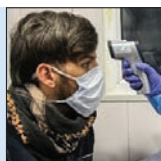




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Iraqi PM-designate Allawi steps down

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©File photo

Guardian reporter speaks out on Neda Agha-Soltan, Khashoggi, Iran International

EXCLUSIVE REPORT
By Mohammad Homaeefar

TEHRAN — Guardian journalist Saeed Kamali Dehghan has opened up about an HBO documentary film he co-produced about Neda Agha-Soltan, an Iranian woman who was shot dead in Tehran on June 20, 2009 during the post-election unrest, saying, "I regret making that documentary

because I was naive to believe the Western narrative about her death."
"The Western intelligence's interest in my work started very early on, not far from the time I made what I now call the wrong documentary on Neda," Kamali Dehghan told the Tehran Times. "I was sent to Iran as a journalist to naively humanize their narrative but I didn't know what their narrative was." **→3**

Mining projects worth over \$1.2b ready to come on stream: IMIDRO

TEHRAN — Several projects worth more than \$1.2 billion are ready to be inaugurated in Iran's mining sector across the country, IRNA reported, quoting the head of Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO) as saying.

Currently, over \$3.5 billion worth of projects are ready to go operational or are nearly completed in various sectors, of

which nearly \$1.2 are mining and mining industry projects, according to Khodadad Gharibpour.

The official underlined some of the industry ministry's plans for developing the country's mining sector in the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 19), including the increase of exploration operations up to 650,000 square kilometers and the plans for reviving the country's small mines. **→4**

Russia seeks to 'create conditions so that nobody wants to fight us': Putin

Vladimir Putin has confided that U.S. President Donald Trump privately lamented the "insane" U.S. military budget. He also says Russia protects itself by making the costs of attacking the country too high for anyone to contemplate.

"The U.S. has outstripped us" in terms of annual defense expenditure, the Rus-

sian president said in a new episode of news agency TASS's '20 Questions to Vladimir Putin' series. But being the world's largest military spender doesn't really make Donald Trump particularly happy, Putin said.

"Donald told me that they have adopted an insane [military] budget for the next year, \$738 billion." **→10**



ARTICLE

Maryam Qarehgozlou
Head of the Tehran Times
Social Desk

Public attempt to control fake news about the coronavirus

One of the constituent elements of a modern state is sovereignty, means exercising the will and desire of other element, which is state sovereignty.

In the age of the information society and cyberspace, governments are also trying to exercise sovereignty over their people and territory. Therefore, the principle of state sovereignty over the information society and cyberspace originates from the logic of nation state formation, which all states with different ideologies and methods of governance are trying to apply. Information technology has declined the sovereignty of nation states by strengthening centrifugal forces, increasing the number of actors in various fields, diversifying national interests, reducing communication costs and networking.

Therefore, all nation states around the world are faced with the challenges arising from the erosion of political sovereignty over territorial boundaries in the governing arena. However, the extent of this challenge varies depending on the structure of the nation state and its cultural, historical, and political factors.

One of these challenges is the issue of fake news that has long existed in human history, but in the age of the information society, given the particular features of cyberspace, such as the relative anonymity of disseminators and the high speed of circulation due to networking, has increased its quantity and quality. At the same time, it has become a challenge for communities, especially governments. For example at the Munich Security Conference in 2016 fake news was the only issue that was discussed in the field of cyberspace.

This matter has more devastating impact on governance and ultimately on the people in a critical situation that the demand in political system is greater than its resources and support.

Spreading fake news about the coronavirus is an example of this challenge. The virus was first reported in China in January 2020. Since then, the false statements range from a conspiracy theory that the virus is a man-made bioweapon to the claim that more than 100,000 have died from the disease. **→7**

Iran will defeat COVID-19, we believe: Chinese envoy

TEHRAN — Chinese Ambassador in Iran, Chang Hua, has said he believes that Iran would overcome the crisis of coronavirus outbreak.

"We believe that by sending humanitarian aid, Iran will overcome the crisis," he said in a meeting with Mahmoud Reza Peyravi, secretary general of the Iranian Red Crescent Society, IRNA reported.

The envoy praised Iran's Red Crescent Society as the first organization affiliated with the Red Cross and the Red Crescent societies which sent humanitarian shipments of aid to the Chinese people.



A delegation of Chinese medical experts arrived in Tehran on Saturday with a cargo of aid to help combat the novel coronavirus, known as COVID-19.

"Chinese foreign ministry spokesman said that the first Chinese shipments has arrived in Iran and more aid would be sent. Be strong Iran," the envoy tweeted on Friday.

Some 5,000 coronavirus test kits, and 250,000 face masks have also been sent last week.

Iran has so far sent three million face masks to China and has expressed readiness for providing more medical aid to China.

Pakistan warns U.S. of 'spoilers' on U.S.-Taliban deal in Afghanistan

The political players in Afghanistan should set aside their "personal interests" in moving the country's peace process forward, Pakistan's foreign minister has said, before warning the United States of "spoilers" that could derail a landmark agreement signed a day earlier to bring peace to the country.

Speaking to the press in the Pakistani capital, Islamabad, on Sunday, a day after attending the signing ceremony of an agreement that is aimed at ending the US's 18-year war in neighboring Afghanistan, Shah Mehmood Qureshi said it was important for intra-Afghan talks to begin swiftly.

"People want peace. Now it is time to see what the [Afghan] leadership does," he said. "Do they priorities Afghanistan's interests, or do they give their own personal benefits more importance? This is a very big decision."

The U.S.-Taliban agreement said talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban must begin by March 10.

The agreement signed on Saturday in the Qatari capital, Doha, creates a framework for the US and NATO to withdraw all foreign troops from Afghanistan over 14 months, pending the meeting of certain criteria.

One of those conditions - the release of more than 5,000 Afghan Taliban prisoners in government custody - has already created a potential obstacle to peace, with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani ruling out the move.

'Keep a close eye'

Qureshi said he told U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who was also present at the signing of the agreement in Doha, that the U.S must be wary of "spoilers" who could derail the process.

"We cannot be in denial about this. There were spoilers, there are spoilers," said Qureshi without elaborating on the nature of the alleged "spoilers".

"In Afghanistan and outside. So you will all have to keep a close eye on those spoilers."

Pakistan has facilitated the direct talks between the United States and Afghan Taliban since they began in 2018, after long having been accused by the US and the Afghan government of providing safe havens to leaders of the Afghan Taliban.

Pakistan denies the charge, although members of the Taliban have sought shelter on its territory.

In 2016, the US killed the then-leader of the Afghan Taliban, Mullah Akhtar Mansoor, in a drone strike in the southwestern Pakistani province of Balochistan. **→10**



©ISNA/Soheil Faraji

World's strongest Paralympian Rahman laid to rest

TEHRAN — The strongest Paralympian Siamand Rahman, who died of a heart attack at the age of 32 on Sunday, was laid to rest in his hometown Oshnavieh, West Azarbaijan Province.

Hundreds gathered on Monday morning for the funeral of Rahman.

Is it safe to travel to Iran as a solo female traveler?

By Anna Karsten

Before I started reading more into Iran, all I heard about this country were stories about its politics. In the media, Iran seemed like a place where no one would ever want to visit. Can you imagine solo female travel in Iran?

After my trip to Iran, I can tell you now that Iran has the most hospitable people and great architecture. Traveling to Iran as a solo female traveler has been safe, rewarding and fun.

Iran is safe, accessible and totally easy to navigate as a solo female traveler. Sure, you might experience some inconveniences, but for every annoying man you get 3 nice ones, just like anywhere else. Iran is a destination you must see for yourself to see what I mean.

While organized tours are still dominating Iran's tourism, it's not uncommon to find another person traveling solo. Backpackers and hostels can be found anywhere on a tourist route from Tehran to Shiraz and Yazd.

Plus, if you can't find a hostel, a cheap guesthouse is also an option. No matter which way you travel in Iran, you can always find an affordable place to stay for less than \$30 a night for a double room.

Iran in Western media

Traveling to Iran or anywhere in the Middle East independently, especially as a woman, isn't perceived well these days. Some time ago an article about a woman cycling through the Middle East alone went viral. People were wondering whether it's safe for a woman to cycle alone across the Middle East? The comments weren't pleasant:

'It's foolish and she was very lucky not to get herself raped or killed or both. I hope this article won't encourage other solo female travelers to visit these countries alone' - 400 upvotes

'Not impressed. Putting oneself in harm's way, which then puts potential rescuers in harm's way makes little sense.' - 170 upvotes

But how can we talk about media coverage of safety in Iran when BBC, that published the article, doesn't even bother to check the facts. The article states: 'In Iran, I was given more freedom. Yet foreigners are not permitted to stay with locals without permission, and several of my hosts endured an intense grilling by police.' None of the above is true.

Staying with locals is only forbidden for British, Canadian and American citizens. Anyone else can stay with locals wherever whenever and no police will come and check on you. **→8**

Zarif: After 19 years of humiliation in Afghanistan, U.S. surrenders

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, in his Twitter account on Sunday, wrote that the U.S. has lost the war in Afghanistan but tries to hide it by blaming others.

"U.S. occupiers should've never invaded Afghanistan. But they did, and blamed everyone else for consequences. Now after 19 yrs of humiliation, U.S. has tendered its surrender. Whether in Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq or Yemen, U.S. is THE problem. It will leave—while leaving huge mess behind," Zarif underscored.

On February 29, the United States and Afghanistan's Taliban signed an agreement.

The agreement signed in Doha, Qatar, laying out a timetable for the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan in return for various security commitments from the Taliban and a pledge to hold talks with the government in Kabul.

According to a joint declaration published by the U.S. and Afghan governments on February 29, the United States and NATO would withdraw all troops in Afghanistan within 14 months if the Taliban upheld the commitments made in the agreement.

The deal was signed by U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation Zalmay Khalilzad and Taliban co-founder Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, leader of the political wing of the group.

In reaction, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said on Sunday that the United States was in no legal position to sign an agreement that determines the future of Afghanistan.

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

"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.

"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 spokesman said.

"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.

Expediency Council member Mohammad Mirmohammadi dies from coronavirus

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Seyed Mohammad Mirmohammadi, a member of the Expediency Council, died on Monday morning from the coronavirus disease at Masih-e Daneshavari hospital, Tasnim reported.



He was 71.

Mirmohammadi's mother, the sister of Grand Ayatollah Shobeiri Zanjani, also died from coronavirus in the past few days.

Mirmohammadi was the representative of Qom in the parliament for two four-year terms.

He was a member of the central council of the Islamic Republic Party, presidential chief of staff during the presidencies of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, and secretary general of the Islamic Civilization Party.

President Hassan Rouhani, Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani, and Hassan Khomeini have offered condolences over his death.

E3 provides €5 million to help fight coronavirus in Iran

France, Germany and the UK - known as E3 or the European trio - issued a statement on Monday announcing a plan to provide a comprehensive package of both material and financial support to Iran to combat the spread of the disease in the country.

Following is the text of the statement posted on the UK government website:

France, Germany and the United Kingdom express their full solidarity with all impacted by COVID-19 in Iran. We are offering Iran a comprehensive package of both material and financial support to combat the rapid spread of the disease.

The material will be transported urgently by plane on March 2 and will include equipment for laboratory tests, as well as other equipment, including protective body suits and gloves.

The E3 has also committed to providing urgent additional financial support close to €5 million to fight the COVID-19 epidemic affecting Iran, through the WHO or other UN agencies.

We will continue to support global efforts to combat the outbreak of COVID-19. Our support is directed to help the most vulnerable across the globe.

What expertise elected representatives of Tehraners have in 11th parliament?

TEHRAN (MNA) — The elected representatives of Tehraners have considerable experience and expertise in executive, legislative, academic, seminal, and research fields.

The results of the 11th Parliamentary election in Tehran were finalized last week. Most of the elected members are from the principalists. All of the 30 members of the Coalition Council of the Revolutionary Forces were able to win the majority of votes in Tehran and enter the new Parliament.

The following table provides an overview of the elected representatives in Tehran, Rey and Shemiranat in the 11th Parliament:

1. Mohammad Baqer Ghalibaf
Ph.D. in political geography from Tarbiat Modares University, Commander of IRGC Air Force, Police Chief of the Islamic Republic, Tehran mayor

(See Full text at tehrantimes.com)

MP calls U.S. offer to help Iran in coronavirus fight 'nonsensical'

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Alaeddin Boroujerdi, a veteran MP sitting on the Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, has said that the United States' offer to help Iran in the campaign against the coronavirus is "nonsensical".

"If Donald Trump [the U.S. president] feels sympathy for the Iranian people, he must remove the cruel sanctions so that the people can have access to the needed medications," he told ISNA in an interview published on Monday.

He noted that what Trump says has no credibility.

Trump said Saturday he was ready to aid Iran with its outbreak of novel coronavirus if the country asked for assistance.

"If we can help the Iranians with this problem, we are certainly willing to do so... All they have to do is ask. We will have great professionals over there," France 24 quoted Trump as saying at the annual Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) near Washington.

■ 'U.S. offer of help to Iran is propaganda'

Deputy Chairman of the Parliament National Security and Foreign Policy Committee Kamal Dehghani also told ISNA in an interview published on Monday



that the U.S. offer of help to Iran is just propaganda.

There is no good intention behind Washington's offer, he noted.

He added that if the U.S. had any good intention, it would have removed sanctions against Iran.

Military suspends recruitment over coronavirus outbreak

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — The Armed Forces deputy chief for Health Affairs announced on Monday that none of the military and disciplinary units will recruit fresh soldiers for the next two months to narrow down the negative impacts of COVID-2019 outbreak across the country.

Brigadier General Hassan Araghizadeh said, "Military training courses for the fresh soldiers will be suspended for the next two months. It means the next training course for the fresh soldiers will start on April 20."

"The soldiers whose military service period is passing the last days should remain in the garrisons and bases to be under healthcare monitoring," he added, assuring the families about the health condition of their loved sons.

The commander added that the entire military and security units should be present at the missions as the country's security stands atop the armed forces' agenda.

On Saturday, Rear Admiral Habibollah Sayyari, the deputy Army chief for coordination affairs, announced that the Army has 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 said.

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

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 1501 Iranian nationals have been infected by the virus, out of which 66 have lost their lives.

The ministry also said 291 patients have recovered.

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



Iran's Foreign Ministry: We do not count on U.S. help

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said on Monday that Iran does not count on the United States' help to counter the outbreak of coronavirus.

"We have doubts about the United States' intention and we do not count on its help. You saw that the United States even causes impediments to the Swiss humanitarian channel," he said at a news conference.

Washington has no good intention and just makes propaganda, Mousavi added.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has claimed Washington is ready to help Iran in the battle with the infectious disease.

An American weekly news magazine has said that the unilateral U.S. sanctions against Iran has complicated the country's access to life-saving medical supplies, hampering its ability to effectively respond to the deadly spread of the new coronavirus.

"The U.S. sanctions regime has severely impacted the access that Iranians have to life-saving medical supplies and will most likely hamper the Islamic Republic's ability to respond to the coronavirus efficiently," Naveed Mansoori, a co-editor of online Middle East magazine Jadaliyya's Iran Page, told Newsweek which was published on February 24.

■ 'Foreign media should not abuse issue of coronavirus outbreak'

Mousavi also said that the foreign media outlets should not abuse the issue of coronavirus outbreak in Iran.

"We advise the foreign media, especially the ones which are in Persian, not to make the people fearful and weaken their spirit," he said.

The BBC's Persian service claimed on Friday that coronavirus has killed at least 210 people across Iran.

Iran's Health Ministry categorically denied the claim. Kianoush Jahanpour, head of the ministry's Public Relations and Information Center, said on Friday that the BBC Persian 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.

"These are seeking to satisfy [their] ignoble political goals by creating anxiety and distress among nations, and are unfortunately making their money this way," Jahanpour added.

■ 'Triggering dispute mechanism was cancelled from beginning'

Elsewhere, Mousavi said that triggering the dispute



mechanism in the nuclear deal was cancelled from the beginning.

He urged the Europeans to implement their obligations under the 2015 nuclear deal, known as the JCPOA.

EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell was notified in January by Paris, London, and Berlin that they had triggered the dispute resolution 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.

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.

■ 'Pathways to peace in Afghanistan must be through intra-Afghan dialogue'

Mousavi also said that all the pathways to peace in Afghanistan must be through inter-Afghan consensus.

"Taliban's role in Afghanistan cannot be denied. What Iran attached great importance to is that all the passages to peace in Afghanistan must be through inter-Afghan consensus and with involvement of all the Afghan groups guided by the central government," he noted.

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.

Mousavi said in a statement on Sunday that the U.S. is in no legal position to sign an agreement that determines the future of Afghanistan.

"The U.S. has no legal status for signing a peace deal or deciding the future of Afghanistan," 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.

■ 'Iran will continue talks with Taliban'

Mousavi also said that Iran will continue talks with Taliban and the U.S.-Taliban agreement will not affect it.

■ 'Iran following Turkey-Syria issue'

Elsewhere, Mousavi said that Iran is following clashes between Syria and Turkey in Idlib.

