed by the previous government of Najib Razak before his defeat the May 2018 general election.

Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, 94, since returning to power as head of the Pakatan Harapan (PH) coalition has reportedly taken a tough approach with Brunei and demanded a larger slice of profits.

Brunei is seen as keen to restart negotiations and open another source of natural gas, putting it in a weak bargaining position.

### ■ Fossil fuel resources

The BP World Energy Outlook forecast that at its present rate of extraction, Brunei will have no fossil fuel resources



left in 15 years.

Petroleum Brunei is hoping to work with Petronas to exploit several gas-rich fields to supply Brunei’s LNG (liquefied natural gas) refinery at Lumut.

In October 2010, French oil and gas giant Total agreed to sell its near 87-percent stake in a maritime block to Royal Dutch Shell for \$300 million. The deal has now been amid the Malaysian opposition.

A solution after last week looks far less likely as Mahathir has created a political crisis by bringing down the ruling PH

coalition, leaving Malaysia’s royal leaders to try to establish a new government.

Falling fossil-fuel incomes have hit Brunei, which is accustomed to extreme wealth.

The oil-rich kingdom has the world’s biggest residential palace.

A reported \$1.4 billion was spent by Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah on his palace, which has 1,788 rooms, 257 bathrooms and 7,000 luxury vehicles in more than 100 garages.

This year unemployment is projected to rise above 9.1 percent, the highest level in ASEAN.


Foreign workers continue to arrive, mainly from India, Bangladesh and the Philippines, to take jobs Bruneians do not want.

The authorities offer 0 per cent income tax and residents receive free health care, free education and housing development funding.

But social welfare will be under threat if new oil and gas sources are not found.


The dispute has created uncertainty for fossil-fuel companies operating within Malaysian territory, which is expected to reduce investment in future extraction projects.

(Source: aseaneconomist.com)



**First Announcement**  
**Call for public tender (First/Second publish)**  
**One-Stage tender**

Subject of Tender: P/F/P/F "GOALTECK" MEASURING WHILE DRILLING (MWD)



N.I.O.C 1398.7552 National Iranian Drilling Company

**Tender descriptions:**

The Tender holder	Registration No. through national electronic tendering system	Tender No. / Indent No.	Estimated value (Rial)
National Iranian Drilling Company	3/230/763	Tender No.: FP/20-98/147 Indent No.: 08-22-9845121	20, 349, 481, 619

**Qualitative evaluation of tenderers**

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

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<b>Distribution Place</b>	Hall No. 113, 1 <sup>st</sup> floor, Foreign Procurement Dept., National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN 061-34148707 Room No. 431, 4 <sup>th</sup> floor, Oil central building No.8, Yaghma alley, Jomhori Islami st., Tehran - Iran
<b>Submitting Method</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt in the amount of 190,000 Iranian Rials under account number 4001114004020491 ( Shaba No. IR 520100004001114004020491) in name of "NIDC Incomes Centralized Fund" issued by I.R. of Iran Central Bank.</li> <li>Submitting format Request for the purpose of receiving Tender Documents.</li> </ul>
<b>Closing date</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>35 Days after the last time of Purchasing. ( closing date: 21April2020 )</li> <li>The envelopes will be opened At 9:15. a.m On ( 22April2020 )</li> </ul>
<b>Documents Receiving Method</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hall No. 107, 1<sup>st</sup> floor, Tender Committee, Operation building, National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN.</li> <li>Tel: +98-61-34148580 +98-61-34148569</li> </ul>

**Tender Guarantee**

Value of guarantee	1,018,000,000 Rial / 8,499 Euro
<b>Type of guarantee</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bank guarantees or guarantees issued by non-bank institutions that obtain activity license from the central bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran.</li> <li>Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt under account number 4001114006376636 ( Shaba No. IR 350100004001114006376636) in name of "NIDC saving account" by the central bank of Islamic Republic of Iran.</li> </ul>
<b>Duration of credit &amp; quotation</b>	Tender Guarantee and quotation should be valid for 90 days and extendable maximum for one time in initial validity duration.

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# Saudis join shale gas race

If you can't beat them join them

By Salman Parviz

**TEHRAN** — Saudi Arabia fought a price war aimed at putting the U.S. shale industry out of business just six years ago and ultimately failed. Last week Aramco Chief Executive Officer Amin Nasser told Reuters that the company is launching the biggest shale gas development outside the U.S. to boost domestic gas supply to be used to replace oil to fire power generation plants.

The \$110 billion Jafurah shale gas field project received the green light from Aramco on Saturday aimed at making Saudi Arabia world's third largest gas producer by 2030. Top two producers are U.S. and Russia.

The plan is to use the gas to replace 800,000 bpd crude used for power plants to generate electricity by 2030.

Fracking is a controversial way of extracting natural gas from beneath the earth's surface which was previously too costly to tap. It has already proven to have triggered earthquake, and with a potential to cause numerous other forms of ecological damage, it has been banned by some countries.

Why is fracking so contentious? Environmentalists argue that long term effects of fracking on the environment is not studied and known.

The process requires pumping water, sand and chemicals into the fields at high pressure on sandstones and shale under the earth that contain natural gas. The gas is accumulated through the decomposition of dead organisms in the rocks. Fracking extracts that gas by drilling into rocks by injecting pressurized water mixed with various chemicals to force it out, inevitably disturbing a terrestrial netherworld.

Fracking uses a substantial amount of water which is mixed with chemicals, including toxic liquids, acids, detergents and poisons, known as "fracking cock-



A fracking site in Texas in 2017. Photograph: Bloomberg via Getty

tail" that is thrust with high pressure on the shale, thereby cracking them and releasing the gas. In short extracting natural gas from rock.

The long-term impact of injecting the earth with such a lethal chemical cocktail has not been studied thoroughly.

What is known is that fracking causes earthquakes, rampant air and water pollution, and an ever growing list of public health problems. And then there are risks to the climate. Once you properly account for emissions of carbon dioxide and methane (from natural gas), the supposed advantages of switching to gas-fired power plants from coal are far less impressive than advertised.

With the severe shortage of water in the region, Nasser said Aramco had developed fracking using seawater, which

will remove the obstacle that a lack of water supply represents to fracking in the desert.

"A lot of people said it doesn't work outside the U.S. because fracking uses a lot of water and we are not rich with water. But we are using seawater," the Aramco executive said in the interview.

The Jufarah field is near the Persian Gulf coast, having relatively easy access to seawater, which will have to be lightly treated before using in fracking. Aramco has also identical local sand that can be used for fracking, insists Nasser.

Saudi Arabia is bordered by Jordan, Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Oman and Yemen. There has been no comments from the neighbors about the ecological damage that such a project can bring with it.

## Fracking and 2020 U.S. elections

A stand on fracking industry can be a very tricky. On the one hand it can be a question of creation of jobs and a source of energy in the short term. However, the long-term implications on the environment is not known. For politicians short-term gains count.

Gains to consumers far outweigh the costs associated with fracking. Eliminating fracking would inevitably lead to higher natural gas prices and higher electricity prices and increased unemployment as the U.S. would once again become a net importer of natural gas and oil.

Making 2020 elections a climate emergency story?

"On my first day as president, I will sign an executive order that puts a total moratorium on all new fossil fuel leases for drilling offshore and on public lands. And I will ban fracking — everywhere," Democratic presidential hopeful Elizabeth Warren tweeted.

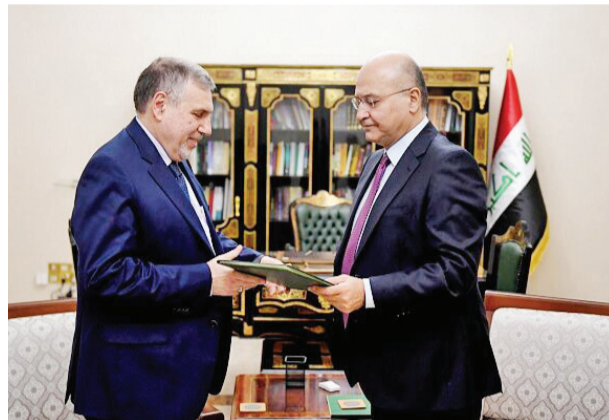
The rest of the Democratic hopefuls will follow suit, with a possible exceptions of Joe Biden and Ohio Rep. Tim Ryan, analysts predict.

Of course, oil industry is a mega industry with big backing behind it. On Thursday a U.S. oil lobby group said banning hydraulic fracturing and halting new drilling on federal land would cost the U.S. economy \$7 trillion in the next decade and kill millions of jobs. No need to talk about Trump's stand on the issue.

In conclusion I want to ask why should we abandon and sanction Iran's easily accessible, environmentally friendly to extract fossil fuel deposits and instead venture into the North Pole, as Russians, Canadians and Americans are doing presently or dig miles under the ground inside rocks in search of natural gas?

## Iraqi parliament confidence vote to Allawi cabinet shrouded in ambiguity

**1 →** Based on latest reports, what has so far prevented the process of assessing the competence of cabinet members introduced by Mohammed Tawfiq Allawi is the emergence of some political disagreements, which are mainly attributed to the protests made by the factions of the Kurdistan Region against the mechanism used by the Prime Minister in introducing the candidates for ministries. In fact, the factions of the Kurdistan Region seek to introduce their own candidates for the ministerial posts, on the other hand, Allawi does not stand the violation of his independence in introducing cabinet members.



An Iraqi political figure Ala El Khatib close to the Prime Minister announced that the Kurdistan Democratic Party led by Masoud Barzani insisted on the necessity of selecting its nominees for new cabinet ministerial seats, but Allawi did not accept.

"Allawi rejected the names proposed by the Kurdistan Democratic Party and emphasized that he himself must propose the cabinet members", he added. Therefore, these political disagreements and the insistence on introducing certain names for ministerial seats is one the major reasons for repeated postponements of the parliamentary sessions.

