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EDITORIAL

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Which one is the ultimate winner in the U.S.: The coronavirus or armed violence?

With only 4 percent of the world's population, the U.S. has recorded 35% of deaths due to firearms. According to official statistics by Giffords Law Center, 36,000 Americans are killed by guns each year—an average of 100 per day.

Gun violence in the U.S. can occur in the form of gun suicide, gun homicide, law enforcement shooting and unintentional shooting.

Of the 36,383 Americans killed with guns each year, 22,274 are gun suicides (61%), 12,830 are gun homicides (35%), 496 are law enforcement shootings (1.4%), and 487 are unintentional shootings (1.3%).

These shootings take place in schools, universities, cinemas, shopping centers, and even churches, affecting different segments of society of all ethnicities, genders, and age groups.

U.S. President Donald Trump is a key supporter of American gunmen and is resisting any move to amend the right to bear arms in the United States. Trump announced to gunmen that they now have a real supporter in the White House when he took office.

But high U.S. casualties are not limited to gun violence. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, at least 29 million people have been infected with the flu in the U.S. over the past year, of which 280,000 have been hospitalized and 16,000 have died. Also by Friday last week, a total of 105 people had died of the flu virus infection in the U.S., which was 13 deaths more than the earlier week.

The death toll from influenza in the U.S. is high enough to surprise Donald Trump and make him to react to the issue.

But with the spread of the coronavirus around the world and the infection of various countries, American public opinion has been concerned about its widespread outbreak. U.S. media outlets, including the Washington Post, have predicted that the virus will spread in the U.S. very rapidly. ➔7

Syrian forces shoot down Turkish drone in Saraqib

Syrian government forces have intercepted and targeted an unmanned aerial vehicle belonging to Turkish military while flying in the skies over a strategic city in the country's northwestern province of Idlib.

Syria's official news agency SANA reported that government air defense forces shot down the drone as it was on a mission over Saraqib, located 27 kilometers (17 miles) north of Ma'arat al-Nu'man city, on Tuesday afternoon.

The development came only hours after Syria confirmed that one of its military aircraft had been targeted by a missile fired by Turkish military forces as it was carrying out a combat mission

against positions of terrorist groups in the area.

An unnamed Syrian military source said in a statement to SANA that the warplane was downed at 11:03 a.m. Damascus time (0903 GMT) on Tuesday northwest of Ma'arat al-Nu'man.

Separately, the Turkish Defense Ministry said in a statement that one of its F-16 fighter jets had downed a Syrian military plane in Syria's northwestern Idlib province, identifying the aircraft as a high-performance Aero L-39 Albatros jet trainer developed in Czechoslovakia.

A day earlier, Syrian government forces, backed by allied fighters from popular defense groups, had managed to retake Saraqib.

SANA reported that Syrian army soldiers and their allies entered the city on Monday after violent clashes with the extremists, and severely hitting their positions and fortification lines.

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. ➔10

Pakistan calls on Kabul to abide by Taliban prisoner swap deal

Pakistan has called on the Afghan government to abide by a prisoner swap clause in the U.S.-Taliban peace deal, the rejection of which saw the Taliban resume attacks in the northeast of the country.

In a statement on Tuesday, Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi called on both sides in the conflict to show restraint and come to the negotiating table for scheduled talks later this month.

"The U.S.-Taliban agreement says that there will be an exchange of prisoners," said Qureshi. "[Afghan] President [Ashraf] Ghani should ask the US for an explanation of the agreement."

On Sunday, Ghani rejected a clause of the US-Taliban peace deal, signed in the Qatari

capital, Doha, a day earlier, that would see up to 5,000 Afghan Taliban prisoners released by the government, with the Taliban releasing up to 1,000 prisoners in return.

The prisoner releases were seen as a confidence-building measure ahead of planned direct talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban - the first since the US's nearly 19-year war in the country began - were due to begin on March 10.

In response, the Afghan Taliban said on Monday that it would be resuming attacks. On Monday, an explosion killed at least three people and wounded 11 others at a football match in the northeastern Khost province.

Pakistan has long been accused by the US

and Afghanistan of harboring the Taliban's leadership and offering a safe haven to its fighters, a charge the country has consistently denied, even though members of the group have been killed there.

Notably, in 2016, then Taliban chief Mullah Akhtar Mansoor was killed in a US drone strike in the southwestern Pakistani province of Balochistan.