"Iran follows the issue by the time that peace is restored to the region," he said.

Ankara is directly involved in the clash against Syrian forces as part of a bid to help armed opposition groups, who have formed a military alliance with the terrorist groups, to halt advance of Syrian forces in Idlib.

According to France 24, Turkey shot down two Syrian warplanes over Idlib on Sunday and struck a military airport well beyond its frontlines in a sharp escalation of its military operations following the death of dozens of Turkish soldiers last week.

Turkey has already deployed thousands of troops and military vehicles in northwest Syria's Idlib province in the last month to stem advances by Syrian government forces, the TV channel reported.

Guardian reporter speaks out on Neda Agha-Soltan, Jamal Khashoggi, Iran International TV, Masih Alinejad

Saeed Kamali Dehghan: I was naive to believe the Western narrative on death of Neda Agha-Soltan

1→ Neda Agha-Soltan's death drew worldwide attention back in 2009, when her death was captured on video and broadcast over the internet. As captured on the video, she collapsed to the ground after being shot in the chest and bled to death while it seemed as though she was looking to the camera.

The documentary Kamali Dehghan was referring to is called "For Neda". It was directed by Antony Thomas and partly filmed by Kamali Dehghan, who came to Iran to secretly interview Neda's family and film her house and personal life prior to her death. For Neda was released in June 2010, a year after her death.

"When they got my footage from me, from then on I was nobody and I was deeply upset about the film, even though I didn't show it at the time," Kamali Dehghan said about his role in making that documentary.

"The reality is I have no idea who killed Neda, whereas Antony Thomas's film points the fingers at the Iranian rulers," he stated.

At the beginning of the documentary, which runs for 67 minutes, the 24-year-old Kamali Dehghan is introduced as a "strong candidate" who emerged while no other journalist dared to do the job of interviewing Neda's family out of fear of being arrested by Iranian intelligence and security forces.

"He accepted the challenge," said the narrator, Shohreh Aghdashloo. "Saeed had been in Iran during the protests, reporting for the London Guardian and CNN. He was also the first person to discover Neda's family name, and the apartment where she'd lived with her parents and a younger brother."

"On November 17th, Saeed left for Tehran via Paris and Dubai, armed only with a list of questions for Neda's family. Early on the morning of November 20th he emailed back with a news that he got safely through customs and security and was now ready to begin his assignment in Tehran."

Then Kamali Dehghan enters the script: "I was completely alone, facing the greatest challenge of my life. First, I contacted Neda's brother. Four days later, I got a message that the family had agreed to meet me. I remember that first night. I was very nervous. My stomach was churning. As I rang the bell, I was sure that someone from the intelligence service would appear at any moment."

Now, almost 10 years after the documentary was released, he says he was wrong to be involved in it because there's "no credible evidence" Neda was killed by the Islamic Republic forces or anyone tied with the Iranian government.

"The story of me is like the story of Masih Alinejad," he said, referring to a U.S.-based Iranian dissident who is well-known for her anti-Islamic Republic activities, including a campaign she launched in 2014 called "My Stealthy Freedom".

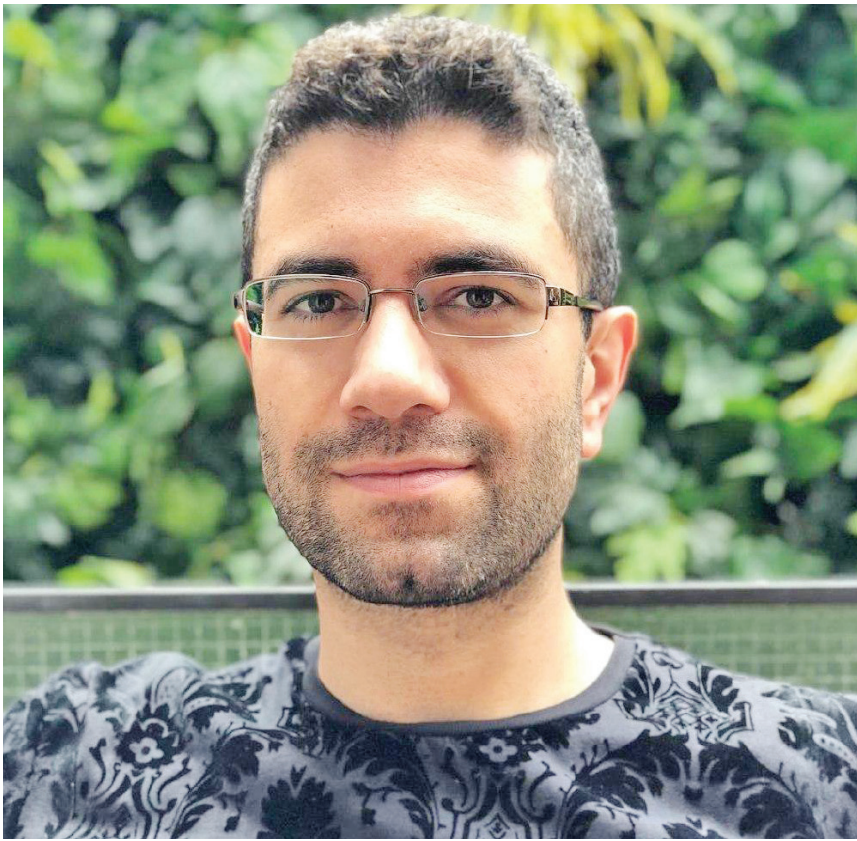
"But God willing, I managed to detect this a bit later on," said Kamali Dehghan. "I chose not to become the kind of person Masih Alinejad represents today. We both have similarities, we're both emotional and prone to manipulation."

He did not further elaborate what he meant.

This is not the first time Kamali Dehghan comes clean about an important issue. He used to cover Iran for the Guardian and initially got himself in trouble by two articles he wrote for the daily, revealing that London-based broadcaster Iran International was funded by Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman (MBS).

His first article on the anti-Iran channel was published on October 2, 2018, the day Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi entered the Saudi consulate in Istanbul and was murdered brutally by the Saudis.

In that article, he highlighted "the growing influence of Saudi-linked stations operating from London", where two other major Farsi-language channels, namely the BBC Persian and Manoto TV, are also based.



"The story of me is like the story of Masih Alinejad, but I chose not to become the kind of person Masih Alinejad represents today," says the Guardian journalist.

He pointed out that Iran International pays generous salaries to employees, and then cited a source close to MBS as saying that the channel's money came from the Saudi royal court, estimated to be about \$250m. "The money is coming from Saudi Arabia, it is from the royal court," he quoted the source as saying.

The second article was published on October 31, long after the first. In that article, Kamali Dehghan offered more details about the Saudi regime's links to Iran International, and mentioned Khashoggi several times to foreshadow a shocking disclosure days later.

Citing the source, he said Saud al-Qahitani, a close advisor to MBS at the time who reportedly oversaw the killing of Khashoggi, was involved in the funding behind Iran International. "You could have a larger picture about how those kids [Saudi media moguls] with that money being thrown around [by Prince Mohammed] trying to change the world by buying media... It is money coming from the royal court," he quoted the source as saying.

Finally, on November 9, 2018, he identified his source as Jamal Khashoggi, but also claimed in a tweet that the Washington Post journalist was killed because of speaking to him about the Iran International issue.

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

He then posted a series of tweets indicating he felt deeply threatened. "My request to all family and friends is not to contact me at this moment, except very trusted one. My

mum knows how to contact me. I trust my mum and a few people here," he tweeted.

However, the tweets were deleted soon afterwards. The Guardian, according to him, has silenced him for over a year. It's also important to note that no major media outlet in the world covered the story.

Fed up with the situation, Kamali Dehghan went public with the mental torment he went through since then. He tweeted that he was in Nightingale hospital after experiencing serious mental health problems, saying the newspaper has placed a "de facto ban" on him writing about Iran.

The Guardian did not respond to a request for comment.

However, Kamali Dehghan told the Tehran Times that prior to Khashoggi's death, nobody at the newspaper knew that he was his source. "The interview was taped," he confirmed. "After his death, I revealed to editors that he was my source."

Asked to elaborate on his Iran International articles, he said, "The Guardian published my [first] article because it valued it newsworthy."

Initially, he continued, there was "resistance [against] me following up on the story from some editors by editor-in-chief Ms. [Katharine] Viner allowed me to publish my second article on Iran International."

■ 'My enemies discredited me in the eyes of my employer'

He also insisted that his enemies, who are mad at him for writing about Iran International, have contacted the Guardian and managed to "discredit me in the eyes of my employer."

"The Guardian never gave me a single opportunity to defend myself. Instead they silenced my voice and imposed a de facto ban on me writing about Iran."

Initially, there was "resistance [against] me following up on the story from some editors but an intervention by editor-in-chief Ms. [Katharine] Viner allowed me to publish my second article on Iran International," said Kamali Dehghan.

"I believe Iran International and others including Western intelligence services managed to discredit me in the eyes of my employer," he said, reiterating. "I believe the intelligence services of the UK, helped with their allies, are intent to make my life hell in London."

"I'm sure western intelligence services kept close eyes on my writing from early on in my career, but I'm happy that I've turned out to be a huge disappointment to them," he added.

He said, however, that the Guardian "seems to have bought into those allegations against me including bogus claims that I am an agent of the Islamic Republic of Iran."

Kamali Dehghan noted that the Guardian's silencing of him by not allowing him to report on Iran has exacerbated his mental health problems.

On February 24, he tweeted that "a decision by the Guardian to impose a de facto ban on me writing about Iran has led to my current severe mental health status."

What happened to me is "the result of abuse of psychiatry," he told the Tehran Times. "For example, in 2018, I came under huge attacks because of my Iran International history and my enemies created an environment that made me doubt everything and everyone."

"As a result, I had a psychotic episode and was sectioned for two weeks. But make no mistake, I am a victim of abuse of psychiatry and my opponents use that as a pretext to silence my voice."

Ever since he disclosed the links between the Saudi regime and Iran International, Kamali Dehghan has been viciously attacked by some journalists, Iranian dissidents and online trolls who have smeared him and called him names.

The Jerusalem Post also ran a hit piece on him on Friday with the same attitude, citing Iranian dissidents to destroy his credibility on the matter.

"Am I a spy, a liar, psychotic, schizophrenic, mentally disturbed, an attention seeker, a loser, or am I just a journalist silenced by his employer and intelligence services?" read his latest tweet, which was posted last week. "You decide. This is your Dreyfus affair moment in some ways, this time with a Muslim Iranian journalist."

Kamali Dehghan was not the only person who said Khashoggi was his unnamed source after the Arab journalist's death.

Thomas Friedman, a New York Times Op-Ed columnist, also revealed on October 8, 2018 that Khashoggi was the unnamed source he had earlier quoted in a column about MBS.

"My views on Saudi Arabia are my own, but Jamal had a big impact on them," Friedman wrote in the New York Times. "[Jamal] believed that MBS needed a lot of coaching, because he had a dark side and was too isolated inside a small ruling circle."

As the year went on, Friedman continued, "Jamal came to believe that MBS's dark side was completely taking over."

On 12 November 2018, days after Kamali Dehghan's second article was published, Iran International made a statement on their website in which it denied that it had any connection to Saudi Arabia or MBS.

But Negar Mortazavi, a former reporter for Iran International, told the Wall Street Journal in early 2019 that she left the channel the previous year because "their editorial direction is increasingly influenced by Saudi foreign policy."

Saudi Arabia is making "a systematic and very persistent push in a new direction in the media sphere," said Mortazavi. "The Saudis want influence and credibility, and are paying a lot for it."

Asked by a Twitter user whether the story in the Guardian on the \$250 million financing by Saudi nationals in Iran International is correct, she replied judiciously: "Guardian is a credible news outlet."

Iran's anti-narcotic chief in Vienna to attend UN meeting

POLITICAL DESK **TEHRAN** — The secretary general of Iran's Drug Control Headquarters, heading a high-ranking delegation, has traveled to Vienna to attend the 63rd session of the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND).

Eskandar Momeni, who left Tehran for Austria's capital on Sunday, is scheduled to address the CND meeting opening ceremony.

The CND confab will run from March 12 to 14. Momeni will also hold separate meetings with senior UNODC officials as well as the heads of participating delegations.



The UNODC is the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. Simultaneously, Iran will also hold an exhibition of the country's anti-narcotic measures at the venue of the UN in Vienna.

Iran, which has a 900-kilometer border with Afghanistan, has been used as the main conduit for smuggling Afghan drugs to narcotics kingpins across the world, especially Europe.

Despite high economic and human costs, the Islamic Republic has been actively fighting drug-trafficking over the past decades.

Iran has spent more than \$700 million on sealing its borders and preventing the transit of narcotics destined for European, Arab and Central Asian countries.

The war on drug has claimed the lives of nearly 4,000 Iranian police forces over the past four decades.

Just on Sunday, the police commander of the border province of Sistan-Baluchestan announced drug combat squads had confiscated 2,956 kilograms of different illicit drugs in Khash County. Second Brigadier General Mohammad Ghanbari said 1,492 tons of morphine, 1,442 tons of opium, and 22 kilograms crystal were seized from smugglers.

The Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) was established by Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) resolution 9(I) in 1946, to assist the ECOSOC in supervising the application of the international drug control treaties. In 1991, the General Assembly (GA) expanded the mandate of the CND to enable it to function as the governing body of the UNODC.

ECOSOC resolution 1999/30 requested the CND to structure its agenda with two distinct segments: a normative segment for discharging treaty-based and normative functions; and an operational segment for exercising the role as the governing body of UNODC.

The CND meets annually when it considers and adopts a range of decisions and resolutions. The intersessional meetings of the CND are regularly convened to provide policy guidance to the UNODC. Towards the end of each year, the CND meets at a reconvened session to consider budgetary and administrative matters as the governing body of the United Nations drug program.

U.S.-Taliban agreement shows Washington has failed to reach its goal: Iranian analyst

POLITICAL DESK **TEHRAN** — Mohsen Rouhisefat, an expert on international affairs, has said that an agreement between the United States and Taliban shows that Washington has failed to reach its objectives.

"When the United States reaches an agreement with Taliban after years of war, it shows this country [the U.S.] could not reach its objectives and seeks a way out of the crisis," he told ILNA in an interview published on Monday.

Rouhisefat also said that Iran supports peace in Afghanistan and backs dialogue among the government and Taliban.

Writing on his Twitter account on Sunday, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said that the U.S. has lost the war in Afghanistan but tries to hide it by blaming others.

"U.S. occupiers should've never invaded Afghanistan. But they did, and blamed everyone else for consequences. Now after 19 years of humiliation, U.S. has tendered its surrender. Whether in Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq or Yemen, U.S. is THE problem. It will leave—while leaving huge mess behind," Zarif underscored.

Sanctions-hit Iran struggles to make cancer drugs: report

By staff and agency

In a report published by AFP on Monday, it is said that the United States sanctions against Iran have caused problems for making cancer drugs.

"We have many issues at the moment. Because of the sanctions, usually we can't either transfer the money or the supplier is not willing to sell the machinery that we need," Reza Mostofi, manager of a facility in an industrial district of Karaj, said.

He also said, "Much of the equipment that we are using either in production or in laboratory, they are considered as dual-use and they are sanctioned." On paper, humanitarian items are exempt from U.S. sanctions, but in reality banks tend to decline transactions involving Iran to avoid being exposed to potential litigation.

"The equipment that we are using, the spare parts and everything, now we have a big issue for repairing the spare parts that are needed," said Mostofi. For the past six months, he said, the plant has been unable to produce a drug that is essential for treating leukaemia.

"For some time we have not been able to import the ingredients of this material, so our line... is now stopped," said the English-speaking manager.

The company hopes to produce the active ingredient itself, with a "very big" bioreactor, but it faces almost insurmountable difficulties because of the sanctions.

Iran's Health Ministry spokesman Kianoush Jahanpour voiced concern about the situation.

"Regarding cancer patients, we had no problem because we are producing the medicine ourselves... (but) our companies want to renew, rebuild and replace their industrial equipment," he told AFP.

According to him, there are 500,000 cancer patients in Iran, and it is the second biggest cause of death in the country, claiming 30,000 lives a year.

Army to utilize entire capabilities to root out coronavirus: commander

POLITICAL DESK **TEHRAN** — The Army ground force commander has expressed satisfaction about the ongoing campaign against coronavirus outbreak across the country, vowing to use the force's full capacities to counter the epidemic.

Brigadier General Kiomars Heidari made the remarks in his visit to the production lines of face masks and anti-infection clothes by the Army.

The commander went on to say that his force is with people and is resolved to prove its loyalty to the motto that "the army is willing to sacrifice forces for the people".

"We have set up a number of workshops to produce more cosmetic products in different provinces of Kermanshah, Ilam, Tehran, Golestan and Khuzestan. The workshops are producing 10,000 face masks each working day," he added.

The commander said that the army special units have started sanitizing public places across the country.

On Sunday, the general said that the ground force's experts have built test kits to diagnose coronavirus.