The disagreement has reached a point where even some people in Iraq are chanting slogans in favor of the U.S. and, surprisingly, calling for the overthrow of the Allawi-led government which even has not been established. In this regard, the Al-qavia Al-Iraqia Coalition announced that it is striving to overthrow the government of Mohammed Tawfiq Allawi which has not been formed yet and is still waiting for the vote of confidence from the parliament. The coalition spokesman Faleh al-Issawi said that the coalition does not seek postponement in the parliamentary session for the vote of confidence, but it wants to overthrow the Allawi's cabinet in the parliament.

Meanwhile, however, U.S. consultations with the officials of the Kurdistan Region cannot be ineffective in the repeated postponement of the parliament special session on Allawi's cabinet. Although U.S. terrorist leaders have repeatedly stated that they are in favor of stabilizing Iraq and called for the new government to be formed as soon as possible, they provoke their allies in the Kurdistan Region to stand up against Allawi's government.

About two weeks ago, the Prime Minister of Iraqi Kurdistan Region Masrour Barzani held a series of meetings with various U.S. officials. U.S. Secretary of Defense Mark Esper had a meeting with Masrour Barzani and emphasized that Erbil is one of Washington's key allies. Barzani also held a meeting with U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, in which the U.S. official gave his praise to the Kurdistan Region.

It is clear that the U.S. has used all its influence over the officials of the Kurdistan Region in order to undermine the process of forming the cabinet of Allawi. The main purpose of the U.S. is to create a political vacuum and, consequently a legal vacuum in Iraq which leads to tension and chaos in the country.

## The U.S. and a smart oligarchy

**1 →** The Democratic Party, backed by lobbyists, launched a movement called "anyone except McGovern". Therefore, he lost the votes of the Democratic Party, while had not have the Republicans' votes from the beginning, so he lost the election. He later said, "I lost to Nixon because I was against the war".

Now few may remember those years, but this strange election engineering is still used as a key model by lobbyists and power-holders, to the extent that many now refer to Bernie Sanders as the second McGovern, believing he will also face lobbyists' anger because of its opposition to wealth-holders as well as opposition to U.S. military policies around the world.

Some figures like Michael Bloomberg, the tenth richest man in the U.S., has further reinforced the idea of the importance of money and wealth in the U.S. election by his sudden presence in the Democratic race.


Bloomberg distributes free food and booze in many campaign events, and has spent more than \$ 300 million on advertising in the past month alone. His efforts have been effective, and Bloomberg has gained a good place in the polls despite not being present in the Iowa and New Hampshire elections.

Figures like Bloomberg in the U.S. political system show that money and wealth has become a key factor in the U.S. to help candidates to take power. For example,

by looking at the spending of candidates in congressional elections, we will find out that nearly 90 percent of the candidates who have spent the most have won the U.S. congressional election.

The U.S. election is limited to the Democratic and Republican parties, and the electoral process is designed in a way that the third party is less likely to take part in the race, so people have to choose someone from the Democratic or Republican Parties.

In fact, any third party is practically absent from the debates, is not reflected by media outlets and is not financially backed. This is what many called that a two-party dictatorship or a smart oligarchy in America.



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**Call for public tender (First/Second publish)**  
**One-Stages tender**

**N.I.O.C**      Subject of Tender: **HAMMER PLUG VALVE1" X2" CWP**      **National Iranian Drilling Company**

**1398.7525**

Tender descriptions:			
The Tender holder	Registration No. through national electronic tendering system	Tender No. /Indent No.	Estimated value (Rial)
National Iranian Drilling Company	3,230,281	Tender No.: FP/11-98/201 Indent No.: 01-22-9846012	5,814,000,000

**Qualitative evaluation of tenderers**

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

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Submitting Method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt in the amount of 190,000 Iranian Rials under account number 4001114004020491 (Shaba No. IR 520100004001114004020491) in name of "NIDC Incomes Centralized Fund" issued by I.R. of Iran Central Bank.</li> <li>Submitting format Request for the purpose of receiving Tender Documents.</li> </ul>		
Documents Receiving Method	Closing date	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>35 Days after the last time of Purchasing</li> </ul>	
	Address	Hall No. 107, 1 <sup>st</sup> floor, Tender Committee, Operation building, National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN. Tel: +98-61-34148580 +98-61-34148569	

**Tender Guarantee**

Value of guarantee	291,000,000 Rial / 2,146 Euro
Type of guarantee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bank guarantees or guarantees issued by non-bank institutions that obtain activity license from the central bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran.</li> <li>Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt under account number 4001114006376636 ( Shaba No. IR 350100004001114006376636) in name of "NIDC saving account" by the central bank of Islamic Republic of Iran.</li> </ul>
Duration of credit & quotation	Tender Guarantee and quotation should be valid for 90 days and extendable maximum for one time in initial validity duration.

(Name of department)

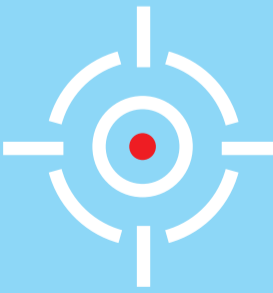
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**One-Stages tender**

**N.I.O.C**      Subject of Tender: **P/F: "ANTARES" FREE POINT INDICATOR , TYPE I50 3**      **National Iranian Drilling Company**

**1398.7494**

Tender descriptions:			
The Tender holder	Registration No. through national electronic tendering system	Tender No. /Indent No.	Estimated value (Rial)
National Iranian Drilling Company	3 /230 / 215	Tender No.: FP/04-98/ 195 Indent No.: 08-22-9845125	4,206,000,000

**Qualitative evaluation of tenderers**

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

**Purchasing & Submitting**

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Submitting Method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt in the amount of 190,000 Iranian Rials under account number 4001114004020491 (Shaba No. IR 520100004001114004020491) in name of "NIDC Incomes Centralized Fund" issued by I.R. of Iran Central Bank.</li> <li>Submitting format Request for the purpose of receiving Tender Documents.</li> </ul>		
Documents Receiving Method	Closing date	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>35 Days after the last time of Purchasing ( closing date : <b>April 13 / 2020</b> )</li> <li>The envelopes will be opened At <b>10:45 .a.m. On April 14 / 2020</b> )</li> </ul>	
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**Tender Guarantee**

Value of guarantee	21,000,000 Rial / 1,536 Euro
Type of guarantee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bank guarantees or guarantees issued by non-bank institutions that obtain activity license from the central bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran.</li> <li>Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt under account number 4001114006376636 ( Shaba No. IR 350100004001114006376636) in name of "NIDC saving account" by the central bank of Islamic Republic of Iran.</li> </ul>
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## The travel industry is suffering its worst shock since 9/11 because of coronavirus

**New York (CNN Business)** — It's one of the largest industries in the world, with \$5.7 trillion in revenue. It is responsible for an estimated 319 million jobs, or roughly one in 10 people working on the planet. And no sector is more at risk from the novel coronavirus.

The travel industry has already taken a huge hit due to travel restrictions and canceled trips for both business and pleasure, but that's just the beginning.

It could be the worst crisis for the industry since the September 11 terrorist attacks on the United States, according to some experts.

"It's on the front line of the fallout," said Mark Zandi, chief economist with Moody's Analytics. "It's the most directly and immediately impacted."

### Travel industry crucial to the global economy

The hit to the travel industry has the potential to become a major drag on the global economy if the coronavirus continues to spread around the world.

"It's vital. If you measure the entirety of the impact of travel, it is bigger than any other industry around the world. No other industry can say it supports 1 in 10 jobs," said Adam Sacks, president of Travel Economics, a leading research firm that follows the industry. His firm produced the data on the industry's global revenue and employment, the latter for the World Travel and Tourism Council.

"It's partly because it's such a diverse industry. It includes a lot of things you don't think of," said Sacks. "Besides airlines and hotels, it's part of retail, part of restaurants, parts of technology."

The effect on travel is growing by the day.

There has been a sharp drop in travel across the Pacific, not just to and from China, the epicenter of the outbreak, but also to other Asian countries. This week United Airlines disclosed that it had seen a near total drop in demand to China and about a 75% decline in near-term demand on the rest of its trans-Pacific routes.

Chinese nationals have become the most frequent global travelers in the world, with 180 million holding passports, compared to the 147 million Americans who have passports. And travel by the Chinese has been virtually halted due to the crisis.

### Sharp drop in business travel

The falloff in travel has expanded beyond the Chinese market.

Several major conferences expected to draw more than 100,000 visitors each were canceled even if their location has yet to experience an outbreak. That's because people traveling from around the world could bring the virus to the event, and infected people are slow to show symptoms.

Canceled conferences include the Mobile World Congress in Barcelona, the leading show for the mobile phone industry, the Geneva Motor Show, Facebook's (FB) F8 conference, and ironically enough, the ITB Berlin, the leading trade show for the travel industry itself. It was expected to draw 160,000 participants starting Wednesday.

"The fact that the largest global travel show is being canceled right now is telling," said Sacks.

But it's not just the big shows being canceled. All kinds of business trips are being canceled or put on hold because of companies' concerns with exposing employees to unknown risks.

Major companies such as Amazon (AMZN) are on record discouraging non-essential travel for employees. According to a survey of 400 businesses by the Global Business Travel Association, nearly half of businesses have already canceled or postponed at least some meetings or travel. The group estimates that up to 37% of business travel is at risk of being lost.

The steep and immediate drop in willingness to travel is comparable to what happened following the 9/11 attacks, said Scott Solombrino, the trade group's executive director. Confidence started to improve as time passed after the attacks, he said. In the case of coronavirus, the concern about travel is growing each day amid new reports of outbreaks around the world.