The country has supported the US's direct talks with the Afghan Taliban, facilitating the peace process undertaken by the US's Afghan peace envoy, Zalmay Khalilzad, since 2018.

Pakistani Foreign Minister Qureshi said Pakistan continues to support an intra-Afghan dialogue process, but that both sides would have to stop being "stubborn". ➔10



Susa, once capital of Elamite, Achaemenid empires

TEHRAN – Now sprawling in the southwest of modern Iran, Susa is one of the oldest yet magnificent cities in the world.

A UNESCO World Heritage, Susa was once the capital of Elamite Empire and later an administrative capital of the Achaemenian king Darius I and his successors from 522 BC.

Excavations have uncovered evidence of continual habitation dating back since about 5000 BC. Earliest urban structures there date around 4000 BC. ➔8

'South Pars phase 11 development operations to start soon'

TEHRAN — National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC)'s deputy director for development and engineering affairs says the development operations of South Pars gas field's phase 11 of development are going to be started in near future, Shana reported.

"The installation operations of the first jacket of phase 11 will be commenced in the coming weeks," Reza Dehqan said. According to the official the devel-

opment status of most of the country's joint fields in border regions has been clarified and development operations for such fields are underway.

"The executive operations at Balal and Farzad fields have also begun and the development projects of other joint fields such as Azadegan, Yadavaran and Yaran in West Karoun region are being pursued as well," he said. ➔4

Leader facilitates approval of next year budget

TEHRAN — A member of the parliament's presiding board announced on Tuesday that Majlis has received two "state decrees" by Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei concerning the next year budget and the Agriculture Ministry which is now run by a caretaker minister.

Asadollah Abbasi said, "Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani, in a letter to

the Leader on Monday, requested his state decrees for two important issues. One of the speaker's requests was about implementation of Article 85 of the constitution over the next year budget and the other one was about the caretaker of Ministry of Agriculture."

Iran's next fiscal year starts on March 21. ➔3

Iranian diplomat wishes peace, friendship for all Indian citizens

TEHRAN — Iran's Ambassador to India, Ali Chegeni, has expressed hope that all Indian citizens would enjoy "peace and friendship" through wise decisions by the Indian government and officials.

During a meeting with Indian Foreign Ministry director general for political affairs on Tuesday, Chegeni noted that India is famous among Iranians

in which people with diverse religions and ethnicities live peacefully with each other.

Chegeni made the remarks as he was summoned to the Indian Foreign Ministry over a tweet by Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif in which he had expressed dismay over violence against Muslims in India. ➔2



ARTICLE

Martin Love
Political analyst from
North Carolina

Javad Zarif's brain should be duplicated at the U.S. State Department

Javad Zarif is so correct, saying that the U.S. never should have invaded Afghanistan (nor should the U.S. have invaded or attacked or sanctioned so many countries since World War 2 for that matter.)

But one must be reminded of what former U.S. Secretary of State Madeline Albright suggested years ago: that given the fact of the existence of the U.S. military's might, it ought to be USED for something, as if that could be good excuse for shattering countries and cultures that are not American, and murdering millions of people. This has been done repeatedly especially since 9/11.

Albright, a Jewess of questionable merit for the jobs she has attained (unless a doctoral degree is worth mention, or later that she was the first U.S. female who became the top U.S. "diplomat"), also said that the demise of some half a million Iraqi children in the 1990s when Iraq was under U.S. sanctions imposed by President Bill Clinton was "worth it". This occurred largely because the U.S. prohibited the import of chemicals to make Iraq's water supplies free of bacteria and other pathogens. (Just imagine having to drink from the Tigris River flowing through Baghdad after the river arose in Turkey for starters and flowed south over 1000 kilometers.)

Albright was also awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2012 by another President, Barack Obama. Why is anyone's guess! But U.S. Presidents of late have been inclined to award unindicted criminals or criminal minds big awards — Trump just gave the same medal to a vicious right-wing radio personality, Rush Limbaugh, whose verbal stock in trade has been racism, misogyny, far right politics and sheer banality.