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."

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 1501 Iranian nationals have been infected by the virus, out of which 66 patients have lost their lives.

It added that 291 patients have been cured and returned to normal life.

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

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	529,328
IFX	6.787

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	\$50.41/b
WTI	\$45.58/b
OPEC Basket	\$51.89/b
Gold	\$1,603.65/oz
Silver	\$16.83/oz
Platinum	\$872.90/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

Mining projects worth over \$1.2b ready to come on stream: IMIDRO

➔ “The project for reviving the small scale mines is being followed up continuously by the organization and the industry ministry,” he said.



Back in April 2019, Gharibpour had said that projects worth \$3 billion were planned to be inaugurated in the country’s mining sector in the current Iranian calendar year.

The official said that 20 projects implemented by IMIDRO in the previous year created 4,440 direct jobs and 25,300 indirect jobs.

The deputy industry and mining minister said that the projects were implemented in collaboration with the country’s private sector.

According to Gharibpour, the country’s private sector invested 11.3 trillion rials (about \$269.04 million) in the mining sector since December, 2018 up to August, 2019.

“This amount of investment is a turning point in the private sector’s contribution to the development of the country’s mining industries,” Gharibpour said.

Italy unveils €3.6b stimulus to tackle coronavirus

Italy will inject €3.6 billion into its economy to mitigate the impact of the largest outbreak of coronavirus in Europe as policymakers around the world consider the consequences of transport and supply disruptions resulting from efforts to contain the disease.

Roberto Gualtieri, Italy’s economy minister, said on Sunday the government would introduce tax credits for companies that reported a 25 percent drop in revenues, as well as tax cuts and extra cash for the health system. The package will amount to 0.2 percent of GDP, he told La Repubblica, and would come in addition to €900 million worth of measures unveiled on Friday for the most severely hit regions.

Rome will simultaneously seek authorization from Brussels to increase the budget deficit for this year, the Treasury said over the weekend.

The eurozone’s third-largest economy, which was on the brink of recession before the disease, needs “shock therapy”, said Giuseppe Conte, Italy’s prime minister, on Sunday in an interview with il Fatto Quotidiano newspaper.

The move comes as investors and policymakers anticipate more harm to the global economy than previously thought.

Global markets shed four months of gains last week over concerns the response to the spread of the new disease will hit economic activity and companies profit more heavily than initially anticipated.

Data released on Saturday showed that China’s manufacturing sector suffered the steepest decline in activity on record in February, leading some economists to warn that the country could report an economic contraction in the second quarter.

Official figures suggest that the virus, known as Covid-19, is now spreading faster outside China, where it originated. Beijing reported 573 new confirmed cases and 35 deaths on Sunday, bringing the total number of confirmed cases on the mainland to 79,824.

On Friday Jay Powell, the Federal Reserve chair, signaled that the U.S. central bank was considering cutting interest rates in response to the “evolving risks” to the U.S. economy posed by the spread of coronavirus.

South Korea, with 3,736 cases and the largest outbreak outside China, has also announced new stimulus measures to help buffer the fallout for Asia’s fourth-biggest economy after a series of stoppages at the country’s factories prompted concerns over damage to the global technology supply chain. The death toll in the country rose to 21 on Sunday and authorities reported that a 45-day-old infant was among the new infections, South Korea’s youngest case.

With more than 1,500 confirmed cases and 29 dead, Italy is home to one of the largest coronavirus outbreak outside Asia. The country has placed 11 towns in the wealthy north — and their 50,000 residents — under lockdown until the end of next week, closed schools and universities, and cancelled football matches and fashion shows. (Source: Financial Times)

Commodities worth \$3.6m traded at IME during February

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Over 2.56 million tons of commodities valued at \$3.648 million were traded at Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) during February.

As reported by IME’s International Affairs and Public Relations Department, during the last month, the oil and petrochemical trading floor of IME played host to trading of 1,644,350 tons of commodities worth more than \$1,897 million.

On this trading floor, more than 411,309 tons of bitumen, 324,615 tons of polymer products and 131,768 tons of chemical

products, 562,475 tons of VB feed stock, 168,200 tons of lube cut oil, 26,110 tons of sulfur, 5,905 tons of insulation, 8,000 tons of slaps waxes, 5,767 tons of base oil and paraffin waxes, and 200 tons of argon were traded by customers.

The metal and mineral trading floor witnessed trading over 910,549 tons of commodities worth more than \$1,747 million.

On this trading floor 1,845,229 tons of steel, 34,550 tons of copper, 680 tons of molybdenum concentrates, 60 tons of precious metals concentrates, 680 tons of zinc, 27,350 tons of aluminum, 2,000 tons

Stock market witnessing more growth



ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — After a sharp decline in Saturday, growth returned to Iran’s stock on Sunday and continues on Monday as well.

TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), went up 13,745 points to 529,328 as 7.232 billion securities worth 54.006 trillion rials (about \$1.28 billion) were traded at this market on Monday, IRNA reported.

The first market’s index rose 8,510 points and the second market’s index climbed 34,576 points, the same report conformed.

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.

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

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

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

The index rose 109 points to 6,784 as 2,432 securities valued at 25.725 trillion rials (about \$612.5 million) were traded at this market.



of coke, as well as 42 kg of gold bullion were traded by customers.

The side market of the IME experienced trading of 300 tons of tomato paste, 50 tons of used locomotive engine oil, 2,153 tons of metal scrap, 250 tons of steel scrap as well as 2,700 tons of phosphate concentrates.

As previously announced by the International Affairs and Public Relations Depart-

ment of IME, some 2.874 million tons of commodities valued at \$3.397 billion were traded at this exchange market in January.

IME is one of the four major stock markets of Iran, the other three markets are Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), Iran’s over-the-counter (OTC) market known also as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB), and Iran Energy Exchange (IRENEX).

Budget review committee submits report to Majlis



ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iranian parliament’s ad hoc budget review committee submitted its report on the administration’s budget bill for the next Iranian calendar year (starting March 20) to the parliament (Majlis), IRNA reported on Sunday.

According to Ali-Asghar Yousefnejad, a member of the body, the report includes the views of the committee members on the next year’s budget bill.

Majlis Presiding Board has now referred the committee’s report to the regulations deputy for further considerations and assessment, the official said.

After receiving the committee report, the parliament members have 10 days to announce their final verdict about the budget bill.

President Hassan Rouhani presented the administration’s draft of the 19.88

quadrillion rials (about \$473.3 billion at the official rate of 42,000 rials) budget bill in early December 2019.

In late February, Majlis rejected general outlines of the national budget bill stating that the bill is not compatible with the country’s current economic conditions.

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

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

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

The coronavirus has put the world’s economy in survival mode

By Eswar S. Prasad

Whether or not the coronavirus turns into a global pandemic, the outbreak is already infecting economies and financial markets around the world. While governments try to navigate the fine line between being prepared and setting off panic, the economic costs are growing as countries and communities try to control the spread of the disease.

The hopeful narrative about 2020 heralding a modest rebound in global growth now lies in ruins. Europe stagnated and Japan’s economy shrank in the last quarter of 2019, even as China and India were losing momentum. So this year was already off to a rocky start. Now, the coronavirus has put the world economy in survival mode. The spread of the virus is hurting travel, trade and supply chains worldwide. The Baltic Dry Index, a forward-looking indicator of global trade, has fallen by half and oil prices are down by about a quarter so far this year. U.S. stock markets, after initially taking the epidemic’s fallout in stride, are now experiencing a major sell-off.

Why were stock markets sanguine for weeks after the outbreak began, and why are they now in full-blown panic mode? Financial markets are prone to large, sen-

timent-driven swings that sometimes seem out of line with economic fundamentals. But the news of the last few days suggests that, rather than coming under control and being confined to China, the outbreak is spreading and could get far worse. Stock markets in the United States and elsewhere are reflecting this reassessment of the epidemic’s future trajectory and the risks it poses.

The notion of this outbreak being a short-lived negative shock to global demand now looks unrealistic. It is not just spending on restaurants and travel that is suffering, but also investment by businesses while they wait for the uncertainty to be resolved. This will have long-term effects on growth even if the outbreak proves short-lived.

Stock markets mainly reflect the prospects of medium-size and large firms. Warnings of weaker revenues and profits from giants like Apple and Microsoft have contributed to the declines in major stock indexes. Even though the United States has so far been relatively unscathed by the epidemic, the plunge in stock markets last week reflects the supply chain disruptions faced by U.S. companies and also weaknesses in foreign markets that account for a significant portion of U.S. multinationals’ revenues.

The disruption of supply chains, especially

those that pass through Asia, is hurting businesses in multiple dimensions. Countries such as China, South Korea and Japan are critical to the supply chains for products ranging from plastic toys to iPhones to high-tech machinery. In these countries, manufacturers can’t get raw materials delivered reliably, are facing worker shortages and are having difficulty shipping out products. Rejiggering supply chains takes months, if not years. If the coronavirus spreads and causes disruptions to other major economies, it could wreak further havoc on supply chains.

Still, big companies are better equipped to cope in difficult times. They tend to have large cushions of cash and can get financing from banks. The picture is bleaker for small companies.

In most countries, including the United States, small private businesses are among the most dynamic in creating jobs. But they usually have slim financial cushions. Banks are often reluctant to lend to small businesses even in the best of times. Moreover, even if their employers stay afloat, employed workers are likely to pare back spending as they face uncertainty about job prospects and shrinking investment accounts.

Another quandary that governments face, especially in China and other countries hit

hardest by the coronavirus, is how to balance containing the spread of the epidemic with keeping their economies humming. Every day that factories stay closed and restaurants have no customers makes it harder to get things back up. On the flip side, the very nature of increased economic activity, with more person-to-person contacts, would make it harder to control the spread of the epidemic.

There is no easy way out. The Federal Reserve and other central banks could cut interest rates. This might not do much good, as uncertainty will restrain consumer spending and business investment even if cheap loans were available. Government spending might be more potent. Any assistance that reaches small businesses and allows them to stay afloat or goes directly into the hands of low-income consumers will help. But consumers and businesses are as likely to stash away any extra cash as they are to spend it.

Governments cannot eliminate uncertainty, but they can ensure the transparent and accurate flow of information. Even if the news is bad, consumers, businesses and investors need to know that they have a reliable picture of the facts. That, along with knowing that governments are doing all they can, might be the salve that everyone needs.

(Source: The New York Times)

Asian shares rebound as markets bet on coordinated policy stimulus

Asian shares regained a measure of calm on Monday as markets bounced after a searing sell-off last week and as investors pinned hopes on a likely coordinated global monetary response to help soften the economic blow of the coronavirus outbreak.

European stock futures also showed a higher opening for European markets, tracking gains in Asia.

The positive turn came after global markets took a pounding last week as the virus spread across many countries. Pandemic fears wiped out more than \$5 trillion from a major global equity index and stocks logged their biggest falls in more than a decade.

The sheer scale of losses led financial markets to price in policy responses from the U.S. Federal Reserve to the Bank of Japan and the Reserve Bank of Australia.

Futures now imply a full 50 basis point cut by the Fed in March while Australian markets are pricing in a quarter-point cut at the RBA’s Tuesday meeting.

On Monday, investors were encouraged by comments from Bank of Japan Governor Haruhiko Kuroda who said



the central bank would take necessary steps to stabilize financial markets.

“Markets being what they are, they are usually responsive to the prospect of monetary accommodation. The question is, how long this lasts and how much of a boost it gives us,” said Rob Carnell, head of Asia-Pacific research at ING.

MSCI’s broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside

Japan MIAPJ0000PUS rose 1%, up for the first time in four sessions and recovering from a fall of about 0.3% in early trade. But the uptick barely made up for a 10 percent tumble last week.

Euro Stoxx 50 futures STXEc1 and German DAX futures FDXXc1 both rose 1.6%, while FTSE futures FFIc1 rallied 2.1%.

E-minis for the S&P500 ESck1, which were down more than 1% at one point, were last up 0.5%.

Global disruption

The rapid spread of the coronavirus has led businesses globally to curb travel, send workers home and cancel events, hitting stocks in the aviation, gambling and tourism sectors.

The disruption to global supply chains and productivity has darkened the outlook for a world economy already struggling with the fallout of the U.S.-China trade war.

“There’s no policy out there, frankly, that is going to be sufficiently large to offset the nature of what’s coming in terms of the virus. So we have to keep watching these new case numbers until these show signs of leveling off,” said ING’s Carnell.

(Source: Reuters)

Last platform of SP phases 22-24 fully operational

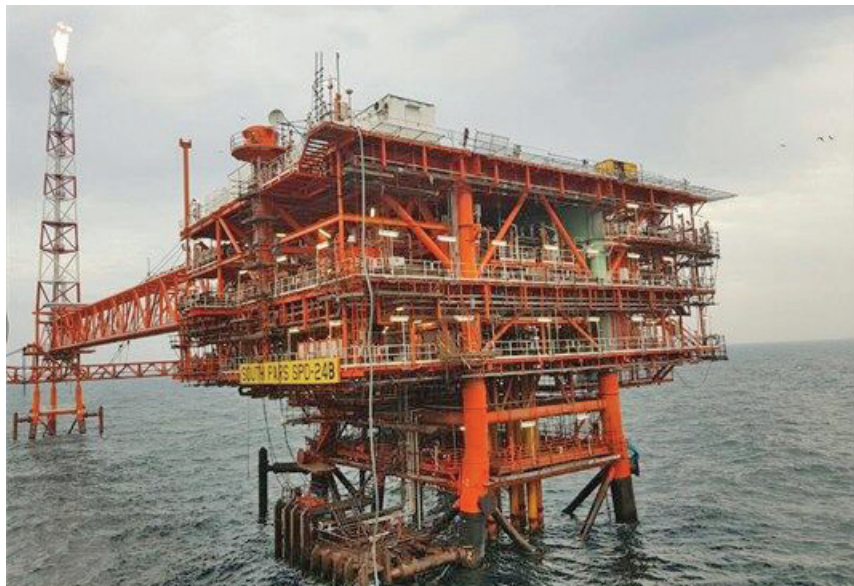
E N E R G Y **TEHRAN** — Platform SPD-24B, which is the last platform of the phases 22, 23, 24 of developing South Pars gas field (in the Persian Gulf), has started transferring sour gas to onshore refineries, deputy operator of the phases' development project told Shana.

According to Ali Asghar Sadeqi, this platform has added 500 million cubic feet (14.2 million cubic meters) of gas to the field's output and with this last platform fully operational, the phases' total output has reached the expected 56 million cubic meters.

The phases 22-24 are also going to produce 75,000 barrels of gas condensate, and 400 tons of sulfur per day, in addition to 50 million cubic meters of methane, 2,900 tons of LPG and 2,750 tons of ethane.

Sadeqi pointed out that the refineries of phases 22-24 are now receiving sour gas from four production platforms through two 32-inch pipelines connected to the main platforms.

The refineries, currently, have the capacity of processing 50 million cubic meters of gas, 75,000 barrels of condensate, 400 tons of sulfur and one million tons of ethane and



one million tons of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) annually.

Platform SPD-24B was loaded at Sadra yard in the southwestern province of Bushehr

in early October 2019 and its installation operations were completed in early February.

South Pars gas field, which Iran shares with Qatar in the Persian Gulf, covers an area

of 9,700 square kilometers, 3,700 square kilometers of which, called South Pars, are in Iran's territorial waters. The remaining 6,000 square kilometers, called North Dome, are situated in Qatar's territorial waters.

The field is estimated to contain a significant amount of natural gas, accounting for about eight percent of the world's reserves, and approximately 18 billion barrels of condensate.

In mid-September last year, managing director of Pars Oil and Gas Company (POGC), which is in charge of developing the gas field, had announced that all the remaining platforms of the field will be installed by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 19, 2020).

Speaking to the state TV, Mohammad Meshkinfam had said "By the end of this year, the five remaining South Pars platforms at Sadra industrial yard will be installed [on their designated offshore spots] and recovery from all South Pars gas blocks (except for phase 11) will be realized."

The development of South Pars Field started 22 years ago and 29 different phases were defined for the project along with a separate oil block.

Iran to produce 9 major petchem catalysts in 2 years

E N E R G Y **TEHRAN** — Iran is planning to indigenize nine major catalysts used in the petrochemical industries within the next two years, Shana reported, quoting the managing director of the country's Petrochemical Research and Technology Company (PRTC).

"We plan to produce over \$100m worth of petrochemical catalysts annually, by the end of the Iranian calendar year of 1400 (March 20, 2022)," Ali Pajouhan said.

According to the official, National Petrochemical Company (NPC) has already signed 20 contracts with knowledge-based companies for mass production of catalysts and 70 research projects are also underway in this regard.

Noting that the country's petrochemical industry is currently using 40 different types of catalysts which cost the industry \$260 million annually, the official added: "Currently, the knowledge for producing 16 of the mentioned 40 types has been indigenized which would save the country \$105 million every year."

In early January, NPC held a seminar on the indigenization of petrochemical industry catalysts in Kish Island.