"It is fundamentally affecting the way many companies are now doing business," he said. "If this turns into a global pandemic, the industry may well lose billions of dollars -- an impact that will have negative ramifications for the entire global economy."



## ROUND THE GLOBE

### Maya site of Copan

Discovered in 1570 by Diego García de Palacio, the Maya site of Copan is one of the most important sites of the Mayan civilization.

Located in Honduras, the site is functioned as the political, civil and religious center of the Copan Valley. It was also the political center and cultural focus of a larger territory that covered the southeast portion of the Maya area and its periphery.



The first evidence of population in the Copan Valley dates back to 1500 BC, but the first Maya-Cholan immigration from the Guatemalan Highlands is dated around 100 CE. The Maya leader Yax Kuk Mo, coming from the area of Tikal (Petén), arrived in the Copan Valley in 427 CE, and started a dynasty of 16 rulers that transformed Copan into one of the greatest Maya cities during the Classic Maya Period.

The great period of Copan, paralleling that of other major Mayan cities, occurred during the Classical period, 300 CE-900. Major cultural developments took place with significant achievements in mathematics, astronomy and hieroglyphic writing. The archaeological remains and imposing public squares reveal the three main stages of development, during which evolved the temples, plazas, altar complexes and ball courts that can be seen today, before the city was abandoned in the early 10th century.

The Mayan city of Copan as it exists today is composed of a main complex of ruins with several secondary complexes encircling it. The main complex consists of the Acropolis and important plazas.

(Source: UNESCO)

# Rig-e Jenn: An extraordinary landscape named after elves!

By Afshin Majlesi

**TEHRAN** — Eastern Iran is dominated by vast deserts known worldwide for having harsh sun-scorched landscapes, parts of which more attractive for adrenaline chasers.

The one, which is focus of this story, is Rig-e Jenn ("Dune of the Jinn"); a barren and desolate place dominated by enormous sand dunes that defies avid skillful sightseers, adventurers and motorists driving 4WD vehicles.

Rig-e Jenn is in fact home to giant sand dunes, vast swamps that could pose a serious challenge even to passionate trekkers with arduous hike and scarcity of water.

People who have been there say it feels almost like walking across an ocean floor without water. It is where eye-catching structures and shapes are only formed by constant winds blowing across vast areas of sand that can almost look unreal and "too" smooth.

Ones who set up camps are well rewarded when the sun sets. It's the right time for a very bright moon and extremely vivid stars to show off in the absolute clear sky of the desert.

Also known as the "Desert of Spirits", it is not a place where a novice trekker goes alone! But why? Because it's in the middle of nowhere with no roads and in some parts with no mobile coverage. Experts say even seasoned voyagers must plan prudently before setting foot on the desert.

Rig-Jenn is situated in a border area between Semnan and Isfahan provinces. In another world, it is part of Dasht-e Kavir (the central desert of Iran). The bizarre desert can be reached after hours first on asphalt roads, and then for some hours through uninhabited terrain.

Rig-e Jenn assumed its name from whom believed that is was haunted by spirits and the devil. This say-so was strengthened by, or probably originat-



**Rig-e Jenn assumed its name from whom believed that is was haunted by spirits and the devil. The bizarre desert can be reached after hours first on asphalt roads, and then for some hours through uninhabited terrain.**

ed from the fact that perhaps many had entered the desert and never returned.

Narratives say that even caravans used to skip passing through Rig-e Jenn, believing it to be a place where evil spirits and "jinn" dwell. A "jinn" is a spirit in Islamic culture and Rig-e Jenn was once (and in some places still) believed to accommodate evil spirits!

Even today, amongst the neighboring towns and villages some still hold this belief. Sources say that Sven Hedin, the famous Swedish desert explorer avoided the area during his 1900s travels to Iranian deserts and in the 1930s, Alfons Gabriel only managed to cross the southern 'tail' of the desert on his way from Ashin to Aroosan.

Finally a feasible path through the Rig-e Jenn was found some years ago by trial and error using modern equipment such as 4WDs, maps, aerial photos, laptops, GPS devices, and aids.

If you are planning to pay a visit, bear in mind that sometimes fierce winds howl throughout Rig-e Jenn voicing fears to passersby!

## Remnants of prehistorical settlement discovered in Iran's Jiroft

**HERITAGE** **TEHRAN** — A team of **d e s k** Iranian and German archaeologists has recently discovered remnants of a prehistorical settlement during a survey in an ancient hill in Jiroft, southeast Iran.

"According to early reports, a very important building from the Achaemenid era (550-330 BC) has been discovered in a prehistorical Tepe (hill) situated near Tom Gavan village of Jiroft [county, Kerman province]," Jiroft governor said on Sunday, IRNA reported.

"The hill itself dates back to [some] 6,500 years ago to the third millennium BC," Abuzar Atapourvaziri stated.

The official announced the launch of a research laboratory and archaeological site in Jiroft, adding, "It is constructed to keep data and artifacts [collected] from the [neighboring] archaeological sites for further



investigation."

Senior Iranian archaeologist Nader Alidad-Soleymani and German Professor Peter Pfalzner co-led a newly-commenced comprehensive survey, which is aimed to record evidence about previously excavated sites in the counties of Jiroft, Kahnouj, Anbarabad, Faryab, Rudbar, Qalehganj and Manujan.

Supervised by Iran's Cultural Heritage and Tourism Research Center, the previous surveys adopted a methodology that involved field sampling methods, pottery documentation, setting up a database system and carbon dating.

Jiroft is one of the richest historical areas in the world, with ruins and artifacts dating back to the third millennium BC. Many Iranian and foreign experts see the findings in Jiroft as signs of a civilization as great as Sumer and ancient Mesopotamia.

## Arts of ancient Iran: Chalice decorated with leopards

**TOURISM** **TEHRAN** — The pictured Iranian chalice, which is decorated with leopards and geometric patterns, dates from the fourth millennium BC. It was unearthed near Tepe Sialk which is a large ancient archeological site in a suburb of the city of Kashan, central Iran.

The object is being kept and displayed at Louvre museum in Paris. According to the Louvre's Department of Near Eastern Antiquities, painted ceramic vessels comprised the principal medium of artistic expression in Iran during the fifth millennium BC. The most beautiful examples feature highly stylized animal motifs repeated several times over. Goats appear frequently. Lions, panthers, and leopards are rarer. Footed vessels were found both in Tepe Sialk on the edge of the Kavir Desert and at Tepe Hissar east of the Caspian Sea.

Iranian painted ceramics of the fifth millennium BC and early fourth millennium BC are characterized by the quality of their execution and by the variety of designs employed: they formed a vast common cultural idiom.

As the potter's wheel had not yet been invented, the vessels were made by hand using coils of clay. The brown designs with which they were decorated combined geometric patterns with elements derived from the local environment; however, animals and plants were so highly stylized that they were difficult to identify. These motifs were repeated several times - in the art of this period, rhythmic repetition took precedence over narrative considerations. The Tepe Sialk site was established on the edge of the Iranian plateau; it was founded circa the mid-fifth millennium BC - a little earlier than Susa, the major site of the Elamite period.

The depiction of big cats is a characteristic of Tepe Sialk art. In contrast, such imagery is totally absent from the vessels vases produced in Susa. A larger shallow bowl from Sialk depicts a procession of panthers or



leopards on its upper level. A sherd of a pot from the same site portrays a leopard rising up on its hind legs and gripping the hindquarters of an ox.

### How chalices of Tepe Sialk differ from those crafted in Tepe Hissar

Louvre experts believe despite the existence of a vast common cultural idiom in Iran during the fifth millennium BC, which was principally reflected in

painted ceramics, regional variations can be seen in the shapes and decorative motifs employed: footed vessels, also called 'chalices,' were made both in Tepe Sialk and in Tepe Hissar, east of the Caspian Sea. Goblets were common in Tall-e Bakun, in the Fars region.

"Bushel, bowls, and small elegantly designed jars were the first three basic forms found in Susian pottery. Ceramics with designs painted on a red ground were typical of Islamabad, south of Tehran. The designs often combined geometric patterns (here, bands of jagged lines alternating with ladder patterns next to a stylized woolly fleece) and animal motifs: ibexes, ducks, birds with outspread wings, and, more rarely, big cats: panthers or leopards."

Evidence shows that representations of human figures were very rare during this period. The image most frequently found on the vessels of Tepe Sialk and Tepe Hissar image is that of a leaping goat in mid-air with its legs pointing forwards.

"There was obviously a connection between the shape of the vessel and the nature of its design. On the vessel shown here, a procession of big cats with spotted coats is depicted."

The walking motion is conveyed by the oblique position of the legs. It is amusing to observe a kind of contradiction between the simplified way in which the leopards' bodies have been rendered and the extreme realism with which the animals' tails are depicted, with their curling tips emphasized and fur meticulously evoked by small streaks of color.

Tepe Sialk has so far been excavated several times; the first three seasons in (1933, 1934, and 1937) by a team headed by Roman Ghirshman and his wife Tania Ghirshman. Artifacts from the original dig ended up mostly at the Louvre, while some can be found at the British Museum, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, and the National Museum of Iran and in the hands of private collectors.

# \$47m more allocated to combat COVID-19 outbreak

**SOCIETY** **TEHRAN** — The Plan and Budget Organization has allocated 2 trillion rials (nearly \$47 million at the official rate of 42,000 rials) more to the Ministry of Health in order to counter COVID-19.

This allocation is in line with the order of the President Hassan Rouhani to enhance services of medical staff, nurses and health workers fighting coronavirus, IRIB reported.

Previously, the Plan and Budget Organization allocated 3.5 trillion rials (nearly \$125 million) to the Ministry of Health in this regard.

Health Minister Saeed Namaki earlier announced that effective measures have been taken and comprehensive plans are underway to get rid of the virus in the country.