Maybe Trump felt sorry for Limbaugh who announced he had Stage 4 lung cancer, but he'd have done better sending him a mere note of condolence on toilet paper? Trump cheapened the so-called Medal of Freedom badly. ➔7

Senior officials seek to back small businesses against effects of coronavirus

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — President Hassan Rouhani, Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani and Judiciary Chief Hojjatoleslam Ebrahim Raeisi held a session of the Supreme Council of Economic Coordination on Tuesday and decided to support small businesses against effects of coronavirus.



According to the official presidential website, the necessary legal deadlines in the areas of taxation, customs and banking were discussed and decided upon until conditions go back to normal in line with supporting small businesses and the employees of these sectors.

The effects of the outbreak of coronavirus on economic sectors were discussed, and government proposals to support productive and service units that have lost part of their income due to precautionary measures and preventive actions were raised.

The latest economic developments and the budget were also discussed during the meeting.

Harsh punishment awaits hoarders: Judiciary

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Gholamhossein Esmaeili, Iran's Judiciary spokesman, said on Tuesday that those who hoard face masks and other sanitizing items will be punished harshly.

As the number of patients infected with the novel coronavirus is increasing, certain opportunists are hiding hygienic items in huge quantities. Security forces have so far uncovered warehouses where millions of face masks or sanitary gloves were hidden.

The Judiciary spokesman told a regular press briefing that those who do the "dirty business" of hoarding items in the area of medicine and health will be severely punished.

He even said hoarders may even face "death penalty" or jail terms ranging from 5 to 20 years.

On Monday, Judiciary Chief Hojjatoleslam Ebrahim Raeisi ordered severe punishment for hoarding pharmaceutical and health products.

According to Tasnim, the top judge said that the health of people would never be up for a bargain.

Raeisi added that hoarding medical commodities in the current circumstances is playing with the lives of people and could not be forgiven by any means.

In his Tuesday press briefing, the Judiciary spokesman also announced that 54,000 prisoners have been granted furlough due to the coronavirus outbreak.

'China is ready to provide Iran with assistance in fight against coronavirus'

By staff and agency

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said on Monday that China is ready to provide Iran with assistance to contain the coronavirus epidemic.

"We certainly relate to what the Iranian and Italian people are going through at the moment and expresses sincere condolences to them. China is ready to provide assistance as its capacity allows in terms of prevention and control of the epidemic and medical treatment in light of the needs of Iran and Italy," Chinese Foreign Ministry's website quoted him as saying.

"As I understand the Chinese side has urgently donated nucleic acid testing kits and medical equipment to the Iranian side. A team of five experts from the Red Cross Society of China arrived in Tehran, capital of Iran, on February 29. We are ready to enhance communication with Italy in professional fields and exchange experience and technology in epidemic prevention and control," he added.

Elsewhere, he said, "What I want to say here is that when the epidemic broke out in China, both Iran and Italy expressed sympathy and support to China. What they did demonstrates what it means to stand together in times of adversity and we will never forget that."

Diplomat says IAEA will continue JCPOA verification

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Kazem Gharibabadi, Iran's ambassador to the Vienna-based international organizations, told reporters on Tuesday that the International Atomic Energy Agency will continue to verify and inspect the 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the JCPOA.

Gharibabadi said that the new IAEA report confirms that the UN body's verification of the JCPOA has been continuing since January 16, 2016.

The report also says that the level of nuclear enrichment by Iran is up to 4.5 percent and that Iran's activities related to UF6 enrichment at Fordow have been continuing, he stated.

"Based on this report, stockpile of Iran's enriched uranium until February 19 of the current year has been 1020.9 kilogram. The report also acknowledges that Iran has installed new centrifuges as it had announced," the ambassador stated.

Gharibabadi also noted that the report emphasizes that Iran continues to voluntarily and temporarily implement the Additional Protocol and that the UN nuclear watchdog will continue verifying non-diversion of the materials and declared activities.

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.

Rouhani has invited Putin to hold next Astana talks summit in Tehran: diplomat

By staff and agency

Iran's Ambassador to Russia Kazem Jalali has said that President Hassan Rouhani has invited Russian President Vladimir Putin to hold the next Astana-format summit in Tehran.

"Several days ago, Presidents Rouhani and Putin talked over the phone. During the phone conversation, President Rouhani invited President Putin... suggesting that the next summit in the Astana format in the near future should be held in Iran," Jalali said on Tuesday in a meeting with Chairman of the Federation Council's Foreign Affairs Committee Konstantin Kosachyov, according to RT. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters on Tuesday that discussions were ongoing about a possible summit on Syria between the leaders of Russia, Iran and Turkey, Reuters reported.