According to the seminar's Executive Secretary Mohammad-Amin Ebrahimi, the mentioned seminar was aimed to create a common language and synergy between catalyst producers and consumers and also to provide a platform to discuss and evaluate the performance of the native catalysts.

Back in September 2019, Pajouhan had said that the country's petrochemical complexes were keen on utilizing domestic catalysts in their operations.

The official noted that significant steps were taken for the domestic production of catalysts used in petrochemical processes in Iran.

Petrochemical is Iran's most important industry after oil and gas. The National Petrochemical Company hopes to lift output capacity to 120 million tons per annum by 2022.

The petrochemical industry has played a key role in



domestic economic growth as it creates value-added and reduces the sale of oil and gas on which the economy has been dependent for decades.

With abundant hydrocarbon reserves and new private sector investments, Iran is working hard to maintain its global status in the key sector and broaden its scope.

OPEC could deepen oil supply cuts with or without Russia: sources



OPEC could agree on deeper oil supply cuts this week, with or without Russia's support, to halt the slide in crude prices triggered by the global spread of the coronavirus, said two sources familiar with the talks.

Moscow is resisting further output curbs, arguing that reduced production by the Saudi Arabia-led Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and its allies, a group known as OPEC+, will not necessarily revive oil demand, the sources said.

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Sunday said that current prices are acceptable for his country's budget and that Russia - a key member of OPEC+ - has sufficient resources to contend with any deterioration in the global economy.

"Saudi Arabia wants to hold prices from falling, but Russia is still not agreeing. So the only way might be for OPEC to cut alone, which will not send a good signal to the market," one of the sources said.

"There should be a cut, there is no other option," another source said, adding that another option might be for OPEC to delay a decision until low oil prices force Moscow to come on board.

Markets rattled

Global oil and stock markets have been rattled by the spread of the coronavirus, which has infected 82,000-plus people globally, with more than 2,700 deaths in China and 57 fatalities in 46 other nations.

Brent crude fell to \$49.67 a barrel on Friday, having lost more than \$15 since January.

OPEC has been discussing cutting oil production by a further 1 million barrels per day (bpd), among other

options, as it seeks to stabilize declining oil prices, OPEC and industry sources said on Friday.

That is more than an initially proposed cut of 600,000 bpd.

The existing OPEC+ pact entails output cuts of 1.7 million bpd under a deal that runs to the end of March.

Saudi Arabia has been holding its output to 400,000 bpd beneath its quota, bringing the total effective OPEC+ cuts to 2.1 million bpd.

OPEC and allies are scheduled to meet in Vienna over March 5-6 to seek agreement on production policy.

But cutting output without Russia could effectively mean an end to the co-operation between OPEC and Moscow, an outcome that Saudi Arabia and other key OPEC members would not want.

Moscow has a history of agreeing to OPEC+ actions only at the last minute after showing initial reluctance.

Saudi Arabia's Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman last month described as "nonsense" a media report that Riyadh is considering a break from the OPEC+ alliance with Russia.

He also expressed confidence that OPEC+ would respond responsibly to the spread of the coronavirus and that Saudi Arabia and Russia would remain engaged on oil policy.

The prince has been advocating a swift oil supply cut since the initial outbreak of the virus in January, aware that delays have previously led to costly price collapses, sources familiar with the kingdom's thinking have told Reuters.

Saudi Arabia needs oil prices of about \$80 a barrel to balance its state budget while Russia can cope with prices as low as \$42.

(Source: Reuters)

Speculators raise bets against U.S. oil and gas companies



Bruised by plunging commodity prices and oversupply across the industry, U.S. oil and gas companies have come into the sights of market speculators, who have placed huge bets against equity valuations in the sector.

Short sellers have added more than \$460m to their short-interest positions since the start of February, according to data from S3 Partners, a research company, the largest move of this kind in the sector since June 2019, when oil prices tumbled into a bear market.

In addition, two exchange-traded funds considered proxies for U.S. energy, XOP and OIH, have drawn particular attention from funds seeking to profit from the sector's deepening slump. Short interest in both now amounts to around 40 percent of their shares, the data show.

Investor disenchantment with U.S. oil and gas companies is not new — but it has suddenly accelerated. The sector's high debt burden, patchy record of paying back investors, and the inability of some producers to spend within cash flow has consistently dragged on equity valuations.

Short sellers have put a lot more cash into the pot by shorting another \$462m worth of energy stocks, anticipating further price weakness in the short term.

The S&P index of energy stocks is down 25 percent so far in 2020, compared with a 7.5 percent drop for the S&P 500, and is barely positive over the past 10 years. Bank of America calculated that the sector was now underperforming the broader market by the biggest margin in almost 80 years.

Short sellers think worse is imminent for energy equities. Some spent recent days drawing up lists of especially vulnerable companies, reflecting a sudden negative shift in mood about the coronavirus among hedge funds in the U.S., according to conversations with people close to these moves.

"Short sellers have put a lot more cash into the pot by shorting another \$462m worth of energy stocks, anticipating further price weakness in the short term," said Ihor Dusanivsky, head of predictive analysis at S3.

Among shale companies targeted for shorting in recent weeks have been Range Resources and Southwestern Energy, according to S3 data, both large producers of natural gas left exposed to the plummeting commodity price.

Big short positions have also been opened up in the shares of Callon Petroleum and Matador Resources, two companies operating in the prolific Permian shale oil play.

WTI crude oil, the U.S. benchmark, fell beneath \$45 a barrel on Friday to a four-year low and is down more than 27 percent since the start of the year. U.S. natural gas prices are at historic lows beneath \$1.70 per million British thermal units.

But the sliding commodity price is not the sector's only problem. The global market sell-off triggered by fears of economic dislocation owing to the coronavirus outbreak has come during a period of oversupply in energy markets.

"It's structural," said Yasser Elguindi, market strategist at Energy Aspects, a consultancy. "Energy equities have underperformed relative to the commodity, relative to the S&P. Investors are saying 'no mas'. They've lost faith in management."

The bets against XOP, an ETF that tracks oil and gas explorers and producers, now amount to more than \$1bn — or almost half its float — with the number of shares shorted up 9 percent in the past month and 2 percent this week, according to S3.

Short interest in OIH, an ETF that tracks oilfield services companies, rose 9 percent over the past week and amounts to \$233m, or almost 40 percent of its shares.

(Source: Financial Times)

Oil up over 3% as hopes of OPEC cut, stimulus counter virus gloom

Oil prices jumped more than 3 percent on Monday, reversing an earlier fall to multi-year lows as hopes of a deeper cut in output by OPEC and stimulus from central banks countered worries about damage to demand from the coronavirus outbreak.

Brent crude was at \$51.91 a barrel, up \$1.71 or 3.4 percent, by 0925 GMT, having earlier hit its lowest since July 2017 at \$48.40.

Across the Atlantic, U.S. West Texas Intermediate crude hit a 14-month low of \$43.32 before recovering to \$46.15, up \$1.39, or 3.1 percent.

It was the first gain for both benchmarks after six sessions of losses triggered by coronavirus worries. The virus, which originated in China, has killed nearly 3,000 people and roiled global markets as investors brace for a steep knock to world growth.

Equities underwent their biggest rout since the 2008 financial crisis last week although European and Asian shares steadied on Monday.

"Everybody is afraid to miss the rebound in oil, metals and equities," said Bjarne Schieldrop, chief commodities analyst at SEB Markets.

"Signs of monetary and fiscal stimulus as well as possible further production cuts from OPEC+ later in the week are driving a rebound in both commodities and equities this morning."

The scale of losses last week led financial markets to price in policy responses from the U.S. Federal Reserve to the Bank of Japan, which indicated on Monday it would take necessary steps to stabilize financial markets.

Data released over the weekend by China, the world's top energy consumer, dragged on oil prices earlier in the session.

Factory activity in the country shrank at the fastest pace ever in February, underscoring the colossal damage from the coronavirus outbreak on its economy.

However, several key members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) are mulling an additional production cut in the second quarter with fears the virus outbreak will erode oil demand. The previous proposal was for an additional output cut of 600,000 bpd.

Oil prices are down more than 20 percent since the start of the year despite OPEC and its allies including Russia, a grouping known as OPEC+, curbing oil output by 1.7 million bpd under a deal that runs to the end of March.

"Inaction by OPEC+ would likely trigger another potentially severe bout of selling," analysts at Fitch Solutions have said.

They said that although current prices would incentivize Russia to agree to further output cuts, they would likely be of a short duration, for example, three months, with the barrels brought immediately back to market thereafter.

(Source: Reuters)

Putin says current oil price acceptable, backs continued OPEC+ cooperation

Russian President Vladimir Putin said Sunday that current oil prices are acceptable for Russia and he backed continued cooperation through the OPEC+ agreement to ensure market stability and combat the negative impact of the coronavirus outbreak on the global economy.

"I want to emphasize, for the Russian budget, for our economy, current oil prices are acceptable. Let me remind you that this year, as part of our macroeconomic policy, we took a Brent crude price of \$42.40/b as the base level," Putin said during a meeting on the impact of the coronavirus on the global economy and the oil market with government ministers and representative of oil and gas companies.

"Moreover, our accumulated reserves, including the National Welfare Fund, are sufficient to ensure stability, and meet all budget and social obligations even with a possible deterioration of the situation in the global economy," he added, according to a transcript of the meeting posted on the Kremlin website.

Crude oil futures settled at fresh 14-month lows Friday as the continued global spread of coronavirus fed fears of flattening demand and raised the specter of economic downturn. ICE April Brent settled \$1.66 lower at \$50.52/b. NYMEX April WTI was \$2.33 lower at \$44.76/b at market close.

Putin said that Russia's international reserves are \$563 billion, and there is a further \$124 billion in the National Welfare Fund.

"Nevertheless, this does not negate the need for us to take action, including in conjunction with foreign partners," he said.

OPEC+ view

Putin described the OPEC+ agreement as an effective tool to ensure long-term stability in global energy markets.

"Due to this, we received additional budget revenues and, importantly, enabled our producers to confidently invest in promising development projects," he said.

Beyond officials backing ongoing cooperation, Russia has yet to provide a detailed position on the OPEC+ agreement going forward. Earlier this month Russian oil producers indicated that they would be willing to extend the current agreement to the end of the second quarter but do not want to cut further.

Some participants in the deal have called for deeper cuts in response to the market impact of the coronavirus outbreak. The group will meet in Vienna March 5-6 to discuss the market situation and future action. The current 1.7 million b/d supply cut agreement expires at the end of March.


Putin added that although current conditions are acceptable, the situation continues to be unpredictable and Russia needs to be prepared.

"Of course, today it is difficult to predict how long-term this trend will be, but in any case, it is important for us to be prepared for various scenarios," Putin added.

He described last week as the worst for global markets since the 2008 crisis.

"The negative consequences are already making themselves known, and are affecting the entire system of global economic relations, almost all states, given the current high interdependence and interconnectedness of economies," Putin said.


(Source: Platts)



Second 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



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

Tender Document Distribution by Company	The distribution of the documents will be started one day after the publishing of second advertisement and ended on the following tenth day thereof (closing date : 16March2020)
Distribution Place	Hall No. 113, 1 st floor, Foreign Procurement Dept., National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN 061-34148707 Room No. 431, 4 th floor, Oil central building No.8, Yaghma alley, Jomhori Islami st., Tehran - Iran
Submitting Method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt in the amount of 190,000 Iranian Rials under account number 4001114004020491 (Shaba No. IR 520100004001114004020491) in name of "NIDC Incomes Centralized Fund" issued by I.R. of Iran Central Bank. Submitting format Request for the purpose of receiving Tender Documents.
Closing date	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 35 Days after the last time of Purchasing. (closing date: 21April2020) The envelopes will be opened At 9:15. a.m On (22April2020)
Documents Receiving Method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hall No. 107, 1st 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	1,018,000,000 Rial / 8,499 Euro
Type of guarantee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bank guarantees or guarantees issued by non-bank institutions that obtain activity license from the central bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt under account number 4001114006376636 (Shaba No. IR 350100004001114006376636) in name of "NIDC saving account" by the central bank of Islamic Republic of Iran.
Duration of credit & quotation	Tender Guarantee and quotation should be valid for 90 days and extendable maximum for one time in initial validity duration.

(Name of department)
More of this & other tenders are accessible by click on: www.nidc.ir http://sapp.ir/nidc_ir
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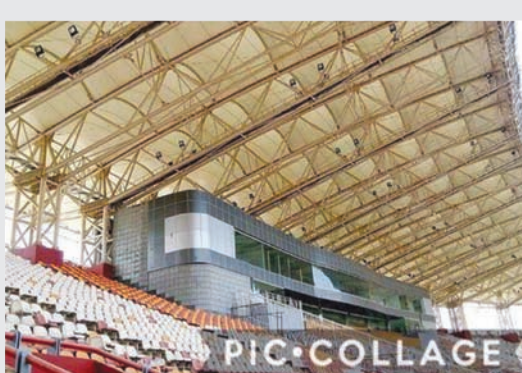
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Iran's proposal concrete demonstration of regional ownership: Turkish politician

By Payman Yazdani

TEHRAN (MNA) – Senior member of Turkey's Republican People's Party (CHP) believes Iran's proposal is not only a concrete demonstration of regional ownership but also a genuine opportunity for addressing the Syrian situation with a chance of success.

After suffering its worst casualties in years, Turkey openly declared a war against the Syrian government of Bashar al-Assad, a move which has created many concerns not only inside Turkey but also in the region.

Many believe that the US and Israeli regime's officials are leading Turkey towards a quagmire in Syria and warned of falling into a trap. They are leading not only Turkey but also its president to the trap.

It is believed that the conflict in Idlib will isolate Turkey and pushes it away from strategic allies, including Russia.

To shed more light on the issue we reached out to Dr. Osman Faruk Logoglu a senior member of Turkey's CHP and veteran politician.

He said, "The attack on Turkish soldiers was a major mistake on the part of Syria, knowing it would surely draw a disproportionate response from Turkey. Similarly, the sustained military operation (dubbed as Spring Shield) now launched and in progress by Turkey, however, justified it might seem like an act of retaliation, is set to further complicate an already explosive situation. The confrontation has the potential of leading to wider clashes between Turkish and Syrian armed forces. It also has created cleavages between Turkish and Russian positions on Syria which the US is trying to exploit to its advantage. On the other hand, developments on the ground will make the humanitarian situation of the civilian population in Idlib even worse and increase the pressure on Turkey in handling the refugee issue."

Following the escalation of tensions in Syria Iranian President Hassan Rouhani in a telephone conversation with



his Turkish counterpart referred to the importance of direct talk between Ankara and Syrian legitimate government recognized by the UN and noted that trilateral cooperation between Iran, Turkey and Syria is very significant and expressed Iran's readiness to host a trilateral summit.

Referring to the Iranian President's proposal, Logoglu said, "The possible solution, though unlikely to materialize, lies in Ankara talking directly to Damascus, the seat of the legitimate Syrian government recognized by the UN. The two neighbors know each other and enjoyed better times in the not too distant past. However, Ankara's refusal to

engage Esad and its handling of the Syrian issue through Moscow only serves to enhance Russian influence and clout over Esad, leaving Syria's fate in Russian hands. That is why the trilateral meeting proposed by the President of Iran is a genuine opportunity for addressing the Syrian situation with a chance of success. It would be a concrete demonstration of regional ownership with the countries of the region taking the responsibility to resolve their problems by their own means without the intervention of non-regional actors. I hope the Iranian offer is taken up."

Keith Preston: U.S. votes based on pre-rational tribal affiliations, not rational process

TEHRAN (FNA) — Keith Preston, political activist, says Americans vote for the candidate who is closer to their "tribe's" political view, regardless of how "terrible" that candidate can be.

In an exclusive interview with FNA, Preston draw analogy between the US elections and sports events, and said, "Most people root for what they perceive to be their home team, the one that reflects the norms of their tribe, regardless of how terrible their team's individual players may be."

Keith Preston is an author, radio host, political analyst and activist. He is also the editor-in-chief of AttacktheSystem.com.

Below is the full text of the interview:

■ How do you find the resolution passed by the US House of Representatives on impeachment inquiry into President Donald Trump?

A: The resolution on impeachment is something that is taking place for purely partisan reasons. In the three years since Donald Trump was elected, the Democrats' primary objective has been to find some means through which they could legally maneuver to force the President out of office. For over two years, they pursued the claims of "Russian collusion" that were made against Trump with no success due to a lack of evidence to substantiate such claims. When the latest allegations against the President concerning his communications with the Ukraine were revealed, the Democrats immediately seized upon these latest claims as a new justification for trying to impeach the President. The extreme partisanship that is represented by the efforts of the Democrats to impeach the President is something that reflects the fragmented nature of US party politics at this time, along with the President's general unpopularity among America's elites for various reasons. The Democrats are also internally fragmented and unable to develop a coherent opposition to the

President that is based on actual policy proposals, therefore they rely on unsubstantiated allegations and dubious impeachment efforts instead.

■ Trump is accused of trying to persuade Ukraine into helping him smear his political rival Joe Biden. Do you think if Trump has found himself unable to beat the Democratic candidate in the election?