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

The number of coronavirus cases in the country has risen to 987, with 54 deaths so far.



## Tehran to host INOTEX 2020 in June

**SOCIETY** **TEHRAN** — The 9th International Innovation and Technology Exhibition (INOTEX 2020) will be held at Tehran Permanent International Fairground on June 7-10.

It is expected that more than 18,000 people will attend the event which is aimed to attract investment for startups and introduce investment opportunities to them.

Over 500 companies, startups, and investors will set up booths at the exhibition representing their latest achievements, with more than 600 B2B sessions and 20 side events to be held during the three-day event.

Established in 2012, INOTEX is a platform for innovation and technology, which seeks to introduce latest technologies to large and medium-sized industries in addition to connecting



customers of technology products to their manufacturers, and also introduces investors to the opportunity to invest in technological projects or start-ups.

Leading governmental organizations of Iran are the partners behind INOTEX, including Vice Presidency for Science and Technology, Presidential Center for Innovation and Technology Cooperation and Innovation Fund.

## What does Iranian traditional medicine recommend against COVID-19?

**SOCIETY** **TEHRAN** — Iranian traditional medicine can play an effective role in strengthening the immune system to resist the novel coronavirus infection, the health ministry's director of traditional medicine department has said.

Referring to the importance of health care, Alireza Abbassian explained some of the measures recommended in Iranian traditional medicine to strengthen the immune system, ISNA reported.

He went on to say that medical fasting, reducing calorie consumed in a day by 20 percent less than usual, can help strengthen the immune system and reduce inflammation, this method can improve the body's function against the disease.

"Pickles should be restricted and it is essential to avoid spicy food such as red pepper, mustard and salts in addition to salty nuts or cucumbers," he said, adding, it is also advisable to limit the consumption of



yogurt, tomatoes, bananas and thick food.

On the other hand, the consumption of juicy stews along with fresh vegetables, prune, barberry, zucchini, green bean, okra and pumpkin are also helpful to boost the immune system, he noted.

He went on to conclude that thyme, cinnamon, fennel flower, turmeric, stachys lavandulifolia, viper's-buglosses, chamomile, saffron, rosemary and cloves are also beneficial to the body.

## Space images show drastic drop in China pollution as coronavirus hits

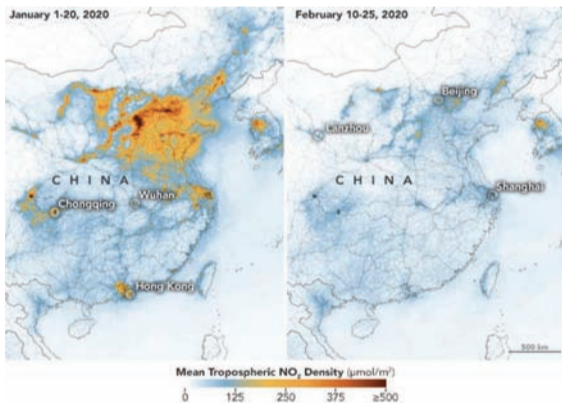
Satellite images show a dramatic drop in pollution over China after the coronavirus outbreak shut down swathes of the country's industry and travel.

US space agency Nasa said the change was at least partly related to the economic slowdown caused by efforts to contain the virus.

Nasa maps show how levels of nitrogen dioxide, a toxic gas from vehicles, power plants and factories, plummeted after the mass quarantine, compared with before.

Scientists have previously found the coronavirus wiped out at least a quarter of China's emissions of damaging greenhouse gases in just two weeks in mid-February.

Closing industrial plants and asking people to stop at home has led to sharp drops in the burning of fossil fuels — a key cause of the climate crisis — in the world's largest greenhouse gas producer.



China, where the outbreak began, has nearly 80,000 cases of coronavirus, by far the largest number of any country, with nearly 2,900 deaths.

Nasa's maps compare pollution levels between the first three weeks of the year and 10-25 February.

The space agency's scientists said the fall in pollution was first apparent near Wuhan, the source of the outbreak, but eventually spread across the country.

"This is the first time I have seen such a dramatic drop-off over such a wide area for a specific event," said Fei Liu, an air quality researcher at Nasa's Goddard Space Flight Centre.

She said she had seen a decline in nitrogen dioxide levels during the economic recession of 2008 but said that decrease was more gradual.

(Source: The Independent)

### ENGLISH IN USE

#### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → E

## Wildfire extinguished in northern forests

Wildfire, erupted in northern forests of Gilan province over the past 2 days, has been fully extinguished, commander of the protection unit of natural resources and watershed management organization of Gilan has stated.

According to the latest statistics, approximately 130 hectares of forests in Gilan province have been burnt in recent days, IRNA quoted Mohammad Qorbani as saying on Sunday.

He went on to say that 99 percent of fires in 13 cities of Gilan province have caused no serious damage to the trees.

In spite of the complete containment of fire, the protection unit is on full alert, he further noted.

Appreciating all the forces who made efforts to control the wildfire, he concluded that fire broke out in various cities, including Rezvanshahr, Talesh, Roudbar, Siahkal and some others.

## آتش سوزی جنگل های گیلان مهار شد

فرمانده یگان حفاظت اداره کل منابع طبیعی و آبخیزداری گیلان گفت: آتش سوزی جنگل های استان گیلان پس از ۷۲ ساعت تلاش، کاملاً مهار شد.

سرهنگ محمد قربانی لرد عصر روز شنبه در گفت و گوی اختصاصی با خبرنگار ایرنا اظهار داشت: بر اساس آخرین آمارها به صورت تقریبی حدود «۱۳۰ هکتار» از اراضی جنگلی استان گیلان در چند روز اخیر دچار آتش سوزی شدند.

وی افزود: ۹۹ درصد از آتش سوزی جنگل های ۱۳ شهرستان استان گیلان سطحی بوده و خسارت جدی به درختان وارد نشده است.

فرمانده یگان حفاظت اداره کل منابع طبیعی و آبخیزداری گیلان خاطر نشان کرد: به رغم مهار کامل آتش در جنگل های استان، نیروهای یگان حفاظت اداره کل منابع طبیعی و آبخیزداری در آماده باش کامل هستند.

وی ضمن قدردانی از تمامی نیروها در مهار آتش در جنگل های استان گیلان اضافه کرد: آتش سوزی در سطح شهرستان های مختلف استان از جمله رضوانشهر، تالش، رودبار، سیاهکل و غیره روی داده.

### PREFIX/SUFFIX

#### “phon-, phono-”

■ **Meaning:** sound, voice

■ **For example:** Small-group activities focus on **phonological** awareness and language skills.

### PHRASAL VERB

#### Put in something

■ **Meaning:** to do something in a particular way, especially a performance in a play, film, race

■ **For example:** He put in a brilliant performance in the British Grand Prix.

### IDIOM

#### Doom and gloom

■ **Explanation:** A general atmosphere of pessimism, and a feeling that the situation is not going to improve

■ **For example:** Fortunately, it's not doom and gloom for all businesses, in spite of the economic situation.

## Orchids are woven through Chinese culture. What happens if they vanish?

Unfurling across paintings, poems and carvings, Cymbidium orchids are more than just wild plants in China. They are inextricably linked with the country's culture. But this rich blooming of human response to orchids that has endured for millennia is fragile, and as Cymbidium orchids increasingly vanish from the wild so too do the words and knowledge that humans have about them.

Every year the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, and the New York Botanical Garden open their doors to thousands of visitors who flock to their orchid shows. Easily grown and long-lasting orchids such as generic Phalaenopsis form the bulk of these temporary displays. But behind the scenes these institutions engage in longer-term work to conserve not just living plants but also records of the culture attached to them.



Kew's Spirit Collection contains ghostly flowers of Cymbidium kanran; their colour washed out but their three-dimensional shape preserved by immersion in a mixture of alcohol, glycerol, and water. In collaboration with the Institute of Medicinal Plant Development, Beijing, Kew has also developed a collection of plants – including orchids – in the forms they are used in traditional Chinese medicine – chopped, dried, fried and so on. Indexed with scientific botanical names, this collection is a repository of knowledge and a reference tool for authenticating botanical ingredients.

Dr Barnabas Seyler, assistant researcher in the department of environment at Sichuan University, looked at the relationship between biodiversity and cultural diversity by examining changes in knowledge of Cymbidium orchids in Liangshan Yi autonomous prefecture, Sichuan.

“As an ethnobotanist, I find all facets of biocultural diversity to be fascinating,” says Seyler.

“Many people, particularly in the west, but also in rapidly changing, urbanising, and modernising China do not fully appreciate the magnitude of symbolism and pride that Cymbidium have held throughout history in traditional Han Chinese culture,” he says.

“Symbolism, metaphors, and poetry associated with Cymbidium are credited to have begun with Confucius's own sayings and infuse traditional Confucian thought today. If you walk into any Chinese restaurant around the world, or into any tea parlour or salon in China, you will likely find paintings, furniture, place settings, or other material culture items depicting Cymbidium orchids.”

Orchids, like other wild species, are vulnerable to the impact of climate change and habitat loss. But Cymbidium species native to Sichuan studied by Seyler have an additional vulnerability – their beauty. Between 2005–2008, when Cymbidium prices were at their peak, wild-collected rare forms could be sold for six-figure sums. In 2006 one was bought for 4.6m Chinese yuan (£511,000).

Interviewing individuals in predominantly Yi and Han communities, Seyler and his colleagues assessed whether people could identify different Cymbidium species. Additionally, they asked about local ecological knowledge: how to find, harvest and grow orchids, as well as orchid business knowledge, and awareness of orchids in arts, academia and idiomatic expressions.

In all categories of knowledge, they found that when species were locally extinct, knowledge about them had declined, except among individuals involved in their trade.