Rouhani and Putin held a phone conversation on Saturday during which the Iranian president said the conflict in Syria must be settled politically.

The phone conversation took place as the war for control of the northwestern Syrian province of Idlib is going unabated



between the Syrian forces and the Turkish-backed armed groups who have formed a coalition with the terrorists.

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

Iranian diplomat wishes peace, friendship for all Indian citizens

1 → According to Press TV, the Indian sources said "a strong protest was lodged over the comments made by Javad Zarif on a matter internal to India."

The Indian Foreign Ministry issued a demarche to the Iranian ambassador, claiming that the remarks by Zarif were "totally uncalled for and unacceptable," according to a person familiar with the development.

■ Zarif condemns organized violence against Indian Muslims

"For centuries, Iran has been a friend of India. We urge Indian authorities to ensure the wellbeing of ALL Indians and not let senseless thuggery prevail," Zarif said in a tweet on Monday night.

"Path forward lies in peaceful dialogue and rule of law," he added.

According to Press TV, anti-Muslim violence began in India amid widespread protests over a citizenship law that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist government introduced in December, offering a path to Indian citizenship for six religious groups from neighboring countries, specifically



excluding Muslims.

Critics insist the law is discriminatory, coming in the wake of other severe government measures against the country's Muslim population such as withdrawal of autonomy for Muslim-majority Jammu and Kashmir province that has intensified

"For centuries, Iran has been a friend of India. We urge Indian authorities to ensure the wellbeing of ALL Indians and not let senseless thuggery prevail," Zarif tweeted on Monday night.

Leader urges citizens to follow health tips in coronavirus fight

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei said on Tuesday that it essential that citizens follow health guidelines to help boost the country's battle against the coronavirus outbreak.

"These guidelines must not be disobeyed, because God has made us duty bound to feel responsible for the health of ourselves and others," he said on Tuesday after he planted two saplings, an annual tradition in honor of National Arbor Day and Natural Resources Week.

He added, "Anything that helps prevent the spread of coronavirus is a good deed and anything that helps spread it is a sin."

The Leader also said that all sectors of the country must fully cooperate with the Ministry of Health, which is at the forefront of the fight against Coronavirus.

"The Armed Forces and the sectors

Ayatollah Khamenei says some countries where the coronavirus outbreak "has been more serious have tried to hide it".

related to the Office of the Leader have also been ordered to do the same," he added.

Elsewhere, Ayatollah Khamenei said, "Coronavirus has affected many countries. Our officials have reported with sincerity and transparency since day one. However, some countries where the outbreak has been more serious have

that dozens of Muslims "were killed and many others beaten half to death" — including a two-year-old baby that was "stripped by a gang to see if he was circumcised, as Muslims usually are but Hindus are not."

Critics of Modi's government have blamed the anti-Muslim violence on members of the prime minister's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which was crushed in local Delhi elections early this month.

Police authorities in India announced on Saturday the arrest of hundreds following the worst anti-Muslim violence by Hindu nationalists that began on the eve of a state visit by U.S. President Donald Trump, infamous for his anti-Muslim rhetoric and policies.

A police statement, however, came without elaborating on whether the detainees were perpetrators of deadly violence on mosques and ordinary Muslim residence or Muslims defending their homes against indiscriminate attacks by Hindu nationalists with little intervention by police officers and other government security forces.



tried to hide it. Of course, we ask God to heal the sick in those countries too."

Zarif, Iraq's al-Hakim vow to intensify joint measures in coronavirus fight

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and his Iraqi counterpart Mohammad al-Hakim, in a phone conversation on Monday night, laid emphasis on joint measure to counter coronavirus outbreak.

Zarif and al-Hakim underscored their countries' determination to do their best to root out the disease and highlighted the need for joint measures to contain the virus.

The two top diplomats also exchanged views about a series of issues, including the latest regional developments as ways to expand relations between Tehran and Baghdad.

The virus first emerged in China in December last year and is now spreading in North America, 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.

Also, the Armed Forces 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.



In the meantime, Rear Admiral Habibollah Sayyari, the deputy Army chief for coordination affairs, announced on Saturday that the Army has designated three of its well-equipped hospitals for the treatment of coronavirus patients.