A: First, it has to be considered that there is no Democratic candidate at this point. The Democratic Party's primaries has just started. It is still undetermined as to who will represent the Democratic Party in the presidential election. The election is still a year away. Joe Biden is a candidate that has been a front-runner in polls that have been conducted so far, but his polling numbers have started to decline in recent times. His popularity is starting to trail that of some other candidates such as Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders. But regardless of the candidate that represents the Democratic Party in the 2020 election, Trump continues to have a good chance of reelection. Presidential elections in the US tend to favor the incumbent candidate. The Democratic Party is very divided within itself and perceived by observers as chaotic, dysfunctional, and veering off into extremes. It is by no means a given that the Democrats will be able to successfully challenge Trump for the presidency next year.

■ How would the Americans have a rational decision who to vote into the White House, when they face Trump using literature like "crazy Nancy", and Democrats accusing Trump of the far-fetched?

A: Voting is typically not a rational process for most people, but one that is based on pre-rational tribal affiliations. Most people vote for the candidate that they feel most represents their political or cultural tribe based on a sense of familiarity and collective norms. Trump's use of derogatory terms to describe



his political opponents actually enhances his appeal to his supporters. The Democrats' far-fetched accusations against the President are actually believed by many of their own supporters as well. The rivalry between the Democrats and the Republicans could be compared to a sports event where most people root for what they perceive to be their home team, the one that reflects the norms of their tribe, regardless of how terrible their team's individual players may be. It should be remembered that many Americans do not take these rivalries seriously. Only slightly over half of all eligible voters participate in presidential elections, and less than half participate in nearly all other US elections. Those who vote typically vote for the candidate that reflects their tribe, or whose personality they find most appealing. Other voters select a candidate on narrow special interest or single-issue grounds.

The plight of civilians in Libya

TEHRAN (FNA) — Civilians are bearing the brunt of Western military intervention and war in Libya. They have also been bogged down in the middle of influence war between the mostly Tripoli-confined Fayeel al-Sarraj's GNA and Tobruk-based Libyan-American citizen Khalifa Haftar-led LNA.

The chronic armed conflicts in most parts of the country since the killing of Gaddafi has displaced more than 300,000 civilians and killed thousands of people. While global foes Russia and the US are at odds in Libya too with the former supporting the GNA and the latter LNA, over Libya's proximity to its shores, the European Union is also struggling to find a unified approach to the Libyan catastrophe over its wider concerns that France was providing military support to the warlord Haftar.

The Berlin Conference on Libya last month, to forge a ceasefire agreement between the two main warring parties, also conceded that the instability, foreign interference, weapon proliferation and economy of predation bowled threats to international peace and security. But since the two vying sides were irreconcilable and have effectually split the state into East and West zones, not much optimism can be laid on the effort either.

Regional divergence is another challenge for an enforceable truce in Libya. After Turkey signed two agreements with



GNA in November, a mutual defense treaty and a maritime deal, four other Mediterranean nations – France, Greece, Egypt and Cyprus – strongly condemned the Turkish move and called the pacts "null and void" claiming that they violate the territorial rights and undermined regional stability.

Following Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan's admission that his military had suffered some losses in Libya but "neutralized" close to 100 fighters there – armed confrontations could escalate in the hapless

country and can bully Geneva peace talks to implement a long-lasting ceasefire.

The signs of bigger tensions are already being materialized as LNA claimed of killing 16 Turkish fighters and a frigate near the port of Tripoli. Ankara's military actions are not viewed positively in the ranks of Erdogan supporters. Turkey's former foreign minister Yassar Yakis recently cautioned him about the dangers of his policies in Syria and Libya.

It is quite clear that the snowballing pro-

Public attempt to control fake news about the coronavirus

1 → "We need a vaccine against misinformation," said Dr. Mike Ryan, head of the WHO's health emergencies program, at a WHO briefing on the virus earlier this month.

China is the world's most populous country has the largest market of Internet users globally: 21% of the world's 3.8 billion Internet users, so fake news can spread quickly online. A 2018 study from Massachusetts Institute of Technology found that «false news spreads more rapidly on the social network Twitter than real news does.» The reason, say the researchers, may be that the untrue statements inspire strong feelings such as fear, disgust and surprise.

In this regard, the WHO is also collaborating with tech giants like Google, Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest and TikTok to limit the spread of harmful rumors. It's pursuing a similar tactic with Chinese digital companies such as Baidu, Tencent and Weibo. To counter false news, Google has just begun to display World Health Organization information on the coronavirus in search results.

The Chinese government has been cracking down on virtual private networks (VPN), which are often used to access foreign news sources. In Malaysia, five people have been arrested for spreading fake news about the virus. One post shared on Facebook, falsely claiming to be from a government department, showed a fake picture of the virus and stated that this is an image of one of many 'Allah's armies' sent to attack China in the form of coronavirus.

The Guardian reported that about 40% of people in the UK believe at least one conspiracy theory of some kind, say the researchers from East Anglia University. The figures are even higher in the United States and other parts of the world.

In the age of the global information society and reduced control over the circulation of information, one of the major issues is the attempt to present facts and real image of various events and to counter the spread of fake news.

Increasing media literacy and efforts to build trust between nations and governments around the world are the most important way for thwarting fake news. However, organized cooperation between states and international organizations will also help to curb this challenge globally as all countries and actors in the world will sooner or later face it.

Edward Corrigan: Aung San Suu Kyi willfully blind to Myanmar military genocide

TEHRAN (FNA) — Edward Corrigan, human rights lawyer, says it is unlikely that Myanmar de facto leader is not told of the "military's genocide operation" and the crimes committed by the government in Rakhine state.

In an exclusive interview with FNA, he said, "She needs to open her eyes and to critically analyze the military's information and address their actions... The crimes against Rohingya Muslims are well documented."

Edward C. Corrigan is a certified specialist by the Law Society of Upper Canada in Citizenship, Immigration and Refugee Protection Law, based in Ontario. He has published numerous articles in academic and journalistic publications.

Below is the full text of the interview:

■ How do you find the accusations against Myanmar de facto leader Aung San Suu Kyi for being silent over the military's actions in Rakhine state?



A: In my opinion she is "willfully blind" and chose not to see the crimes committed against the Rohingya Muslims. The war crimes committed by the Myanmar military and government are well documented. Claiming that the actions of ethnic cleansing and destruction of villages and crops as "evacuations" is perverse. The criminal actions of the Myanmar military and militias have not been prosecuted. They act like that have total immunity and can commit human rights abuses and suffer no consequences.

■ Why do you believe Suu Kyi chose to be "willfully blind"?

A: I suspect that she was not told of the "military's genocide operation" so that she would have "plausible deniability". However, it does appear that she has taken all of the military's information as statement of fact. She needs to open her eyes and to critically analyze the military's information and address their actions. Criminal's words should not be taken at face value. It is their actions that matter. Independent investigators should be allowed to enter Myanmar but the government refuses to allow them access. The question is what they are trying to hide?

The Myanmar military's war crimes have been documented by satellite images and by many respected human rights organizations including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the United Nations. The Rohingya have been called the most persecuted group on the planet. The International Criminal Court (ICC) should proceed with the trial. The UN Security Council should take strong action and every country that believes in human rights and justice should sanction Myanmar and boycott the country.

■ How do you see Suu Kyi, as a Noble Peace Prize laureate, and her defense of Myanmar army at the ICC?

A: Suu Kyi's defense of the Myanmar's military has deeply stained the reputation of this Noble Peace Prize winner. It is sad to see a revered human right icon sinks to such low levels. It shows that even a human rights icon can be blinded by tribal loyalty and Islamophobia.

Chinese travelers ready to donate 100,000 face masks to Iran to combat coronavirus

TOURISM **TEHRAN** – Some Chinese travelers who have previously visited Iran have announced readiness to donate up to 100,000 face masks to help the country in fight against the novel coronavirus, known as COVID-19.



“A number of Chinese tourists, who have traveled to Iran over recent months, have announced their readiness to donate 100,000 face masks to Iran,” CHTN quoted tourism minister Ali-Asghar Mounesan as saying on Monday.

“We [the tourism ministry] and Iran Federation of Tourist Guide Associations are cooperating to transfer the masks by an airline to the ministry,” he said.

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

Some 5,000 coronavirus test kits, a gift from the Chinese embassy and Chinese companies in Iran, was delivered to the Iranian side, China's Ambassador to Iran Chang Hua wrote on his Twitter account, adding that “our efforts will continue.”

So far, 1501 people in Iran have been infected with the virus, of whom 66 died.

The death toll in China, where the virus originated, is nearing 2,800 and the country has almost 79,000 confirmed COVID-19 cases.

Outside mainland China, the virus has spread to more than 45 countries, claiming an excess of 50 lives and infecting north of 3,000 people.

The World Health Organization has declared the outbreak an international health emergency

Lufthansa further slashes flights to Iran, China, Italy over virus

German airline group Lufthansa said Monday it was extending flight cancellations on Iran and China routes until late April, part of a broader rollback because of the novel coronavirus.

The group's namesake carrier and subsidiaries Austrian and Swiss will not fly to and from mainland China until April 24, Lufthansa said in a statement.

Meanwhile Tehran flights will be suspended until April 30.

The slashes to the flight plan are part of a wider scheme Lufthansa announced Friday that will ground 23 long-haul aircraft and cut short- and medium-haul services by up to 25%.

Lufthansa said Monday it was reducing the frequency of flights between major German hubs like Frankfurt and Munich and Seoul and Hong Kong.

And the group is also reducing frequency on routes to cities in Italy, including Rome, Venice, and Milan, with subsidiary Brussels Airlines affected alongside low-cost carrier Eurowings, Austrian and Swiss.

In northern Italy, 11 towns have been placed under quarantine because of the virus outbreak.

Even within Germany, the group is slashing flight frequency on domestic routes between major cities.

Lufthansa said passengers whose flights were affected by the timetable changes should check the company website for updates.

The group has also suspended new hires as part of its measures to cushion the business impact of the virus, which it said Monday was “not yet possible to estimate”.

(Source: AFP)

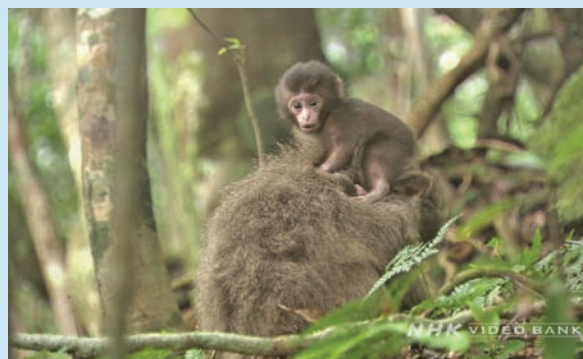


ROUND THE GLOBE

Yakushima

Yakushima is a primeval temperate rainforest extending from the center of the almost round-shaped, mountainous Yakushima Island.

Situated 60 km off the southernmost tip of Kyushu Island in the southwestern end of Japanese archipelago, the island is located at the interface of the paleartic and oriental biotic regions.



Mountains reaching almost 2,000 m high dominate the island, and the property lies in the center of the island, with arms stretching south, east and west to the coast.

The island ecosystem of Yakushima is unique in the Northern Hemisphere's temperate area with successive vertical plant distributions extending from coastal vegetation with subtropical elements, up through a montane temperate rainforest to a high moor and a cold-temperate bamboo grassland at the central peaks.

The montane temperate rainforest of Yakushima is globally distinct, due to its peculiar ecosystem with abundant rheophytes and epiphytes that have adapted to the high rainfall, in excess of 8,000 mm annually, and resulting humid environment.

Home to some 1,900 species and subspecies of flora, 16 mammal species and 150 bird species, it exhibits a rich biodiversity including the landscape of the Japanese cedar (*Cryptomeria japonica*), a primeval forest composed of trees called “Yakusugi”, which are over 1,000 years in age.

(Source: UNESCO)

Is it safe to travel to Iran as a solo female traveler?

→ 1 U.S. government currently warns against travel to Iran for obvious reasons, these two countries don't get along. It says that U.S. citizens may be subject to harassment or arrest while traveling in the country.

Again, I'd say that this statement is very exaggerated. Especially after Argo – the film exaggerating the seizure of the American Embassy in Tehran won the Academy Award for Best Picture.

My Advice is: don't believe what you hear on the news. Explore the place, talk to locals and come to your own conclusions. Come to Iran with an open mind and I guarantee you'll make many great friends in Iran.

Is it safe to travel to Iran in 2020?

Many travelers, including myself, describe it as one of the 'safest countries I've ever been to'. You'll be much more likely to get mugged in Europe than in Iran.

Violent crimes against foreigners are extremely rare and, indeed, if you do your best to fit in with local customs (read more on the dress code and how local women fight it), you are unlikely to be treated with anything.

In fact, I'll be returning to Iran in 2020 to explore even more of its natural beauty.

My experience of traveling solo in Iran

I traveled to Iran solo and later teamed up with another girl whom I met at the hostel. I traveled around the country, in the same way, I would anywhere else in the world.

Wandering around in the evening, taking the metro, using local taxis and buses, going to markets etc.

I met many women whose lives didn't seem very different from the women I know at home. At the birthday party, it was actually men who had to clean after, not women.

Young girls told me they date the same way people date in the Western world,



My Advice is: don't believe what you hear on the news. Explore the place, talk to locals and come to your own conclusions. Come to Iran with an open mind and I guarantee you'll make many great friends in Iran.

they just don't announce it anywhere and keep it to themselves.

I only felt uncomfortable twice in Iran – once in Esfahan (Isfahan) and once in Kashan. In Esfahan a man in a car started driving next to me and my friend in the evening. Every time we moved, he moved. It scared my friend and me for a bit, but the

moment we approached another traveler the car left.

Another unpleasant situation I encountered was while walking around the narrow streets of Kashan. I was filming with my DJI gimbal with my iPhone attached to it when I felt someone approaching me on a scooter.

To me, being uncomfortable once or twice doesn't mean that the place is dangerous. I never once felt physically threatened, unsafe, or at risk, even when I was wandering the streets of Iran.

I felt safer in Iran than if I was walking around in NYC. Even the tap water was safe in Iran!

People believe that Iran is full of moral police watching your every step, ready to arrest Westerners at the slightest prov-

ocation. In my experience, this couldn't be further from the truth.

While cases or reporting and arrests occur, it's not as common as it's being portrayed outside of the country.

Everyone I met was extremely helpful and treated me like I was an expensive piece of jewelry. Escorting from one place to the other, while feeling responsible for me. And that's the people I met on the street for 5 minutes! So unless you're planning on running around naked with a bottle of smuggled vodka in hand, don't be afraid.

Anna Karsten (born 1988 in Warsaw) is a travel blogger, traveler, and social media personality. She and her writing and photography have been featured in the New York Times, Forbes, CNN, National Geographic and Travel Channel.

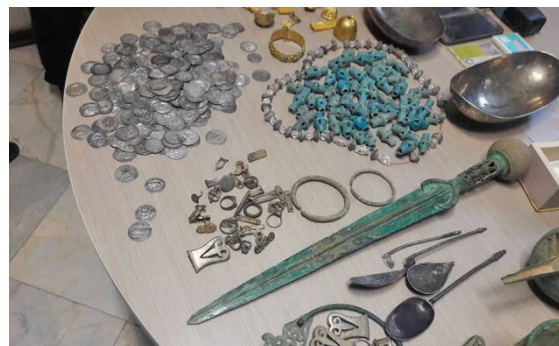
Parthian-era relics recovered from a second-hand shop in Tehran

HERITAGE **TEHRAN** – Tens of ancient relics, estimated to date from the Parthian era (247 BC – 224 CE), have recently been recovered from a second-hand shop in downtown Tehran.

The police were informed by sources last week that someone illegally keeps dozens of antique items in his shop and wants to sell them. After investigations the police found the report was correct, ISNA reported on Sunday.

The person was arrested in his shop by the police in coordination with the judicial authorities, the report said.

Amongst the seized objects were 26 cracked bowls and plates, nine ceramic bowls and plates, two clay idols, eight earthen sculptures, five clay vessels, five bronze plates, and a silver bust.



However, their total value is still being assessed by a team of cultural heritage experts.

Establishing a primary residence at Ctesiphon, on the Tigris River in southern Mesopotamia, Parthian kings ruled for nearly half a millennium and influenced politics from Asia Minor to northern India, until they were overthrown by Sasanian armies from southwest Iran in the early third century CE.

Parthian wealth obtained through lucrative trade networks resulted in substantial patronage of the arts, in particular relief sculpture, statuary (large and small scale), architectural sculpture, metalwork, jewelry, and ceramics; coins with images of Parthian rulers form another important category of objects.

Here's what IKAC doing to shield travelers from the coronavirus



TOURISM **TEHRAN** – Imam Khomeini Airport City (IKAC), which embraces the vast Imam Khomeini International Airport, has tightened precautionary measures to curb the spread of the novel coronavirus, known as COVID-19, since the past couple of weeks.