Seyler believes that botanical gardens contribute much towards conserving biocultural diversity, “through ex-situ collections, for example collecting and showcasing plants like Cymbidium, advocating for their conservation, and educating the general public, and documenting traditional knowledge, stories, and cultural traditions associated with these plants.”

(Source: The Guardian)

### WORDS IN THE NEWS

#### War risk to Iraqi treasures

(April 02, 2003)

Politicians, leading archaeologists and scholars around the world have expressed concern that the relentless bombing of Iraq could destroy priceless treasures. This report by Sunita Nahar.

Iraq is thought to be the **cradle of civilization**. The first urban communities, the first evidence of writing and the first **legal codes** are said to have evolved in the country. Iraq is also an important land for Christians, Jews and Muslims. It's home to Babylon - the Biblical Garden of Eden and Ur, believed to be the birthplace of the prophet Abraham. From palaces to the desert mounds, **remnants** of this ancient culture **litter the landscape**.

The United Nations cultural agency, UNESCO, The Arab League, archaeologists and politicians in Europe and the United States have all warned of the threat the US-led war in Iraq **poses** to these cultural sites. They've provided US officials with lists of sites and museums so they can be avoided during the military campaign. UNESCO says it's confident that the US will **take steps** to protect Iraq's **rich heritage**. Reports suggest American-led troops appear aware of the importance of these sites, apparently they can only fire at some of them in self-defense - but this is **hardly likely** to be their first concern **in the midst of battle**.

■ **Words**

**the cradle of civilization:** the place where the advanced stage of human social development began

**legal codes:** rules of law

**the birthplace:** the place where someone was born

**remnants:** a remnant of something is a small part of it that is left when the main part has disappeared or been destroyed

**litter the landscape:** are scattered all around the land

**poses:** if something poses a threat or danger, it is the cause of it

**take steps:** take action, make moves

**rich heritage:** interesting and valuable buildings and monuments

**hardly likely:** not very probable

**in the midst of battle:** in the middle of the fighting

(Source: BBC)

## The violence in Delhi is not a ‘riot’. It is targeted anti-Muslim brutality

→ 1 Within hours of Mishra’s ultimatum, BJP gangs started attacking anti-CAA protesters. Within days, they were burning down Muslim houses, shops and mosques. And Muslims themselves. At least 39 people have been killed, including a policeman.

Hindus, too, have been attacked and their houses burnt. This has led some to portray the events in Delhi as general lawlessness, even primarily as Muslim violence. In 1958, many West Indians armed themselves with bricks and bats, some ganged up looking for whites to attack. That did not detract from it being a racist assault on local blacks. Nor does the fact that Muslims in Delhi have also responded with violence diminish the Hindu chauvinism and anti-Muslim hostility that lies at the heart of the “riots”.

The BJP is driven by the ideology of “Hindutva”, or “Hinduness”, seeing the Hindu way of life as the only authentic model for India. All of India’s Muslims should have been packed off to Pakistan at partition, a government minister, Giriraj Singh, said last month.

Like many European reactionary groups, the BJP has won popular support largely because of disaffection with the failure and corruption of mainstream parties, especially Congress, which has governed India for most of its post-independence history. When the BJP came to power in 2014, its Hindu chauvinism was kept on a short leash. A resounding second victory in elections last year has, however, given the prime minister, Narendra Modi, licence to pursue exclusionary policies without restraint.

In August 2019, the government stripped Muslim-majority Jammu and Kashmir of its autonomous status – a demand of Hindu nationalists since the 1950s – and dealt brutally with local protests. Then came the CAA, part of a two-pronged attack on Muslim citizenship. The second prong is the creation of a national register of citizens, compelling all Indians to provide documentation of their citizenship. Millions of poorer Indians have no such paperwork. For non-Muslims, this is unlikely to be too great a burden – the amended citizenship law provides a path to citizenship. Muslims, however, excluded by the CAA, fear that they will be deemed “foreigners” even if they have lived in India for generations; that they may end up as India’s Rohingya.

While the attempt to exclude Muslims reveals the chauvinist ideology of the BJP, mass opposition to the CAA, from Hindus and Muslims alike, shows the depth of hostility to bigotry. In Delhi, too, amid the violence there have been many stories of Hindus protecting Muslim neighbours, and of Muslims aiding Hindus.

What is playing out in India is not a simple religious conflict between Hindus and Muslims but a political struggle between two visions of India: between those who see it as an open, secular nation and those who wish to create a chauvinist Hindu state. Who prevails in this struggle matters not just to Muslims, or to Indians, but to all of us.

By Kenan Malik, an Observer columnist

## Muhyiddin becomes Malaysia prime minister, Mahathir vows to fight

Muhyiddin Yassin was sworn in as Malaysia’s prime minister on Sunday, an hour after his predecessor and former ally, Mahathir Mohamad, claimed he was the one with enough support to form a government and would prove it with a vote in Parliament.

“I am telling the public that I have the majority support,” Mahathir told journalists in a live-streamed news conference. “I have the 114.”

The 94-year-old veteran Mahathir said he had proof of the support in the form of statutory declarations and letters, and called for an urgent sitting of Parliament.

Mahathir was flanked by politicians from the Pakatan Harapan coalition, which won power in May 2018 but has been dogged by political infighting that came to a head last weekend when a splinter group tried to form an alliance with the opposition.

The move led to Mahathir’s resignation and days of uncertainty that the king, a constitutional monarch, had sought to resolve by meeting each member of Parliament individually.

On Saturday, the palace announced that Muhyiddin, 72, had the confidence of Parliament and would be sworn in as prime minister on Sunday.

The announcement sparked anger among some Malaysians who felt their democratic rights as voters were being undermined.

Muhyiddin was driven into the palace in Kuala Lumpur at 9.50am (01:50 GMT) ahead of the oath-taking ceremony, having cobbled together a coalition with the opposition United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), and PAS, Malaysia’s Islamic party, with support from the main political party in the Borneo territory of Sarawak.

(Source: al Jazeera)

## Some U.S. states make it harder for college students to vote

Vanderbilt University student Will Newell wishes it was easier for college students like him to cast ballots in Tennessee, one of 14 states holding a presidential primary on Super Tuesday.

The campus has no locations for early voting, so students must visit an off-campus polling location to cast a ballot on Election Day. Newell drives but worries that many students who don’t have their own transportation won’t make it to a precinct. He said some campus groups offer rides to students, but the university itself does not provide a shuttle.

He supports a bill introduced in the Tennessee Legislature that would require early voting locations at large colleges and universities in the state. That’s not the only restriction working against college students in the state. Tennessee, where overall voter turnout is low, is among several states that does not allow a college student ID. But it does allow a handgun license.

“It just makes the last part of actually getting them to the polls to vote a lot more difficult,” Newell, a senior public policy and economics major, said of the ballot-casting hurdles faced by students in the state.

As Democratic candidates seek a boost from young voters in 2020, their impact at the polls could be blunted in a number of states that make voting more difficult for college students. Those include laws related to voter IDs, residency requirements and on-campus polling places. Critics say many of those laws are designed to dampen turnout among voters who typically lean Democratic.

College groups aligned with the Democratic Party are mobilizing this year in an effort to defeat President Donald Trump’s re-election, said Matt Nowling, national director of communications for the College Democrats of America.

(Source: AP)

# Afghan peace deal hits first snag over prisoner releases

Just one day after the United States and the Taliban militant group signed a peace agreement, Afghanistan’s government has announced that it does not consider itself bound by the terms of the deal to free thousands of Taliban prisoners.

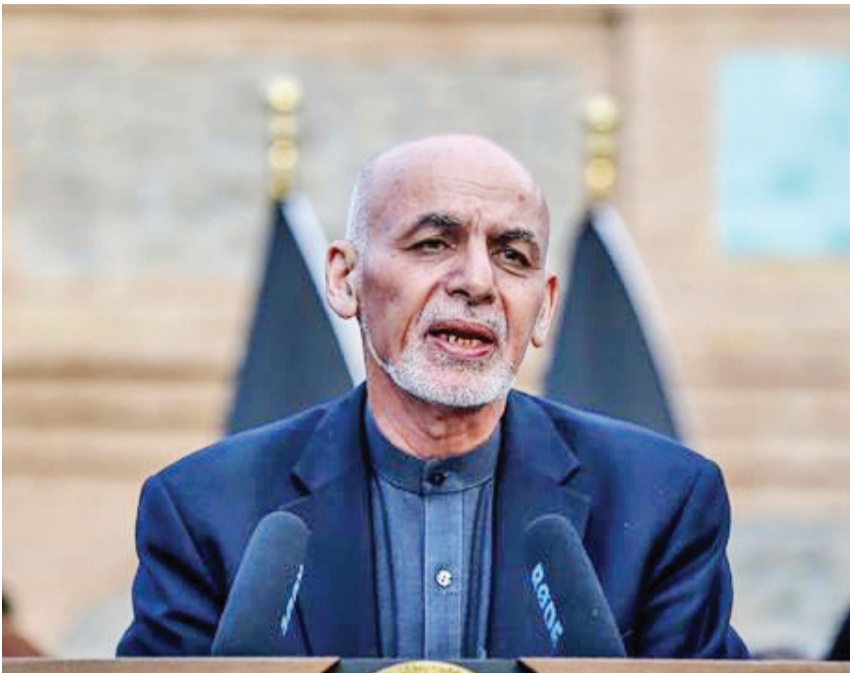
The agreement was reached between Washington and the Afghan militants in Doha, Qatar, on Saturday, after at least 10 rounds of talks over the past 18 months. The accord was signed by U.S. special envoy Zalmay Khalilzad and Taliban political chief Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar.

As a condition for talks with the Afghan government, the deal noted that 5,000 Taliban prisoners would be freed in exchange for up to 1,000 Afghan government captives by March 10.