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.

According to the Health Ministry, official data on Tuesday showed that totally 2,336 Iranian nationals have been infected by the virus that 77 have lost their lives.

The ministry also said 435 patients have recovered.

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

Students call on Zarif not to be indifferent toward Indian Muslims

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — The Islamic society of students at Shahid Beheshti University, in a letter issued on Tuesday, called on Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif to take more serious actions towards the violence against the Muslim community in India.

"Defending rights of the entire Muslims is a part of the Article 152 of the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran," the students said in the letter, urging Zarif to provide diplomatic support for the Indian Muslims.

Writing on his official Twitter account on Monday night, Zarif condemned the recent wave of "organized violence" against Indian Muslims, calling on the New Delhi government to "ensure the wellbeing of all Indians".

"Iran condemns the wave of organized violence against Indian Muslims. For centuries, Iran has been a friend of India. We urge Indian authorities to ensure the wellbeing of ALL Indians and not let senseless thuggery prevail," Zarif said.

The foreign minister added, "The path forward lies in peaceful dialogue and rule of law."

Protests swept India since the Indian Parliament passed the CAA (Citizenship Amendment Act) on December 11, entitling religious minority migrants from

Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan to Indian citizenship if they entered the country before the end of December 2014, but excluding Muslims.

The act has come under criticism for discriminating against undocumented Muslim migrants.

More than 40 Muslims were killed by Hindu extremists last week in New Delhi. They put houses, shops, mosques, schools and vehicles on fire.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been publicly silent on the violence.

His powerful home minister, Amit Shah, has accused opposition parties of inciting the riots by spreading misinformation about the citizenship law, which fast-tracks naturalization for religious minorities from several neighboring countries but not Muslims, according to the Associated Press.

On Monday, India's top court agreed to hear cases filed by riot victims accusing leaders of Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party of hate speech. Some of the victims accuse Kapil Mishra, a local leader of Modi's party who lost his Delhi state assembly seat in recent elections, of stoking the violence.

With around 201 million Muslims (2018 estimate), India's Muslim population is about the world's second-largest and the world's largest Muslim-minority population.

Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe in good health inside prison: Judiciary

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iran's Judiciary says Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, a dual British-Iranian national who is jailed in Iran, is in good health, rejecting speculation that she might be infected with coronavirus.

"Nazanin Zaghari is in good health and she was provided the opportunity to contact her family yesterday (Monday)," Judiciary spokesman Gholamhossein Esmaili said on Tuesday during a press conference, ISNA reported.

It came after her husband, Richard Ratcliffe, issued a statement on Saturday saying she is suspected of having contracted coronavirus in prison.

He has been calling for his wife to be tested for COVID-19, the disease caused by coronavirus, claiming that she showed symptoms including a "cough, temperature, body pain all over and fatigue."

He also claimed there was a lack of hygiene material for inmates at the prison in Tehran, where she is detained.

On Tuesday, Iranian Ambassador to London Hamid Baeidinejad quoted Esmaili as saying that Zaghari-Ratcliffe could be granted furlough.

"Mr. Esmaili, the spokesman of Iran's Judiciary, announced that Mrs. Nazanin



Zaghari is in good health condition and has not been affected with coronavirus," he said in a tweet.

"He added that one of the prisoners with

security charge will be granted a furlough today or tomorrow to join family," Baeidinejad added.

Zaghari-Ratcliffe, 38, has been imprisoned in Iran for more than three years on charges

of trying to orchestrate a soft overthrow of the Islamic Republic.

The prosecutor general of Tehran had stated in October 2017 that she was being held for running "a BBC Persian online journalism course which was aimed at recruiting and training people to spread propaganda against Iran."

On November 1, 2017, Boris Johnson, who at the time was Britain's foreign secretary, said, "When we look at what Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe was doing, she was simply teaching people journalism, as I understand it, at the very limit."

In June 2019, both Nazanin and Richard Zaghari-Ratcliffe went on hunger strike, in protest at her imprisonment, with Richard Zaghari-Ratcliffe camping outside the Iranian Embassy in London. They both ended the hunger strike on 29 June 2019, after 15 days.

On June 24, 2019, Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman said Zaghari-Ratcliffe will serve out her five-year prison sentence, dismissing a call for her release by a British minister visiting Tehran.