IKAC has stepped up efforts to safeguard and protect workers, passengers and visitors against the virus. Extra temperature screenings and improved cleaning with disinfectants are parts of the measures being taken.

“We have decided to disinfect passenger transit areas, Salam Terminal and Terminal 1 every day and add dispensers with hand sanitizers at the Imam Khomeini International Airport as part of the measures to prevent the spread of the coronavirus,” said IKAC director for public relations and international affairs.

“As all of us know coronavirus is a worrisome issue not only in Iran but also in the world. That's why managers at the company decided to reduce work hours and consider Interim Guidance for all staff in order to prevent the spread of coronavirus,” Ali Kashani Heidari told IKAC News.

The coronavirus, which initiated in the Chinese city of Wuhan, has now crossed borders with cases confirmed in tens of countries outside of mainland China, including Japan, South Korea, Thailand, the U.S., France, Singapore, Vietnam, Malaysia, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, India, Nepal, Iran and Canada.

The number of people killed worldwide by the coronavirus has exceeded 3,000, as China reported 42 more death, sources reported on Monday.

Over 90% of the total deaths are in Hubei, the Chinese province where the virus emerged late last year. But there have also been deaths in 10 other countries, including more than 50 in Iran and more than 30 in Italy. Worldwide, there have been almost 90,000 confirmed cases, with the numbers outside China growing faster than inside China.



WHO sends COVID-19 medical team, supplies to Iran

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** – The World Health Organization (WHO) has sent an aircraft carrying tons of medical supplies and test kits along with a medical team to Iran in order to help combat the novel coronavirus, known as COVID-19.

The supplies, worth of over \$300,000, consist of gloves, surgical masks and respirators, which were loaded onto the United Arab Emirates military transport plane in Dubai, AFP reported.

“Today’s flight will carry 7.5 tons of medical equipment and supplies, primarily the critical items needed for infection prevention and control to support health care workers in Iran,” said Robert Blanchard from the WHO in Dubai.

Blanchard further warned that global supplies were running low.

“What we see now is that demand has greatly exceeded our available stocks, and we are struggling to get access to more supplies.”

The six-member medical team is made up of doctors, epidemiologists and laboratory specialists who will help Iran detect and control the virus, Blanchard said, adding it was the first WHO team to be sent to Iran since the crisis began.



Home to home program to be launched to combat COVID-19

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** – The Ministry of Health is to start a home to home program on Tuesday with the aim of finding people suspected of having coronavirus from around the country.

Some 300,000 teams of specialists will visit homes in collaboration with health centers for COVID-19 screening, Health Minister Saeed Namaki said, IRNA reported.

“As one of the leading countries in the Eastern

Mediterranean region, we have started a big move and have prepared a plan that will be implemented as part of the national campaign to defeat COVID-19,” he explained.

“We are also preparing the health centers and we will identify sporadic cases, and all suspected cases will be referred to health centers for further treatment.”

The number of coronavirus cases in the country has risen to 1501, with 66 deaths so far.

Australian summers a month longer and winters shorter as climate crisis hits, study finds

Australia’s summers have been extended by half due to climate change pushing up temperatures in recent decades, scientists have found.

As the country struggles to recover from the catastrophic wildfires that ripped through swathes of the southeast, a study highlighted a telling effect of the climate emergency.

The hottest season is now on average a month longer than half a century ago, and effectively twice as long as winter, which has contracted by three weeks, the research found.

“Our findings are not a projection of what we may see in the future – it’s happening right now,” said Richie Merzian, climate and energy expert at the Australia Institute, a think tank that compiled the report.

The unprecedented fires that began in October killed 34 people and around a billion native animals, while destroying more than 2,500 homes as they tore through towns, leaving people living in tents. Prime minister Scott Morrison dubbed it a “black summer”.

The devastation increased pressure on his government to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Australia, which is the world’s third-largest fossil fuel exporter.

Although the biggest fires have been contained or extinguished, more than a dozen were still burning at



the end of February, which traditionally marks the end of summer in Australia.

The institute compared temperatures from the past two decades with mid-20th century data at the start of seasons in temperate and sub-tropical parts of the country.

Over the past five years, Australian summers have

been on average 50 per cent longer, the analysis showed.

Experts have warned that higher temperatures and more heatwaves will in turn lead to more dangerous fire seasons and extreme weather, while shorter winters will reduce the window for mitigating the effects of fires.

Bottom of Form

The report found that areas such as Port Macquarie on the New South Wales coast experienced seven extra weeks of summer. The region, known for its koala population, was one of the hardest hit by wildfires in recent months, and it’s feared up to ears 85 per cent of the animals were killed by the flames and smoke.

“Extreme heat events are the most fatal of all natural hazards and have been responsible for more deaths in Australia than all other natural hazards put together,” Mr Merzian said.

Meanwhile, international forestry and climate experts have called for an immediate halt to all native forest logging in Australia to help slow the “climate, fire, drought and biodiversity loss crises”.

The country produces about 28.7 million cubic metres of wood from forest plantations a year.

Logging reduces carbon storage, threatens native species and increases fire risks, the experts say.

(Source: The Independent)

FAO extends its support and advice in addressing COVID-19 outbreak

Since late December 2019, after the first case of COVID-19 was confirmed in China, as of today, the virus has spread to 66 other countries across the world.

Besides its direct impact on human health, this outbreak has raised serious questions on the impact of the new coronavirus epidemic on food safety, agriculture supply and demand. However, expert’s opinions on this matter remain very cautious and therefore, assessing COVID-19 outbreak’s impact on the food and agriculture sector is premature and only speculative at this stage.

While imposing restrictions on the movement of people have been considered by some countries in order to limit the spread of a disease, they can have significant socio-economic repercussions on people’s livelihoods, specifically on the most vulnerable groups. Such measures also can partially disrupt market chains.

In this situation, FAO is working to measure the impact on smallholder farmer’s livelihood. FAO is also collaborating closely with its partners, including the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs of China, to assist in identifying the potential animal hosts of this virus.

Considering the current COVID-19 outbreak, FAO strongly advises the public to take into account below points, specifically while dealing with meat and animal products:

■ While the source of the current COVID-19 is likely of animal origin of the COVID-19, to date, the spread and development of the current human epidemic is due to human-to-human transmission.

■ Meat from healthy livestock that is cooked thoroughly remains safe to eat.

■ People should not handle, slaughter, dress, sell, prepare or consume meat that originates from wild animals or livestock that are sick or that have died from unknown causes.

■ Raw wild meat or uncooked dishes based on the blood of wild animals should not be consumed. These practices place people at high risk of contracting any number of infections.

■ Any unusual morbidity or mortality of animals should be reported to the animal health authorities.

FAO has been promoting increased awareness of zoonotic diseases (diseases transmissible between animal and humans). FAO also has a long history in reducing food-related risks, and in promoting healthy food production and consumption.

(Source: FAO)

Vital Cop26 climate talks could be derailed by coronavirus

Concern is growing among campaigners that vital UN climate talks will be derailed by the coronavirus outbreak, while government officials are working to find ways round the problem.

This year’s UN talks on the climate are the most important since the Paris agreement in 2015, as the world is now far adrift of the Paris goals and the Cop26 summit – scheduled for Glasgow this November – is seen as one of the last chances to put nations back on track to avoid climate breakdown.

But while the talks will take place over a fortnight in November, the frantic round of global diplomacy required to reach a settlement is already under way and is being affected by the outbreak of the virus. Campaigners fear that preparations are being hampered by both the travel restrictions and the urgent demands the outbreak is putting on governments’ time and resources.

China, the world’s biggest source of greenhouse gas emissions, is the key player in the climate talks. As the US is withdrawing from the Paris accord, whether or not China takes on strong new commitments on carbon will help determine whether Cop26 (the conference of the parties) is a success. But with the coronavirus taking hold across the country, the climate is likely be much less of a priority.

Italy also plays a vital role in this year’s talks as the country is officially co-host of Cop26 and some key pre-meetings are planned there.

Normally, at this stage before crunch climate talks, officials and politicians from the host nation would be convening meetings in key countries.

(Source: The Guardian)

WORDS IN THE NEWS

Afghanistan health crisis

(April 07, 2003)

As countries around the world mark World Health Day, the Afghan leader Hamid Karzai has spoken about the crisis in Afghanistan’s health sector. This report from Catherine Davis:

President Karzai said no other nation in the world had as poor a health care system as Afghanistan. Certainly, the needs are huge and easy to see. UNICEF warns that failing to **address** these health and **nutritional challenges** will **hamper** any serious long-term development here. It says the health of the population is directly related to their country’s reconstruction.

After years of civil war and drought, especially in the south, Afghans have **scant means** to support themselves. **Chronic malnutrition** is said to be widespread; major causes of **mortality** among children include diarrhoea, respiratory infections and malaria. Iodine **deficiency** is common in women, resulting in low birth weight and deafness in newborn babies.

What the UN is **calling for** is long-term investment in projects that strengthen Afghan women and children’s rights to good health care. As always though, finance is the problem. In the area of **maternal** health, UNICEF says it has only around half the funding needed.

■ **Words**

to address: if you address a problem, you deal with it
nutritional: relating to food and the substances in it - for example proteins, vitamins and minerals that are necessary for growth and good health

challenges: a challenge is something new and difficult which will require great effort and determination

hamper: if you hamper a person or their actions you make it difficult for them to move or make progress

scant means: a very small amount of money or possessions which is not enough to do what is needed

chronic malnutrition: long-lasting physical weakness caused by not eating enough of the right food

mortality: death

deficiency: if you have, for example, an iodine deficiency, you do not have enough iodine

calling for: if you call for an action, you demand that it should happen

maternal: maternal is used to describe things relating to a mother

(Source: BBC)

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → ع

Rainfall increases Lake Urmia level

Recent rainfall has increased the level of Lake Urmia to 1,271 meters, a step closer to its ecological level of 1,274 meters. The lake is expected to reach its ecological level within 10 years by completing the restoration plans which started four years ago.

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

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

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

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

افزایش سطح تراز دریاچه ارومیه بر اثر بارش

بارش های اخیر تراز فعلی دریاچه ارومیه را به یک هزار و ۲۷۱ متر و ۳۸ سانتی متر رسانده است که در حال رسیدن به تراز اکولوژیک یک هزار و ۲۷۴ متر است.

به گزارش ایرنا، فرهاد سرخوش رییس دفتر استانی ستاد احیای دریاچه ارومیه گفت سطح دریاچه ارومیه اکنون ۵۸ سانتی متر بیشتر از زمان مشابه سال گذشته است. طبق آخرین پایش صورت گرفته حجم آب این دریاچه بیش از سه میلیارد و ۶۷۰ میلیون مترمکعب برآورد شده است.

وی با بیان اینکه وسعت دریاچه ارومیه در حال حاضر به بیش از ۲ هزار و ۸۸۳ کیلومتر مربع رسیده، اضافه کرد: وسعت این دریاچه نیز نسبت به سال گذشته ۵۳۸ کیلومتر مربع افزایش دارد.

هرچند تراز یک هزار و ۲۷۴ متر به عنوان ارتفاع اکولوژیک دریاچه ارومیه اعلام شده ولی این دریاچه در تراز یک هزار و ۲۷۲ متر هم شرایط مطلوب خواهد داشت و بیش از ۹۵ درصد کانون های ریزگرد آن رفع خواهد شد.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“ortho-”

■ **Meaning:** straight, correct

■ **For example:** it is essential that you wear your rubber bands as prescribed by your **orthodontist**.

PHRASAL VERB

Point something out

■ **Meaning:** to tell someone something that they did not already know or had not thought about

■ **For example:** He was always very keen to point out my mistakes.

IDIOM

Down at heel

■ **Explanation:** A person who is down-at-heel is someone whose appearance is untidy or neglected because of lack of money

■ **For example:** The down-at-heel student I first met became a successful writer.

Iraqi PM-designate Allawi steps down

Iraq's Prime Minister-designate Mohammed Allawi has withdrawn his candidacy for the post, accusing members of the country's fractured parliament of standing in his way and prolonging a months-long political crisis.

Allawi's move on Sunday came hours after legislators failed for the second time this week to approve his cabinet of independents amid political infighting in a country that has been rocked by months of anti-establishment protests that forced the resignation of Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi.



"I tried with all possible ways to save our country from sliding into the unknown and to solve the current problem. But during the negotiations, I ran into many things unrelated to the country's interests," Allawi said in a statement presented to President Barham Salih.

"Some sides negotiated with the mere aim of making gains without paying any attention to the national cause or heeding the blood of the martyrs who fell during protests seeking the change of conditions," he added.

More than 500 people have been killed and 30,000 wounded since the mass protests seeking an overhaul of the country's political system began in October in the capital, Baghdad, and several southern cities, with rights groups accusing security forces of using excessive force against demonstrators.

Allawi's resignation a month after he was selected for the post - and two months after Abdul Mahdi, who remains a caretaker prime minister, stepped down - plunges the country into more uncertainty.

Salih will begin consultations to choose a new candidate for prime minister within 15 days.

The weeks leading up to Sunday's parliament session was marred by delays and political infighting as Allawi insisted he would select his own ministers - a move that alienated Kurdish and Sunni parties in particular and sparked threats of boycott.

"What Allawi set out to do was form an independent and technocratic cabinet that would be able to address some of the protesters' demands and to try to pass some of the reforms that are seen as necessary to put an end to this crisis," Al Jazeera's Simona Foltyn, reporting from Baghdad, said.

"But such a cabinet would really go against the way the Iraqi system has functioned for the past 17 years, one that is largely beholden to the political parties."

Known as muhasasa, the system was introduced in Iraq after the U.S.-led invasion in 2003 to provide proportional government representation among Iraq's various ethno-sectarian groups.

"The way it works is that the ministerial positions are divided up between the major political parties that represent the Shias, the Sunnis and the Kurds and there are unwritten rules about how this should happen," Foltyn said.

"For example, the Kurds tend to get the finance ministry, the Sunnis the defence ministry and the Shias the interior ministry. What Allawi tried to do is appoint candidates who aren't from these political parties, who are not beholden to their interests, and that was something that wasn't accepted."

(Source: agencies)

Libyan government to move from defense 'to attack'

Libya's internationally recognized government will soon try to push back Khalifa Haftar's eastern forces that have been attacking the capital Tripoli for months, its interior minister has told Reuters.

"The GNA (Government of National Accord) and its forces do not want to see Tripoli subject to shelling every day and it will move these forces (of Haftar) away from Tripoli," Fathi Bashagha said in an interview with Reuters late on Sunday.

Bombardment around the capital has intensified in recent days, and shelling has repeatedly closed the capital's only functioning airport at Mitiga, held by the GNA.

The escalation is the most serious since the announcement of a ceasefire on Jan. 12 and Bashagha said the GNA believed that Haftar had launched a new assault.

"On Friday, more than 60 missiles dropped on Mitiga and 60 dropped on Tripoli on Saturday.... so now he begins his attack," Bashagha said. "Our defence will also move to attack because there is no hope for the ceasefire," he added.

Asked if the GNA would begin a military offensive in the coming days, he said "definitely".

Haftar began his assault on Tripoli last year after advancing from his stronghold in eastern Libya with help from the United Arab Emirates, Egypt and Russia.

Turkey in January began sending some of its forces and allied Syrian fighters to support the GNA. Bashagha said this had "created a military balance" which should bring Haftar to dialogue.

Bashagha called on the United States and Britain to put pressure on countries supporting Haftar and said that Libya faced a major humanitarian crisis if the international community did not intervene.

(Source: Reuters)

Pakistan warns U.S. of 'spoilers' on US-Taliban deal in Afghanistan

➔1 "There is a sense in Pakistan that the US-Taliban deal has vindicated Pakistan's long-held stance, since the Bonn conference [in 2001], that there is no military solution to the conflict and that the Taliban are a political reality in Afghanistan," said Hassan Akbar, an Islamabad-based security and foreign policy analyst.

Akbar said the "spoilers" the foreign minister referred to could be "non-state actors like the [so-called] Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, or ISIS), al-Qaeda and the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, who do not want to see the conflict ending" as well "actors within Afghanistan who benefit from the war economy".

"Afghanistan, and what happens there, has a direct impact on Pakistan's security," said Akbar.

"Afghanistan and Pakistan share a long history of bilateral relations, not just because of ethnic ties and a shared history, but also because of the externalities of conflict in Afghanistan impacting Pakistan."

(Source: al Jazeera)

Syrian govt. forces recapture key northwestern city from Turkish-backed militants

Syrian government forces have managed to retake a strategic city in the southeastern suburbs of the country's northwestern province of Idlib from Turkish-backed militants.

Syria's official news agency SANA reported on Monday that Syrian army soldiers and their allies have entered the city of Saraqib after violent clashes with the extremists and severely hitting their positions and fortified lines.

Battles are still taking place on the outskirts of the city as the Turkish-backed militants are trying to re-enter the area.

Saraqib has a strategic significance as it overlooks the 450-kilometer-long M5 highway.

The M5 highway starts in southern Syria, near the border with Jordan, and runs all the way north to the city of Aleppo near the Turkish border.