But Afghan President Ashraf Ghani told reporters at a news conference in Kabul on Sunday that his government had no commitment to release the Taliban prisoners as stated in the deal.

The Taliban’s demand for the release of its prisoners from Afghan jails cannot be a precondition to direct talks with the government, Ghani added.

The U.S. has agreed to cut down the number of its troops in Afghanistan from 13,000 to 8,600 within 135 days of signing the deal. Washington has also agreed to withdraw all its forces from the country



in 14 months provided that it sees no hostilities from the Taliban.

However, representatives from the Kabul government were not present during the Doha deal and a meeting was instead held in Kabul, where the Afghan

president and the Pentagon chief issued a joint declaration. The NATO chief was also present.

The joint declaration calls on the sides to work together to reach a comprehensive and sustainable peace

deal to end the war in Afghanistan for the benefit of all Afghans.

According to the declaration, the peace deal will guarantee to prevent the use of Afghan soil by any international terrorist groups against the U.S. security; will present a timeline for the withdrawal of all U.S. and NATO forces; will secure a political settlement through intra-Afghan dialog; and will enforce a permanent ceasefire.

NATO, despite not being part of the agreement, will conform with the future peace deal and gradually pull its troops out of the country.

Despite its strong willingness to restore peace across the war-torn country, Afghanistan’s government has voiced Kabul’s opposition to some articles of the Doha deal. The Taliban, in response, claims that it does not recognize the legitimacy of the Kabul government.

US forces invaded Afghanistan in October 2001 under the pretext of the so-called war on terror, overthrowing the Taliban regime in Kabul. Since the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, Washington has spent more than \$2 trillion waging war on the impoverished country, leaving more than 2,400 American soldiers and tens of thousands of Afghan civilians dead.

(Source: agencies)

## Syria closes northwestern airspace, downs Turkish drone

Syria has shut its airspace over the country’s northwest, particularly the embattled Idlib province, warning to bring down any aircraft that violates it.

Syria’s official SANA news agency quoted a military source as saying on Sunday that the army had taken the measure based on its adherence to “constitutional and national duties in defending the sovereignty of the state and protecting its security and territorial integrity.”

“Any aircraft that breaches the Syrian airspace will be dealt with as hostile aircraft that must be downed and prevented from achieving their hostile goals,” he added.

The military source also lashed out at Turkish forces for carrying out “hostile acts” against the Syrian armed forces by directly targeting their positions in Idlib and its adjacent areas and providing support to armed terrorist organizations.

“These repeated hostile Turkish acts will not succeed in saving terrorists from the strikes of the Syrian Arab Army and they prove the Turkish regime’s disavowal of all the previous agreements including the Sochi memo,” it added.

### ■ Syria downs Turkish drone

Turkey’s state-owned Anadolu news agency claimed Sunday that a Syrian government plane had been downed in Idlib.

SANA denied the report and said that the Syrian army had



downed a Turkish drone over the strategic city of Saraqib, which lies on the intersection of the M5 and M4 highways.

Over the past few weeks, tensions have escalated between Ankara and Damascus in Idlib, the only large territory in the hands of terrorists.

The Syrian military has managed to undo militant gains across the Arab country and bring back almost all of Syrian soil under government control.

Syria launched a counter-terrorism offensive in Idlib and neighboring areas last December after its troops and

those of Russia came under increasing militant attacks.

Turkey is evidently upset by changing conditions on the ground. It has deployed massive troops and military equipment in recent weeks to stop Syrian troops from ousting terrorists.

On Thursday, Turkey said at least 36 of its soldiers were killed in an aerial attack by Syrian forces in Idlib.

The Russian Defense Ministry said the Turkish troops who came under fire “were in the battle formations of terrorist groups.”

Under a deal reached between Turkey and Russia in the Black Sea resort of Sochi in September 2018, Turkish troops were deployed in Idlib and set up observations posts there.

The agreement required Ankara to oust Takfiri terrorists from the northwestern Syrian province. But, more than a year into the Sochi deal, foreign-backed terrorists rule supreme in Idlib in close proximity to the Turkish troops.

### ■ Footage shows Turkish forces beating Syrian soldiers

A new video has emerged showing Turkish forces violently beating Syrian soldiers who have been taken captive.

Social media users have criticized the behavior which violates the terms of the Geneva Convention on the treatment of prisoners of war.

(Source: Press TV)

## EU border force on ‘high alert’ as migrants push to enter continent



The European Union border force Frontex has announced that it is on “high alert” across all the bloc’s borders with Turkey, and aims to provide further support to Greece as thousands of migrants seek to enter the continent through the southeastern European country.

“We have raised the alert level for all borders with Turkey to high,” the Frontex spokeswoman said in a statement to AFP on Sunday, adding that, “We have received a request from Greece for additional support. We have already taken steps to redeploy to Greece technical equipment and additional officers.”

Greek police said at least 500 people had arrived by sea on three Greek islands near the Turkish coast within a few hours on Sunday morning.

The Frontex announcement came as Turkey on Thursday relaxed curbs on the migrants’ movement through its borders and said Ankara would no longer restrain hundreds of thousands of asylum seekers in its territory from reaching Europe despite an agreement struck with the EU in 2016.

A Greek government source said police forces deployed at the border had stopped nearly 10,000 migrants trying to enter from Turkey over the past 24 hours, adding that huge crowds had tried to cross into Greece via the

Kastanies Forest in the early hours of Sunday.

Kastanies was the scene of violence a day earlier when riot police used tear gas to repel the migrants on the Turkish side seeking entry, with migrants throwing rocks at the officers.

The Greek government officials have put the number of people gathered on the border with Turkey at 3,000, while the International Organization for Migration estimated the number at 13,000.

The scenes of refugees heading toward Turkey’s border with Greece have sparked fears of a repeat of the 2015 refugee crisis when over one million refugees arrived in the EU, most of them fleeing conflict zones in the Middle East and North Africa.

This time around, there are also fears of a new coronavirus outbreak that has reached some European countries from China.

The European Union and Turkey struck a deal in 2016 under which Turkey would hold back refugees hoping to reach Europe via Turkish territory.

The EU says Ankara had not officially informed the bloc that it had suspended the 2016 deal. The Turkish warning was seen as an attempt to apparently pressure European leaders into backing Turkey’s military campaign in Syria.

(Source: agencies)

## Pentagon sees Taliban deal as allowing fuller focus on China



The Trump administration’s peace deal with the Taliban opens the door for an initial American troop withdrawal that Defense Secretary Mark Esper sees as a step toward the broader goal of preparing for potential future war with China.

Esper has his eye on “great power competition,” which means staying a step ahead of China and Russia on battlefields of the future, including in space and in next-generation strategic weapons like hypersonic missiles and advanced nuclear weapons. He sees China in particular as a rising threat to American predominance on the world stage.

To do more to prepare for the China challenge, Esper wants to do less in Afghanistan, Iraq and other places. It’s less about moving troops directly to Asia from elsewhere in the world, and more about reducing commitments in lower-priority regions so that more military units can train together at home on skills related to conventional warfare. Predecessors in the Pentagon have had similar hopes, only to be drawn back to crises in the greater Middle East. In the past year alone, the U.S. has sent an extra 20,000 troops to the Middle East, mainly due to worries about Iran.

With President Donald Trump’s emphasis on ending America’s wars against extremists and insurgents, including in Afghanistan, Esper wants to bring home as many troops as he thinks he prudently can

so they can prepare for “high end” warfare.

Stephen Biddle, a policy analyst and a Columbia University professor of international and public affairs, is skeptical that the Pentagon will be able to fully shift away from Afghanistan and other regional hot spots like Iraq, recalling that the Obama administration tried the same thing - also with China’s rise in mind - in the 2011-2014 period.

“The trouble was the Islamic State burst onto the scene,” in Iraq and Syria, Biddle said in an interview, and “lo and behold it was right back to a focus on the Middle East and small wars.”

In remarks Saturday in Kabul, Esper kept the focus on prospects for a complete U.S. withdrawal, while cautioning that the United States “will not hesitate” to strike what he called terrorist threats in Afghanistan if the Taliban falters in its promise to prevent extremist groups to use Afghan soil to launch attacks on the homelands of the U.S. or its allies.

“We still have a long way to go,” Esper said.

Reducing U.S. troops levels in Afghanistan to zero is “our ultimate objective,” he said, but added that it will take “many months.”

Late last year, Esper said he would be willing to reduce troop levels even if no deal could be made with the Taliban.

(Source: AP)

# Hadadi assures of winning second Olympics medal

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Iranian discus thrower Ehsan Hadadi says that he can win his second medal in the Olympic Games.

Hadadi, 35, won a gold medal at the 23rd edition of the Asian Athletics Championships in Doha in April. He won his sixth continental title with a throw of 65.95m. However, he failed to claim a medal at the 2019 World Athletics Championships in Doha in September. Hadadi later said he had suffered a foot injury ahead of the competition.

Hadadi, who won a silver medal at the 2012 Olympics with a 68.18m throw, is going to claim another medal in the prestigious event.

"I am training in Mashhad's Emam Reza Stadium and I have to say I am in a pretty good shape right now. I think I am better compared to where I was four years ago," Hadadi said in an interview with IRNA.

"I've already trained in the U.S. and I should say our country suffers from lack of infrastructure but we also have capacity to expand infrastructure in our country," he added.

"My American coach Mac Wilkins has arranged three events in the U.S. and I will also participate in three more competitions in Europe as part of preparation for the Olympics. I will hold a camp in Russia 20 days before the Tokyo 2020 to adjust to the time difference," Hadadi said.