"Mrs. Zaghari is an Iranian. She has been convicted on security charges and is spending her sentence in prison," Abbas Mousavi told a press conference.

Rouhani congratulates Bulgaria on National Day

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — President Hassan Rouhani has offered his congratulations to the Bulgarian people and government on National Day.

In a message to Bulgarian President Rumen Radev on Tuesday, Rouhani hailed the age-old ties between the two nations.

He expressed hope that Tehran-Sofia relations would expand in political, economic and cultural areas in the future.



Bulgaria celebrates its national day on March 3, marking liberation from almost 500 years of Ottoman rule more than 130 years ago.

On March 3, 1878, the Treaty of San Stefano between Russia and the Ottoman Empire ended the Russo-Turkish War, and paved the way for bringing Bulgaria back to the political map.

The de jure independence of Bulgaria from the Ottoman Empire was proclaimed on October 5, 1908 in the old capital of Tarnovo by Prince Ferdinand of Bulgaria, who afterwards took the title "Tsar".

Iran, Kyrgyzstan to cooperate in battle against coronavirus

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iranian Ambassador to Bishkek Saeed Kharrazi met on Tuesday with Kyrgyz Deputy Health Minister Tolo Isakov to exchange views on ways to cooperate in the battle against the coronavirus outbreak.

During the meeting, Kharrazi presented a report on the activities of Iran in the battle against the infectious virus in the country.

According to the Kyrgyz deputy health minister, no case of coronavirus has been reported in his country so far.

He also said that they request the Iranian embassy to exchange necessary information on fighting against coronavirus with Kyrgyz officials.

As of Tuesday, the death toll from the coronavirus outbreak in Iran has risen to 77 with 2,336 confirmed cases.

The virus first emerged in China in December last year and is now spreading in the U.S., Europe and across the Middle East, sparking fears of a global pandemic.

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

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi responded on Monday to Pompeo's remarks, saying that Iran does not count on the United States' help to counter the virus.

"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.

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

Leader facilitates approval of next year budget

I➔ He said the Leader immediately agreed with the speaker's requests and accordingly the ratification by the Talfiaq Committee of the Majlis will be submitted to the Guardian Council for review.

Talfiaq Committee is a body consisting of MPs from different committees which is established each year to study the national budget bill.

"The ratification will be announced to the government after the Guardian Council's confirmation and the government must implement the approval," Abbasi stated.

"Larijani requested the Leader's administrative verdicts after the representatives of Majlis agreed on putting the next year's budget bill under the Article 85 to review the bill in the Talfiq Committee instead of an open session of the Majlis to avoid consequences of the coronavirus outbreak," he said.

COVID-2019 has hit at least 27 out of 30 provinces of the country, killing 77 till Tuesday morning time. The government has shut down universities, schools and all gatherings till sanitization of all public places. The parliament suspended any open session too.

Some MPs have been diagnosed with the virus too.

According to the Leader's verdict, the Ministry of Agriculture will be headed by its caretaker till an open session of the Majlis decides about a new minister, Abbasi added.

In December, President Rouhani submitted his administration's proposed national budget bill for the next year to the parliament. While presenting the budget bill, Rouhani said the next year's budget was intended to meet the purposes of resistance economy and countering the sanctions.

Louis Farrakhan slams Trump for assassination of Soleimani, saying 'murder is your modus operandi'

The leader of the U.S.-based Nation of Islam movement Louis Farrakhan has blasted President Donald Trump for the assassination of Iran's top anti-terror commander Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, saying "murder is your modus operandi."

On January 3, a drone strike conducted by direct order of Trump martyred Soleimani, the commander of the Quds Force of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, deputy head of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), and their companions outside Baghdad International Airport.

Both commanders were admired by Muslim nations for eliminating the U.S.-sponsored Daesh Takfiri terrorist group in the region, particularly in Iraq and Syria.

During speech at the Savior's Day conference in Detroit, Michigan, Farrakhan said, "Mr. Trump killed my brother Qassem Soleimani."

The African American activist and Muslim preacher condemned Trump for trying to justify the assassination

of General Soleimani by falsely claiming he was a "bad man" who had "killed a lot of Americans."

"That man was no terrorist... he was the brother of [the Iraqi people] from Iran trying to rid them of an occupying [US] army."

"Mr. Trump... you said that my brother [Qassem Soleimani] is a terrorist... you may call me a terrorist tomorrow to justify what the government is planning to do to me and the Nation of Islam," Farrakhan said.