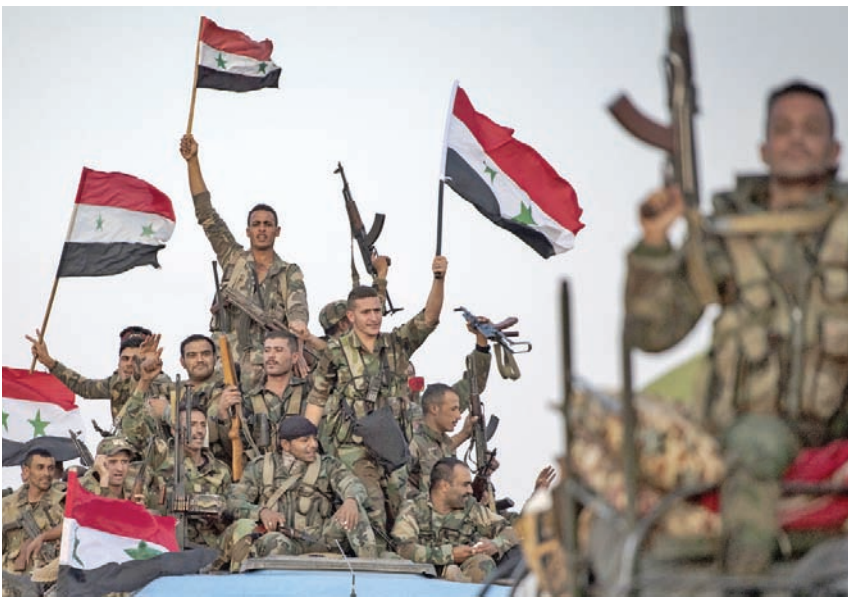
Since 2012, the M5 had been controlled by various foreign-backed militant groups. Syrian government forces started regaining parts of the highway in 2014, but they were only able to take full control during the latest offensive.

Syrian army troops and their allies established control over the highway on February 10 after dealing heavy blows to Takfiris south and west of Aleppo.

The Damascus government began road repair shortly afterwards, and the Syrian Ministry of Transport announced on February 22 that the highway was officially open to traffic and "at the full disposal of citizens."

■ **Israel targets civilian vehicle in occupied Golan Heights**

Separately, Israeli military forces fired



a missile at a civilian car traveling along a road in Syria's southwestern province of Quneitra in the occupied Golan Heights.

SANA reported that the strike took place in the town of Ayn al-Tinah, but no immediate word on casualties in the attack was available.

The Israeli army claimed in a statement that military forces "identified an attempted sniper attack in [the] northern Golan Heights and acted to thwart it, striking the vehicle involved in the attempt."

On February 27, one person was killed in an Israeli drone attack in Quneitra

province.

"A civilian was martyred when his car was targeted by a drone belonging to the Israeli enemy south of the town of Hader," SANA reported.

SANA noted that the victim was traveling in his car along a road in Hader village on Thursday, when the Israeli drone fired a missile, killing him on the spot.

The so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said the victim was a member of the "Syrian resistance to liberate Golan," without elaborating.

Quneitra Governor Humam Dibat

North Korea fires 2 unidentified projectiles

The South Korean military says North Korea has fired two unidentified projectiles eastward into the sea.

The two missiles were fired from the Wonsan area on North Korea's east coast, the South's Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a statement on Monday.

"The military is monitoring for additional launches and maintaining readiness," the statement added.

There was no immediate confirmation from the North.

The development comes over two months after Pyongyang declared an end to a moratorium on its missile tests.

At a party meeting in late December last year, North Korean leader Kim Jong-

un declared that Pyongyang no longer considered itself bound by an agreement with the U.S. because Washington was not upholding its end of the bargain.

The North Korean leader also warned hostile countries that his military would demonstrate a "new strategic weapon" in the near future.

The North Korean statement came after the U.S. repeatedly refused to relieve any of the sanctions on the North.

The United Nations Security Council, the U.S., South Korea, and other bodies have slapped multiple sets of sanctions on Pyongyang over its weapons programs.

(Source: Daily Star)

EU readies measures to help economy as coronavirus hits

The European Union's economics commissioner said on Monday the bloc was ready to deploy all possible measures to tackle the impact of the coronavirus outbreak on the European economy, as health risks in Europe were raised to high.

Paolo Gentiloni said there should be a "coordinated fiscal response" from European countries. It "has to be very timely. You can't take it too early, you can't take it too late," he told a news conference in Brussels.

"The EU is ready to use all the available policy options if and when needed to safeguard our growth against these downside risks," he said.

At the same briefing, the president of

the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, said the EU's disease prevention agency had raised its assessment of coronavirus risks in the bloc to high, as the outbreak spread to most EU states.

"The ECDC (European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control) has announced today that the risk level has risen from moderate to high for people in the European Union. In other words, the virus continues to spread," she told reporters.

Health commissioner Stella Kyriakides said 2,100 cases of coronavirus were confirmed in 18 of the 27 EU states, and 38 EU citizens had died because of the disease.

(Source: Reuters)

Buttigieg exits race, Biden back in contention as 'Super Tuesday' looms

Pete Buttigieg, the openly gay U.S. presidential candidate, on Sunday ended his campaign to be the Democratic nominee -- giving a major boost to fellow centrist Joe Biden.

The 38-year-old Buttigieg's surprise decision was set to shake up the race this week when 14 states vote on "Super Tuesday."

It is expected to further boost the fortunes of Biden after the former vice president scored a resounding victory in South Carolina's primary on Saturday in the contest to see who faces President Donald Trump in November.

Biden has emerged as the chief moderate challenger to frontrunner Bernie Sanders, the firebrand leftist who has taken the race by storm and is looking to score big wins on Tuesday in states such as crown jewel California.

Buttigieg, a military veteran and former mayor of South Bend, Indiana, addressed supporters in his home town.

"The truth is that the path has narrowed to a close -- for our candidacy, if not for our cause," he said.

Buttigieg did not mention Sanders by name in his speech, but he has publicly stated he believes the 78-year-old senator's "inflexible" political approach would fail in a match-up against Trump.

"We need a broad-based agenda that can truly deliver for the American people, not one that gets lost in ideology," he said.

Buttigieg however stopped short of endorsing Biden or any other candidate.

Buttigieg emerged as a major player by narrowly winning the Iowa caucuses, earning widespread attention for his unflustered and professional approach in an often bitter Democratic nomination battle.

But his third place finish in Nevada and a worse showing in South Carolina confirmed he had struggled to build a broad coalition, including support from black voters -- a key Democratic demographic.

Biden's resounding victory Saturday in the first southern state to vote has thrust him back into contention, after miserable showings in the first three states.

With 48 percent of the vote in South Carolina, Biden more than doubled the 20 percent won by Sanders -- positioning him as the leftist senator's main rival.



"Just days ago the press and the pundits declared my candidacy dead," Biden told a crowd in Norfolk, Virginia, one of the states voting on Super Tuesday.

"Now, thanks to the heart of the Democratic Party in South Carolina, I'm very much alive," he said.

"On Tuesday here in Virginia, you could be the launching pad on the path to beat Donald Trump."

Sanders continues to hold poll leads in several Super Tuesday states -- including California.

"I think we've got a great chance to win in California, in Texas, in Massachusetts and a number of states," Sanders said Sunday on CBS.

He later congratulated Buttigieg on "running a strong and historic campaign" and angled for his supporters.

"I urge them to join us in the fight for real change in this country," Sanders tweeted.

In an already turbulent Democratic race -- which has gradually winnowed down a diverse and record-large field -- Biden's victory Saturday injected further uncertainty.

"The biggest question is whether this will slingshot Joe Biden into victory in some Super Tuesday states," said Larry Sabato, director of the Center for Politics at the University of Virginia.

The win, powered by support from black voters, was Bid-

en's first in the race, but came at a crucial time, helping dispel doubts about the 77-year-old's energy level and appeal.

- Pressure to drop out -

South Carolina brought some clarity: billionaire businessman Tom Steyer, who spent \$23 million campaigning in the state, also dropped out of the race after taking just 11 percent of the vote.

Pressure is mounting on other trailing Democrats -- including Senator Elizabeth Warren and Senator Amy Klobuchar -- to follow Steyer's and Buttigieg's example and then swiftly throw their weight behind a frontrunner.

Warren, Klobuchar and billionaire Michael Bloomberg have all made it clear that they will stick around at least through Super Tuesday.

Buttigieg was feted by rivals including Bloomberg, another moderate, who has poured a staggering \$500 million from his personal fortune into campaign advertising.

Buttigieg "ran a strong campaign that inspired audiences and made history," Bloomberg said.

Biden praised Buttigieg for his "trail-blazing campaign based on courage, compassion, and honesty."

Many Buttigieg supporters are unlikely to shift their backing to Bloomberg, whom Buttigieg openly accused of trying to "buy" his way into the presidential race.

- The money factor -

As the race goes forward, money will loom ever larger. Biden claimed he had been outspent 40-to-1 in South Carolina, but said he raised \$10 million over the weekend.

Sanders has raised huge amounts in mostly small donations, including \$46 million in February alone.

Biden argued on Sunday that as a centrist, he would be far more effective atop the party's ticket in November against Trump than Sanders, who calls himself a democratic socialist.

"Most Americans don't want a promise of a revolution. What they want is results," he said in Virginia.

Biden campaigns on Monday in Texas, Super Tuesday's second largest haul of the delegates who formally pick the party's nominee in July, while Sanders campaigns in Utah and in Klobuchar's home state of Minnesota.

(Source: AFP)

Russia seeks to 'create conditions so that nobody wants to fight us': Putin

➔1 The U.S. commander-in-chief, who likes to talk up his country's military hardware during overseas trips while bragging about the armed forces, tends to be more reserved in private, according to Putin. "He told me that the costs were too high, but he had to do it," he said, describing his counterpart as "an advocate of disarmament, as he says."

In terms of military spending, Russia trails behind China, Saudi Arabia, the UK, France,

and Japan, with a defense budget worth \$48 billion, although its lower cost base gives it more purchasing power than most western states. "Moreover, our annual expenditures are falling. In contrast, other countries' spending has been rising," Putin stated.

Putin also explained why Trump -- who already dismantled the landmark Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty the U.S. signed with the old Soviet Union -- is reluctant

to talk non-proliferation and arms control.

"That is another question, this is a question which relates to the understanding of security and how to ensure it... We can discuss this topic," the Russian president replied without going into details.

Another crucial treaty which now hangs in the balance is the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START), which dramatically reduced the number of nuclear warheads and the means

of delivery.

The current edition of the pact, known as New START, was signed by former U.S. President Barack Obama and his then-Russian counterpart, Dmitry Medvedev in 2010. It is set to expire in February next year.

While Moscow has signaled its readiness to prolong the treaty immediately, the U.S. has kept silent on the matter.

(Source: RT)

Paralympic lost a true gentle giant: Andrew Parsons

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — The International Paralympic Committee's (IPC) President Andrew Parsons has expressed his shock and deepest condolences at the passing of Iran's two-time Paralympic champion powerlifter Siamand Rahman and said IPC has lost a true gentle giant.

The world's strongest Paralympian died at the age of 31 after a suspected heart attack on Sunday (1 March) in his hometown Oshnavieh.

Andrew Parsons said: "The whole Paralympic Movement is deeply saddened to learn of the passing of Siamand Rahman. As the world's strongest Paralympian, he made global headlines at Rio 2016 when he became the first Para athlete to lift over 300kg. Few will forget that phenomenal performance which marked a landmark in the history of Paralympic sport.

"Siamand was a pioneer for his sport, an inspiration for many in his home country Iran and around the world, and a fantastic ambassador for the Paralympic Movement. He was also a wonderful human being, a gentle giant and one of the friendliest people you could ever meet.

"The thoughts and deepest condolences of the whole IPC, World Para Powerlifting and the Paralympic Movement are with Siamand's family, friends and loved ones at this difficult time. Our prayers are also with our friends at the Iranian National Paralympic Committee. Sadly, today we have lost a true Paralympic great."

Rahman broke onto international stage at the Kuala Lumpur 2010 World Championships where he competed in the men's over 100 kg taking the silver medal behind teammate Karem Rajabi Gololeh.

Two years later, he took his first Paralympic title at London 2012 breaking his own world record with a 291 kg-lift.

Rahman broke the world record nine times in three years from 2014-2016 and took his first world title at Dubai 2014



in the lead up to the Rio 2016 Paralympic Games.

In Brazil, the Iranian was responsible for one of the outstanding moments in Paralympic Games history when he became the first Paralympian to lift more than 300 kg. The remarkable 310 kg-lift which gave Rahman his sec-

ond Paralympic gold still stands as the world record in the men's over 107 kg category.

Since Rio, the Iranian has also won two more world titles at Mexico City 2017 and Nur-Sultan 2019, Paralympic.org reported.

Iranian karateka Abbasali likely to miss out Olympics



S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Hamideh Abbasali of Iran will likely miss the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games after suffering a knee injury at the Karate 1-Premier League event in Salzburg, Austria on Sunday.

She managed her second Premier League win of the year in the female Kumite over-68kg category beating Italy's Clio Ferracuti 2-1 via a Waza-ari.

Shortly after, Abbasali was rushed to a hospital in Salzburg to determine the extent of her injury.

She cannot accompany her teammates in 10-day Frankfurt training camp and will return to Tehran to start her healing process.

Abbasali, who booked her Olympics place in Salzburg, has been diagnosed with a sprained MCL and will be sidelined for six weeks.

She will likely undergo surgery on her knee and if this happens, Abbasali will miss the Olympics.

Karate 1-Premier League event in Salzburg 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 Rahman laid to rest



➔ 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.

He had already won three gold medals in the last three Asian Para Games (2010 Guangzhou, 2014 Incheon and 2018 Jakarta).

"The thoughts and deepest condolences of the whole IPC, World Para Powerlifting

and the Paralympic Movement are with Siamand's family, friends and loved ones at this difficult time. Our prayers are also with our friends at the Iranian National Paralympic Committee. Sadly, today we have lost a true Paralympic great," the International Paralympic Committee's (IPC) President Andrew Parsons said.

"Siamand was a pioneer for his sport, an inspiration for many in his home country Iran and around the world, and a fantastic ambassador for the Paralympic Movement. He was also a wonderful human being, a gentle giant and one of the friendliest people you could ever meet," he added.

East Zone teams agree to new dates

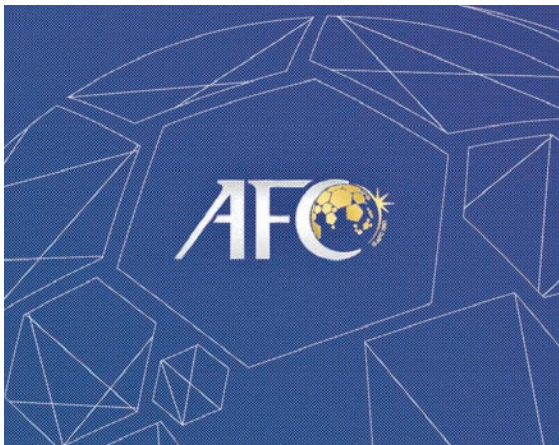
Representatives of the East Zone Member Associations (MA) with competing teams in the AFC Champions League 2020 have agreed to extend the dates of the knock-out rounds to allow for more time to complete the disrupted Group Stage fixtures.

Meeting in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, it was agreed that Group matches scheduled for March and April which cannot be played, will be moved to May 19-20 - Match Day (MD3), May 26-27 (MD4), June 16-17 (MD5) and June 23-24 (MD6).

Where matches have been agreed between the two clubs, then the matches will go ahead as planned, if agreed by other stakeholders. A full list of fixtures will be confirmed between the MAs and the Clubs by March 16, 2020.

If the current unprecedented situation continues then matches involving teams, other than clubs from Japan, can be played in July and any outstanding matches which have not been staged from Match Day 1 and 2 need to be concluded before August 2020.

That means that the round of 16 matches will be played on August 11/12 and the second leg on August 25/26, 2020.



The ACL quarter-finals will be played on September 15/16 with the return legs on September 29/30, 2020.

The semi-finals will then take place on October 20/21 and

the return leg on October 27/28, 2020 and the final dates would remain as November 22 (East) and 28 (West), 2020.

Dato' Windsor John, the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) General Secretary, thanked the representatives for their cooperation and said: "These are challenging, and unprecedented times and we are grateful that everyone has come together to try and find a solution which works for everyone."

"As the AFC President, Shaikh Salman bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa has already stated, the AFC will not put anyone at risk during these times of heightened health concerns and so we have taken some sensible decisions to postpone both matches and events.

"The AFC hopes that there is a quick and safe end to this current situation and that we can return to normality where football can play a role in bringing some joy and entertainment to people's lives. Our support and sympathies are extended to communities affected."

An emergency meeting will be held with the West Zone representatives at the weekend.

(Source: the-afc)

Persepolis striker Anthony Stokes arrested

Persepolis star Anthony Stokes was nicked by armed cops after getting off a plane, it's claimed.