"Olympic Games is a dream for every athlete and I am really grateful that I will participate in the games for the fourth time. I hope to win my best medal in the event. The best seven discus throwers will take part at the Olympics and they will make it tough for me to win a medal but I will do my best to win my second medal at the Olympics," Hadadi concluded.



## Cambodia, Iran match likely to be postponed



**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Iran match against Cambodia at the 2022 World Cup qualifier will likely be postponed due to coronavirus concerns.

The outbreak of coronavirus and the canceling or reducing flights between countries especially in Asia have led many sports events to be postponed or to be held behind closed doors.

Asian Football Confederation (AFC) has postponed several Champions League matches and rescheduled the women's Olympic qualifier between China and South Korea.

Now, it seems that the 2020 World Cup qualifiers might be affected by coronavirus concerns.

Hong Kong's Soccer chief Pui Kwan-kay said it was "highly unlikely" that Hong Kong's World Cup Asian zone qualifier against Iran next month will go ahead because of the coronavirus outbreak, but hoped to clear

the air with governing bodies as to whether the clash can go ahead.

Hong Kong is expected to visit Tehran's 78,000-seat Azadi Stadium for the away World Cup match on March 26 before returning for their home tie against Iraq in the Group C qualifiers five days later.

Meanwhile, Iran national team must go to Cambodia to meet the country's national team on March 31 but this game is also unlikely to happen because there is no direct flight from Iran to Cambodia and due to the fact that calls for closing borders have grown louder and that many countries have closed their borders with Iran, there will be high costs for the Iranian Football Federation to send Team Melli to Cambodia.

Iran has four must-win games ahead in the 2022 World qualifiers against Hong Kong, Cambodia, Bahrain, and Iraq.

## Iran win two gold medals at Karate 1-Premier League Salzburg



**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Bahman Asgari Ghoncheh and Hamideh Abbasali from Iran clinched two gold medals at the Karate 1-Premier League Salzburg on Sunday.

Asgari, who had won a gold medal at Karate 1-Premier League Paris in late January, claimed a gold in Austria beating Stanislav Horuna from Ukraine 3-0 in the Male Kumite -75kg final.

The Iranian karateka had edged Erman Eltemur of Turkey in semi-finals 4-4 and qualified to win his third medal in three events this year.

At the Female Kumite +68kg, Abbasali earned a 2-1 win over Italian Clio Ferracuti and seized Iran's second gold.

She had had taken gold in Paris after beating her Turkish opponent Meltem Hocaoglu Akyol.

The competition brought over 600 competitors from 88 countries together at the 2020 Karate 1-Premier League Salzburg. This tally represents a considerable increase with the previous event since 513 competitors from 79 countries took part in the Karate 1-Premier League Dubai.

## World's strongest Paralympian Siamand Rahman dies



**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — The strongest ever Paralympian Siamand Rahman passed away at the age of 32 on Sunday.

Rahman died after suffering a heart attack at the Nabi-akram Hospital in Oshnavieh, West Azerbaijan.

Powerlifting superstar Rahman, a two-time gold medalist in London 2012 and Rio 2016, was preparing to win his third successive gold at the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games.

Rahman broke the 300kg barrier in the men's over 107kg at the Rio 2016 Paralympic Games, lifting an unprecedented 310kg.

The mark he set is the equivalent of three baby elephants.

"It's great to be part of this awesome campaign. I am so excited to see we are getting closer to the Games," said Rahman. "I can't wait to compete in Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games. In Tokyo, everything is going to be between the bar and me. I will redraw the boundaries," Rahman had said last year.

Tehran Times offers its heartfelt condolence to his bereaved family.

## Nadal beats Fritz to win title in Acapulco

Rafael Nadal captured his third Mexican Open title on Saturday, continuing his good form with a 6-3 6-2 triumph in the final over Taylor Fritz.

Nadal survived 10 aces from Fritz and broke his service three times to outperform the 22-year-old American.

"I couldn't be happier. I played a great event from the beginning to the end," Nadal told reporters.

"Acapulco was the first big title that I won in my career, so to be able to stay here after 15 years is amazing. I can't thank enough the people who make me feel at home every single time."

The Spanish world No. 2, who first won the title in 2005 and took it again in 2013, stormed through the draw without dropping a set and improved to 20-2 in the event overall.

Fritz had reached the final by rallying from a set and 2-4 behind against John Isner but he could mount no such comeback against Nadal.

Fritz, playing his first final at an ATP 500 event, became the only American besides Sam Querrey in 2017



to reach the Acapulco final.

"He's one of the best players to ever play the game and he showed me why that is tonight," Fritz said of Nadal.

Britain's seventh seed Heather Watson needed 10 championship points to overcome Canadian teenager Leylah Fernandez 6-4 6-7(8) 6-1 in the women's final.

Watson saw her first five championship points slip away in the second-set tiebreak before regaining her composure to lose just one game in the final set.

Victory ensured Watson's first WTA title since she won the Monterrey Open in 2016, and her fourth overall, and she will re-enter the top 50 of the WTA rankings on Monday.

"It's been a few years, so I'm just really, really happy I came through that match," said Watson.

It was a breakthrough week for the 17-year-old Fernandez, who reached her first WTA quarter-final, semi-final, and final after starting as a qualifier.

"I think it's her mental toughness that really stands out," Watson said. "I think she's going to have a great career ahead of her and rise up the rankings very quickly if she keeps playing like this."

(Source: Reuters)

## Iran nat'l weightlifting team cancels warm-up camp

**IRNA** — Iranian women national weightlifting team has canceled its warm-up camp prior to attending in the Asian championships due to the outbreak of coronavirus.

Speaking to IRNA, head of Iranian women national weightlifting team Bahar Bahrami said on Sunday that the camp was scheduled to be held during March 3-18.

She added that four Iranian weightlifters were supposed to be in the camp.

The exact number of athletes to be dispatched to Asian championships has not yet been identified, she said adding that the camp will not be held until the further notice.

The Asian championships was supposed to be held in Uzbekistan on March 27 but it was postponed to April 15, she reiterated.

Head of Iran's Health Ministry's public relations office Kianoush Jahanpour said on Saturday that 43 Iranians have succumbed to the lethal coronavirus which has contaminated the country.

He went on to say that 593 Iranian people have been affected by the virus so far.

## Dragan Skocic returns to Iran

**TASNIM** — Iran national football team head coach Dragan Skocic returned to Iran Sunday morning.

The 52-year-old Croatian coach had traveled to Belgium and Russia to monitor the Iranian players in the leagues.

Skocic then went to Croatia and met with Croatian Football Federation president Davor Suker.

Iran national football team will start the training camp on March 17 in Tehran.

Team Melli prepare for the matches against Hong Kong and Cambodia, slated for March 26 and 31 in Group C of the 2022 FIFA World Cup qualification.

## Iran officially postpones Iranian Volleyball Super League

**TASNIM** — Iranian Volleyball Super League has been postponed over coronavirus concerns.

Last season champions Shahrdari Varamin will represent Iran in the AVC Club Volleyball Championship.

Deaths in Iran from coronavirus have hit 43, the highest number outside China, and the total number of infected people has risen to 593, an Iranian health official said on Saturday.

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

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

## Henry off the mark as Impact wins MLS opener

A superb 80th-minute finish from Maxi Urruti secured all three points for Montreal Impact, which appointed Thierry Henry as manager in November.

Thierry Henry's Major League Soccer (MLS) managerial career got off to a winning start as Montreal Impact came from behind to defeat New England Revolution 2-1 in its season-opener.



A superb lobbed 80th-minute finish from Argentinian striker Maxi Urruti secured all three points for Impact, which appointed former France and Arsenal star Henry as manager in November.

Urruti's winner, lifting the ball over New England goalkeeper Matt Turner from the edge of the area, came just moments after Revs substitute Wilfried Zaha had a goal chalked off for offside after a video review.

Earlier Teal Bunbury had fired New England into the lead at the Olympic Stadium with a 13th-minute volley after a well-worked move from a corner.

Romell Quioto headed Montreal level in the 37th minute, nodding home Joel Waterman's flick-on from a corner to make it 1-1.

Zahibo looked to have shot New England into the lead in the 73rd minute after bundling home a free kick from close range but the goal was later ruled out for a marginal offside.

Instead it was left to former Portland Timbers forward Urruti to clinch victory for Montreal, latching on to a long ball over the top to lob Turner as the New England goalkeeper advanced off his line.

Elsewhere on Saturday, Mexico international striker Javier Hernandez was unable to mark his MLS debut with a goal as the Los Angeles Galaxy was held to a 1-1 draw at Houston Dynamo.

Argentinian forward Cristian Pavon fired Galaxy into an early lead with a superb shot from the edge of the area after 13 minutes.

But Houston fought back to level through Colombian striker Mauro Manotas shortly after half-time.

(Source: sportstar)

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Beware, beware of sinfulness. By God, He has veiled His servants' guilt so much as if He has forgiven them.

Imam Ali (AS)

## Irangaam Records to release Shajarian's album of Khorasani songs

**A R T** **TEHRAN** — Tehran-based Irangaam Records label plans to release an album of legendary vocalist Mohammadreza Shajarian's Khorasani songs entitled "Khorasaniyat" on March 9.



Cover of Iranian legendary vocalist Mohammadreza Shajarian's new album "Khorasaniyat".

Poems by Emad Khorasani have been set to music by the late composer and santur virtuoso Parviz Meshkian.

The duo recorded the songs of the collection during their lifelong collaboration.

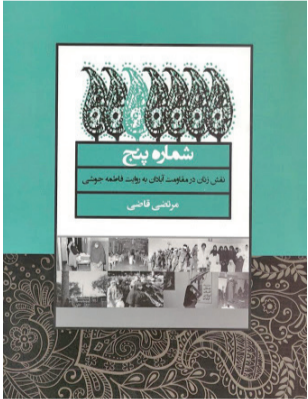
Meshkatian, who died in 2009, was one of the prominent Iranian musicians that created several music albums with Shajarian.