"See, murder is your modus operandi. See here I am now. You want me dead. And after today you might want to speed it up. I don't know."

Farrakhan also assailed the U.S. military presence in the Middle East, saying they were in the region to protect "your little flunky nations."

"What the hell were you doing in Iraq?" Farrakhan shouted at Trump. "[The US military] is an occupying army in the Middle East; soldiers everywhere; who sent for them? Protecting your little flunky nations."

"You went there not to save the Iraqi people. You went

there and spent a trillion dollars to make Iraq a bulwark of defense against Iran."

The U.S. assassination of the top Iranian commander sent shock waves across the world while, at the same time, forging greater unity in the region against U.S. interventionism.

Iraqi lawmakers also took action by unanimously approving a bill, demanding the withdrawal of all foreign military forces led by the United States from the country.

During his speech, Farrakhan warned Trump that "America is falling" because "everybody is rebelling against God."

"America is falling, is falling. Why are you falling America? Because you have become the habitation of devils. A hole for every foul person. A cage for every hateful bird. Have you become a nation of devils?"

"Mr. Trump, this nation has become a habitation of devils. Everybody rebelling against God."

In November, Farrakhan made a solidarity trip to Iran, where he told Iranian students that "America has never been a democracy."

Iran says ready to help replace poppy cultivation in Afghanistan

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — The secretary general of Iran's Drug Control Headquarters announced on Tuesday that his country is ready to help replace poppy cultivation in neighboring Afghanistan.

Eskandar Momeni made remakes in a meeting with Afghan Deputy Interior

Minister Mohammad Hashim Aurtaq on the sidelines of the annual United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) in Vienna.

Iran has always stressed the need for global support to Afghanistan's development projects to pursue its alternative cultivation plans, Momeni said.

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.

Coronavirus likely biological attack against China, Iran: civil defense chief

TEHRAN — Head of Iran's Civil Defense Organization Brigadier General Gholam Reza Jalali said on Tuesday that the outcomes of the coronavirus epidemics and the western states' media propaganda suggest that COVID-19 virus could be a biological attack against China and Iran.

"A study of the consequences of the virus in terms of tolls or the extent of the epidemic and the type of media propaganda over this issue that is aimed at increasing fear and panic among people strengthens the speculations that a biological attack has been launched against China and Iran with economic goals," General Jalali told FNA.

He added that proofs and analysis and certain news reports indicate that the origin of coronavirus is a hostile state but proving this assumption requires laboratorial investigations and comparing the genome of the primary virus and the new genomes.

The Iranian Health Ministry said on Monday that the number of people infected with coronavirus in Iran increased to 1,501, adding that 66 patients have died so far.

It added that 291 coronavirus patients have been cured and discharged from hospitals across the country.

Reports from different cities and towns of Iran indicate strenuous efforts by the officials to help the coronavirus patients and prevent an epidemic.



The Iranian health ministry had said last Tuesday that over 700,000 sanitation packs, including equipment to prevent coronavirus-infection have been transferred to Qom province, the first place where the COVID 19-infection was diagnosed, and are being distributed among people.

As a preventive measure, Iranian authorities have ordered closure of educational and cultural institutions across the country as of weekend.

Tehran's municipality announced that all the city's public places, including the metro trains and buses,

are being disinfected at the end of the line every hour as part of attempts to contain the spread of the virus.

Head of Food and Drug Administration Mohammad Reza Shanehsaz also said that pharmacies will no longer be allowed to sell protective masks and that masks will be distributed among the population via government-run centers free of charge, with the priority given to virus-hit provinces.

The World Health Organization (WHO) stressed Iran's high capabilities to prevent an epidemic of novel coronavirus infection.

Iran's Foreign Ministry hosted a meeting last Wednesday to brief a WHO representative and the foreign ambassadors residing in Tehran on the latest preventive and therapeutic measures taken by the country to contain COVID-19, as the novel coronavirus is called.

In comments at the meeting, the WHO representative said Iran has the necessary fundamental capabilities to tackle the epidemic, and that Tehran's performance has been as "successful and exemplary" in the region and the world.

The Iranian Health Ministry officials, who were also present at the meeting, reaffirmed Iran's commitment to the international health regulations and standards.