The ace, 31, was arrested on an outstanding warrant at London's Gatwick Airport as he returned from a Dubai break.

Stunned witnesses claimed he left the Emirates jet flanked by officers before the arrest.

The striker — now with Iran's Persepolis FC — was due to appear on Monday at Hamilton Sheriff Court.

One passenger who was on Friday's flight said: "I heard raised voices in the cabin and we were all told to stay in our seats for them to deal with someone on the plane."

"They asked for Mr Anthony C Stokes to come to the front of the plane with his luggage."

"He was walked off and I later saw him and another man standing by the baggage belts."

A spokesperson for Police Scotland said: "A 31-year-old man has been arrested in connection with an outstanding warrant."

Stokes, who played for the Hoops until 2016, earlier shared pictures with Instagram followers of his stay at the luxury Palm Jumeirah Dubai hotel.

His club revealed they had no idea of his whereabouts after claiming he failed to return to training — and it was alleged he had blamed coronavirus.

It comes weeks after the Irish frontman signed for Persepolis on a six-month deal. Amir Shafizadeh, who runs their Facebook page, said: "Stokes said he's in Dubai as he

didn't join us since our last match.

"He asked our coach for permission to stay two more days in Dubai because of his family."

"Our coach agreed. We waited for him because he promised us he'd come to our training sessions."

"He hasn't returned to Tehran for two weeks."

"After some days, he said he couldn't come because of coronavirus."

(Source: Scottishsun)

FIFA insists on amendment to FFIRI Statutes

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — FIFA has asked the Football Federation Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI) to postpone the electoral assembly until the federation amend its current statutes.

Football international governing body had already sent a letter to the Iranian federation on Feb. 24, 2020, emphasizing that the FFIRI General Assembly, scheduled for 15 March 2020 should be postponed.

FIFA had hinted that the current version of the FFIRI statutes contains several particularly problematic provisions such as government interference in the FFIRI elections.

In the letter, it was reminded that direct representation of governmental authorities, with voting rights, in a sports association's supreme body contravenes the basic principles of independence of sports set out by the Olympic Movement and it goes against the obligations imposed on our Member Associations by the FIFA Statutes as well.

Besides, FIFA reminded that there must be an electoral committee and an electoral appeal committee to be elected or ratified by its general assembly of FFIRI, which the current version of FFIRI Statutes lacks.

The Iranian federation, in response to the letter, provided some documents and appealed to FIFA so that the FFIRI elections to be held on the scheduled date.

However, FIFA did not consider these documents to be sufficient and, in a new letter, asked the FFIRI officials to conduct revision and amendment in the current statutes and then after the approval of the general assembly, the football federation's elections can be held.

Iran football leagues postponed until further notice

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — All football competitions in Iran have been postponed until further notice due to the coronavirus outbreak.

Last week, Iran Sports Medicine Federation had canceled all sports events except football.

Then the Iran Football League Organization announced that all the football and futsal matches have been canceled until further notice.

Persepolis sit top of Iran Professional League (IPL) table, 10 points ahead of Sepahan and Esteghlal.

South Korea's K League was postponed last week amid coronavirus concerns.

The escalating outbreak in Iran has killed 54 people and infected 978, according to the Iran's Health Ministry on Sunday.

Uzbekistan's Masharipov linked with Esteghlal

Tasnim — Uzbekistan international midfielder Jaloliddin Masharipov has been linked to Iranian football club Esteghlal.

Masharipov, 26, currently plays for Pakhtakor but it seems he is interested in joining Esteghlal in the next season.

Esteghlal have a good memory of another Uzbek midfielder Server Djeparov who played in the Tehran-based football club two years ago.

Masharipov has played 15 times for Uzbekistan national team and scored one goal.

Esteghlal will likely negotiate with him in the summer.

Iran futsal sixth in world ranking

The Iranian national futsal team remained unchanged in the latest Futsal World Ranking released on Sunday.

Iran are sixth in the world with 1603 points but remained the best Asian futsal team.

Brazil and Spain are first and second with 1810 and 1801 points, respectively. Argentina and Russia are third and fourth with 1694 and 1642 points.

Portugal also are fifth with 1639 points.

Japan and Thailand are 16th and 17th in the ranking with 1368 and 1325 points.

(Source: futsalworldranking)

South Korea, Italy, Iran likely to miss Delhi World Cup

After the pull out of China and Pakistan, the ISSF shooting world cup, scheduled to be held in New Delhi between March 16-26, is unlikely to see the participation of three other countries - South Korea, Italy and Iran. This comes after the federations of those three countries were informed of the need to undergo strict quarantine rules laid down by the government of India in order to control the spread of the novel coronavirus.

The virus has so far killed close to 3000 people and infected over 80,000 globally. While the virus originated in China, the three aforementioned nations have seen a sharp rise in the number of confirmed cases over the past week.

As such, the NRAI (National Rifle association of India) had received a travel advisory from the Indian health ministry on February 26 stating, "People coming from the Republic of Korea, Iran and Italy or those having history of travel to those countries may be quarantined for 14 days on arrival to India."

The Indian embassies in the three nations had also announced the travel advisory following which the shooting federations of Italy and South Korea had written to the NRAI seeking clarity on the position being taken by the Indian federation regarding shooters from those countries and the conduct to be followed for the New Delhi World Cup.

The NRAI in turn responded an official letter from the Italian federation on Friday stating, "....all Italian nationals travelling to India, per this advisory, face a minimum of 14 days quarantine in a facility created and designed by the government of India. In such a circumstance, it is virtually certain that even we as members of the organizing committee would not be granted access to such athletes should, despite knowledge of it being so, anyone chose to travel to India."

(Source: ESPN)

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www.tehrantimes.com

■ Managing Director: Mohammad Shojaeian

■ Editor-in-Chief: Mohammad Ghaderi

» Editorial Dept.: Fax: (+98 21) 88808214 — 88808895

editor@tehrantimes.com

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

» Advertisements Dept.: Tel: (+98 21) 43051450

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

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

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Zip Code: 1599814713

GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

One's dignity is enhanced with silence, and one's friends become plentiful with fairness and chivalry.

Imam Ali (AS)

Iranian doc on Asian cheetahs to go on screen at UN

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** – Iranian filmmaker Fathollah Amiri's documentary "The Extinction Vortex" on Asian cheetahs will go on screen at UN Headquarters in New York tonight as one of the finalists of the World Wildlife Day film showcase, Iran's Documentary and Experimental Film Center (DEFC) announced on Monday.



A poster for Iranian director Fathollah Amiri's documentary "The Extinction Vortex".

The film, which will be screened along with a number of international documentaries on wild animals and plants, tries to determine the actual number of Asian cheetahs in Iran and find a relationship between different habitats and Cheetahs.

The international film screening has been organized by the Secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and Jackson Wild Film Festival, to highlight wildlife as a part of the world's biological diversity and to celebrate World Wildlife Day.

Top documentaries will also be honored during the program. All finalists and winners will also be screened at international events around the world during 2020. "Sustaining all Life on Earth" is the theme of the 2020 World Wildlife Day.

Persian version of "Lucky Hans" republished

CULTURE d e s k **TEHRAN** – The seventh edition of a Persian translation of English children's writer Elizabeth Rose's 1976 book "Lucky Hans" has recently been released by the Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (IIDCY) in Tehran.



Front cover of the Persian version of the "Lucky Hans" by English Children's writer Elizabeth Rose.

Translated by Nahid Zare, the first edition of the Persian translation was published in 1997.

The Persian book carries the original illustrations by British artist Gerald Rose. The book is based on Brothers Grimm's fairy tale "Hans in Luck".

"Lucky Hans" tells the story of Hans, who receives his seven years' wages in silver that is very heavy to carry. So he decides to trade the lump of silver for one thing after another until he arrives home empty-handed.

Media faces challenges in covering coronavirus outbreak

NEW YORK (AP) —Covering the coronavirus story requires careful navigation and constant attention.

News organizations trying to responsibly report on the growing health crisis are confronted with the task of conveying its seriousness without provoking panic, keeping up with a torrent of information while much remains a mystery and continually advising readers and viewers how to stay safe.

"It's a 24-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week, around-the-world story," said Michael Slackman, international editor at The New York Times.

The Times maintains a live news blog about the coronavirus that is refreshed 24 hours a day, with editors in New York, London and Hong Kong dividing responsibility. The Slack channel set up by Associated Press journalists to discuss coverage among themselves and contribute to the story has more than 400 members. Starting Monday, NBC News is turning its morning newsletter solely into a vehicle for talking about the disease.

The coronavirus has sickened thousands, quarantined millions and sent financial markets reeling — all while some cultural critics say the story is overblown.

"It's hard to tell people to put something into context and to calm down when the actions being taken in many cases are very strong or unprecedented," said Glen Nowak, director of the Grady College Center for Health and Risk Communication at the University of Georgia.

Filmmakers Majidi, Rustai inject hope, promise victory over new virus

A R T d e s k

TEHRAN – Iranian filmmakers Majid Majidi and Saeid Rustai have written letters of hope, promising days of victory and celebration up ahead in the fight against the new virus.

In a statement released on Sunday by Majidi, the director of "Muhammad (S), the Messenger of God", praised the invaluable efforts made by the doctors, nurses and medical staff in combating the coronavirus.

"This time, coronavirus is at first sight the shadow of fear, worry and horror, and the more we move forward the more the fear appears. But this is one side of the coin. The other side is sympathy and sacrifice reaching its peak, that is to sacrifice one's life to save the other individual and on the frontline are the doctors, nurses and medical staff; I lay a kiss on the hands of these dear individuals," Majidi wrote on his statement.

"They happen to be epics like the soldiers who protected our dear country for eight years. The medical staff, the doctors and nurses gave meaning to the words of sacrifice and compassion once again," he added.

"But this time, be sure that you dear ones who have always had your high social status will win people's hearts. I have no doubts we Iranian people will pass this problem like other problems through sympathy and compassion once again, and will celebrate the days after this disease is gone altogether," he concluded.

Rustai, the director of the acclaimed movies "Just 6.5" and "Life+1 Day", also wrote on his Instagram page about injecting hope into society under the current conditions in the country, which is struggling with the spread of the new coronavirus.

"I am a daydreamer and in my dreams, I have no doubts that this new wandering



This combination photo shows Majid Majidi (L) and Saeid Rustai. (Photos by Fatemeh Rajezi and Reza Ahadzad)

virus will run out of breath one day. I let my dreams fly away and pass these fearful days. Close your eyes off at the bombardment of despair and be hopeful to a future when this epidemic has been captured by the sacrifice of people," he wrote.

"In my dreams, I pass by all the corridors of all the hospitals and hear the jokes uttered by the nurses, I see a doctor who assures his little daughter that he would be back home and hug her soon," he added.

"The farther I fly in my dreams, the more

I feel assured that death will be beaten by life," he concludes.

In addition, the Iranian House of Cinema expressed love and support to the Iranian healthcare staff treating people with coronavirus.

Actor Shahab Hosseini dedicates France's honor to Iranian people

A R T d e s k

TEHRAN – Actor Shahab Hosseini has dedicated his Chevalier of the Legion of Honor (Chevalier de la Légion d'honneur) medal to Iranian people.

He received the decoration from French Ambassador Philippe Thiebaud during a special ceremony at the Embassy of France in Tehran on Thursday.

"In a career full of ups and downs, I dedicate any honors I've received for my achievements to every individual of my homeland; to those who hate me and to those who love me, because I love them one by one

and wish them greatness and pride," the Palme d'Or winning actor Hosseini wrote in a post published on his Instagram on Monday.

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

Hosseini is mostly famous for his role in Asghar Farhadi's "The Salesman", which brought him the Palme d'Or for best actor at the Cannes Film Festival in 2016. He also starred in Farhadi's other Oscar-winning drama "A Separation".



Actor Shahab Hosseini in an undated photo. (Mehr/Hosseini Esmaeili)

English writer Nevil Shute's "No Highway" published in Persian

A R T d e s k

TEHRAN – English writer and aeronautical engineer Nevil Shute's novel "No Highway" has been published in Persian.

Ali Kahrobai is the translator of the book published by Nashre No, which has previously released a Persian translation of Shute's 1950 novel "A Town Like Alice".

"No Highway" is about Theodore Honey, a shy, inconspicuous engineer whose eccentric interests are frowned upon in aviation circles.

When a passenger plane crashes in Newfoundland under unexplained circumstances, Honey is determined to prove his unorthodox theory about what went wrong to his superiors, before more lives are lost.

But while flying to the crash scene to investigate, Honey discovers to his horror that he is on board one of the defective planes and that he and his



Front cover of the Persian version of English writer Nevil Shute's novel "No Highway".

fellow passengers, including a friendly young stewardess and an aging movie actress, are in imminent peril.

Iran's Art Bureau launches intl. cartoon contest on coronavirus

A R T d e s k

TEHRAN – Iran's Art Bureau has launched an international cartoon contest with the motto of "We Defeat Coronavirus", the director of the Art Bureau's Visual Arts Office, Masud Shojaei-Tabatabai, announced on Monday.

"The number of countries being contaminated by the new virus is increasing day by day and that is why the bureau decided to launch the contest," Shojaei-Tabatabai said.

"We all know that many other viruses appeared and caused epidemics in the world but were defeated, therefore, coronavirus will also be defeated," he said.

"The Iranian people should know that Iran is not the only country affected. Many countries are dealing with the virus, however, the topic of giving hope and removing fear plays a major role in the fight against the virus," he added.

Interested applicants are asked to



مسابقه بین المللی کارتون "ما کرونا را شکست می دهیم"

A poster for the We Defeat Coronavirus international cartoon contest.

submit their works to the Art Bureau before March 30.

The contest has been established in collaboration with the Health Ministry.

Weinstein stir crazy at New York hospital days after sex crimes conviction

NEW YORK (Reuters) - Harvey Weinstein is sitting under guard in a cinderblock room at a New York City hospital days after his conviction for sexual assault and rape, and at times "can go stir crazy just staring at the emptiness," according to a spokesman.

The former Hollywood producer was admitted late on Monday to a Bellevue Hospital unit for inmates, hours after a Manhattan jury found him guilty of sexually assaulting former production assistant Mimi Haley in 2006 and raping former aspiring actress Jessica Mann in 2013.

His conviction was a milestone for the #MeToo movement, which inspired women to accuse hundreds of powerful men of sexual misconduct. He is due to be sentenced on March 11.

Weinstein's spokesman, Juda Engelmayer, said he spent about an hour and a half with him at the hospital on Friday reflecting on the case and what the future holds for Weinstein, who faces up to 29 years in prison. His lawyers plan to appeal the verdict. He is also charged with sexual assault in Los Angeles.

"It's scaring him," Engelmayer said in an interview. "I think he's melancholy. He's very, very low right now."

He described a bare room with a bed, a stainless steel toilet with no seat and large windows. Guards are stationed outside the door.

Weinstein is allowed to make limited phone calls from a common area, the former producer's spokesman said.

"He doesn't like being left alone," Engelmayer said. "When no one's there, he said he's just staring at the four walls. He can go stir crazy just staring at the emptiness."



Harvey Weinstein arrives at New York Criminal Court for another day of jury deliberations in his sexual assault trial in the Manhattan borough of New York City, New York, U.S., February 24, 2020. (Reuters/Lucas Jackson)

Engelmayer's description contrasted with defense lawyer Arthur Aidala's portrayal of his 67-year-old client after he visited him at the hospital on Tuesday.

Aidala said Weinstein appeared "upbeat" and "in pretty good spirits."

Weinstein had been en route to New York City's Rikers Island jail complex when he was diverted to Bellevue. Media reports said he suffered chest pain or heart palpitations.

Engelmayer said Weinstein suffers from diabetes and high blood pressure.

More than 80 women have accused the producer behind

hit films including "The English Patient" and "Shakespeare in Love" of sexual misconduct. He has denied the accusations, said any sexual encounters were consensual, and has said he will appeal his conviction.

Actress Ellen Barkin, a friend of one of Weinstein's accusers, Annabella Sciorra, wrote on Twitter on Tuesday: "He is in a private suite in Bellevue hospital. This is not what the jury had in mind."

Attorney Gloria Allred, who represents some of Weinstein's accusers, questioned on Saturday whether Weinstein was receiving special treatment instead of being treated at the Rikers infirmary. She said she was not speaking for her clients, just giving her personal opinion as a victim's rights lawyer.

Responding to questions about Weinstein, a spokesman for the New York City Department of Correction said only that he was in their custody and that "health care is provided as appropriate."

Among those standing by the former producer as he faces prison is William Currao, a retired physician and Weinstein's college roommate at the State University of New York at Buffalo. During the trial, Currao often appeared alongside his friend, sometimes carrying books for Weinstein, who he described as a "voracious reader."

Currao said he would sometimes sleep at Weinstein's home before they were driven to court in the morning. He said he could not "even fathom" abandoning Weinstein, as others had.

"He's a friend," Currao said. "I can't just cut off a friend because of what they've done or not done."