Shajarian is currently in a Tehran hospital to receive treatment for cancer.

The living legend of Persian traditional music has been suffering from kidney cancer for about 20 years.

## Memoires of Iranian woman commander published in French

**CULTURE** **TEHRAN** — The memoirs of Fatemeh Jushi when she was the commander of women's Basij Organization in Abadan during the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war has recently been published in French.



Front cover of the Persian version of the "Number Five" by Iranian writer Morteza Ghazi.

Iranian scholar Alieh Sabaghian is the translator of "Number Five" published by the Sacred Defense Research Center and Archives.

Morteza Ghazi wrote the original Persian book based on narratives from Jushi in 2016. The book describes the role of women's volunteer forces in the southern cities of Abadan and Khoramshahr during the war, which is known in Iran as the Sacred Defense.

"As Islamophobia and Iranophobia are being promoted in the world, translating such books, which give a real image of the Sacred Defense, seems necessary," Ghazi said during a review session held in Tehran on Saturday.

## "Wash Your Hands!" to fight coronavirus: cartoonist Hamid Bahrami

**1 →** The cartoon depicts a coronavirus-shaped bowling ball rolling toward masked pins, one of which cries "If just I washed my hands!"

"I start my day with reading the news, and by this I feel informed, and it injects life into routine jobs," Bahrami had once said in an interview.

"Based on the news I've read, I begin to create a work that may portray Donald Trump! This may be the most journalistic behavior toward the visual arts," he added.

Iran has canceled all art, cultural and cinematic events across the country amid growing concerns over the new coronavirus outbreak.

According to the latest data, a total of 978 Iranian nationals have been infected by the virus, out of which 54 patients have lost their lives.

# Big Sky filmfest honors "Sunless Shadows"

**A R T** **TEHRAN** — Iranian director Mehrdad Oskui's acclaimed film "Sunless Shadows" has won an honorable mention at the 17th Big Sky Documentary Film Festival, the organizers have announced.

The festival was held in the U.S. city of Missoula, Montana from February 14 to 23.

In "Sunless Shadows", Oskui builds a remarkable relationship with a group of adolescent girls who are serving their sentences for the grave crime of murdering their father, their husband or another male family member in an Iranian juvenile detention center.

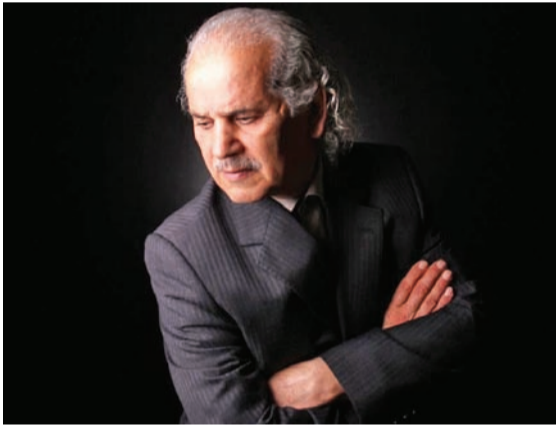
"We award 'Sunless Shadows' with an honorable mention for exposing the desperation and resiliency of young Iranian women serving time at a juvenile detention center, and the unlikely opportunity that their incarceration allows them as they form tight friendships and are able to speak freely about their regrets and hopes," the jury wrote in a statement.

"I Am Not Alone" by Garin Hovannisian from Armenia was selected as best feature documentary while the award for best short documentary went to "Colette" by American filmmaker Anthony Giacchino.

The Big Sky Award was presented to "Public Trust" by American filmmaker David Garrett Byars and "A Bold Experiment" co-directed by Andrew Miller and Alexander Milan from the U.S. was picked as best mini-documentary.



A scene from "Sunless Shadows" by Mehrdad Oskui.



Mazandarani folk singer Abolhassan Khoshru in an undated photo.

## Mazandarani folk singer Abolhassan Khoshru dies at 73

**CULTURE** **TEHRAN** — Mazandarani folk singer Abolhassan Khoshru, who made great efforts to familiarize the younger generation in northern Iran with their native music, died at his home in Qaemshahr on Saturday night after years of suffering from cancer. He was 73.

The director of the Mazandarani Office of Culture and Islamic Guidance, Abbas Zare, confirmed Khoshru's death in a press release published on Sunday.

"Master Khoshru carried in his heart the songs and melodies, which were linked to the lives and hearts of people," he said.

"He made great efforts in transferring these songs to the younger generation and helped introduce the original

local music of Mazandarani rooted in the rich culture and history of the region," he noted.

Khoshru was born into a musician family. His father, Abutaleb, was a singer and ney virtuoso. Along with his brothers, Farajollah, a santur player, and Abdollah who plays kamancheh, he established an ensemble. His friend, Ahmad Mohsenpur, who played violin, joined the band, which recorded memorable songs for the Mazandarani Radio.

"Hojabr Soltun" was his first album. He had a smash hit with his first single titled "Mashti". As a result, many people in Mazandarani called him "Mashti".

He also sang pieces for the albums "Mazandarani Epic and Ritual Music" composed by Nabi Ahmadi and "Cham" by Siavash Talebi.

## "I Killed Bin Laden" published in English

**CULTURE** **TEHRAN** — Persian writer Mehdi Rezaei's novel "I Killed Bin Laden: The Wildest Dance of the History" has been published in English.

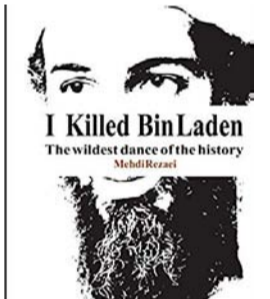
Supreme Century, a major international publishing company located in the Reseda neighborhood in Los Angeles, is the publisher of the book translated into English by Mandana Kia.

The Persian version of the book was published by Aradman Publications in Iran.

The novel is the story of one of the UN's commandos who uncovers corruption in the UN bureaucracy, and the issue propels him to kill one of the UN's commanders and then escape. While he is fleeing, he is recruited by a private military team whose objective is achieving global peace,

but meanwhile it engages in activities to gain income for their operations.

The commando's cooperation with the private team continues until they also have operations in Iran and Saudi Arabia. In the end the team plans an operation for killing Bin Laden in Pakistan in order to prevent more massacres in the world and to thwart any attempt by American military forces to slay him.



Front cover of the English version of Persian writer Mehdi Rezaei's novel "I killed Bin Laden: The Wildest Dance of the History".

## Actress Lori Loughlin among parents to face U.S. college scam trial in October



Actress Lori Loughlin, and her husband, fashion designer Mossimo Giannulli leave the federal courthouse after a hearing on charges in a nationwide college admissions cheating scheme in Boston, Massachusetts, U.S., August 27, 2019. (Reuters/Josh Reynolds)

**BOSTON (Reuters)** — A federal judge on Thursday said actress Lori Loughlin in October will be among eight parents accused of participating in a vast U.S. college admissions bribery and fraud scheme to face the first trial to result from the scandal.

The "Full House" star, along with her fashion designer husband, Mossimo Giannulli, are among 15 parents fighting charges brought by federal prosecutors in Boston stemming from the U.S. college admissions scandal.

U.S. District Judge Nathaniel Gorton said the first group of parents would face trial on Oct. 5, while the remaining ones would go on trial on Jan. 11.

Loughlin's co-defendants at trial will include Gamal Abdelaziz, former president of Wynn Resorts Ltd's Macau subsidiary, and Robert Zangrillo, founder

of the private investment firm Dragon Global.

Prosecutors have accused 53 people of participating in a scheme in which parents conspired with a California college admissions consultant to use bribery and other forms of fraud to secure the admission of their children to top schools.

The consultant, William "Rick" Singer, pleaded guilty last March to charges he facilitated cheating on college entrance exams and helped bribe university sports coaches to present his clients' children as fake athletic recruits.

Prosecutors allege that Loughlin and Giannulli agreed with Singer to pay \$500,000 in bribes to have their two daughters named as fake recruits to the University of Southern California crew team.

## Coronavirus sends Netflix looking outside Italy for part of Dwayne Johnson's "Red Notice" shoot



Actor Dwayne Johnson speaks during a ceremony for actor Kevin Hart to place his handprints and footprints in cement in the forecourt of the TCL Chinese theatre in Los Angeles, California, U.S., December 10, 2019. (Reuters/Mario Anzuoni)

**LOS ANGELES (Reuters)** — Filming of Netflix Inc's big-budget Dwayne Johnson movie "Red Notice" had been scheduled to move to Italy in the coming weeks, but producers now are exploring other locations due to the coronavirus outbreak in the country, a source close to the production told Reuters on Friday.

The possibility of relocating that portion of the production is not expected to force a hiatus in filming of the movie, which also stars "Deadpool" actor Ryan Reynolds and "Wonder Woman" actress Gal Gadot, the source said. Netflix has not announced a release date, and the company had no comment on production locations.

"Red Notice" is a global crime thriller about an Interpol agent who tracks the world's most-wanted art thief. It is among the streaming service's most-expensive

movies to date with a budget of roughly \$160 million, Hollywood trade publication Variety reported.

Production on "Red Notice" is currently underway in Atlanta, the location that had been planned to host the bulk of filming.

The U.S. State Department late on Friday said Americans should reconsider travel to Italy due to the coronavirus outbreak there. "Red Notice" is among a handful of Hollywood productions affected by the virus.

Producers of the CBS television global competition show "The Amazing Race" said on Friday they had temporarily suspended filming of a new season.

And a planned three-week shoot in Venice, Italy, for Tom Cruise's new "Mission: Impossible" film has been postponed due to the outbreak, Paramount Pictures said this week.