Iran enjoys all the technical and specialized capabilities needed to battle the coronavirus, they stressed.

Envoy denounces use of coronavirus as political weapon against Iran

TEHRAN (FNA) — Iranian Ambassador to Paris Bahram Qassemi lashed out at some countries which are pouncing on the outbreak of a novel coronavirus to achieve their political objectives, stressing that such an opportunistic approach is tantamount to committing crimes.

"Those who take advantage of people's lives and turn the coronavirus into a political weapon against Iran are criminals," Qassemi wrote on his Twitter account on Tuesday.

"The fight against the coronavirus is not limited to a specific country or a special center, and the control of the virus needs a global consensus and comprehensive cooperation," he stressed.

Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Seyed Abbas Mousavi said in a press conference that some media outlets intentionally seek to undermine the Iranian efforts to combat the coronavirus, adding that among our responsibilities is to thwart these bad media propaganda against the country.

He added that some, unfortunately, suggest that Iran is the source of this virus, and they fabricate and display false statistics.

As of Tuesday, the death toll from the coronavirus outbreak, officially known as COVID-19, in Iran has risen to 77 with 2336 confirmed cases.

On Friday, the Iranian Embassy in Georgia lashed out at some neighboring countries

which are playing a blame game against Tehran for the spread of coronavirus in the region, reminding that hiding figures on infections will worsen the problem rather than solving it.

Iran appreciates all countries and international bodies which have helped confront coronavirus and considers international community's cooperation as key to control, contain and uproot the epidemic, Iranian Embassy in Tbilisi said in a statement.

Since the outbreak of the coronavirus in some of the Iranian cities, effective and special measures have been taken in line with WHO instructions to fight and control coronavirus, the statement read.



STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	544239.9
IFX	6933.04

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	46,785 rials
GBP	53,667 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$53.07b
WTI	\$48.05/b
OPEC Basket	\$50.16/b
Gold	\$1,604.50/oz
Silver	\$16.88/oz
Platinum	\$874.10/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

‘South Pars phase 11 development operations to start soon’

1 → ■ Sixth IPC-based deal to be signed soon
Dehqan further pointed out that, so far, NIOC has signed five IPC-based development deals with domestic companies for development of the country’s oil fields, adding that the sixth deal is also ready to be signed but due to the coronavirus outbreak the signing has been delayed and the company will go through with it in near future.

“Over the past three years, the development of 10 fields has been awarded to domestic companies and a total of \$10 billion in upstream contracts have been signed,” he said.

He further referred to the NIOC’s maintenance and recovery increase projects and said these projects which include Engineering, Procurement, Construction (EPC) and Engineering, Procurement and Drilling (EPD) deals are going to be awarded in the form of 33 work packages.

“10 contracts were signed last year and nine deals will be signed soon. The rest of the work packages will also be awarded in the first half of the next year [which starts on March 19],” he added.

National Iranian Oil Company signed a contract with Total in 2017 for developing the phase 11 of South Pars gas field (Iran shares with Qatar in the Persian Gulf) with an initial investment of \$1 billion, marking the French company the first major Western energy investor in the country after sanctions were lifted in 2016.

The company was pressured to leave Iran after the United States threatened to impose sanctions on companies that do business in the country.

Later on, Iran awarded the project to CNPC which was part of the consortium that was first supposed to carry out the project.

The Chinese company however, did not go on with the project and left the contract like the French party and the domestic Petropars is now in charge of this phase development project.

The offshore South Pars field holds the world’s largest natural gas reserves ever found in one place.

Malaysia’s Central Bank cuts key rate to 10-year low to mitigate virus impact

Malaysia’s Central Bank cut its key interest rate to the lowest in 10 years on Tuesday (Mar 3), as it aimed to soften the blow from the coronavirus outbreak on the country’s exports and tourism.

Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM) lowered its overnight policy rate by



25 basis points to 2.5 percent, the second reduction to its benchmark rate this year and adding to its fiscal stimulus package unveiled last week to help businesses and households.

The central bank’s monetary policy committee said the virus outbreak will weigh on Malaysia’s economy, particularly in the first quarter, and pressure full-year growth as the Southeast Asian country continues to grapple with weakness in commodity-related sectors.

The “reduction in the OPR is intended to provide a more accommodative monetary environment to support the projected improvement in economic growth amid price stability,” the committee said in a statement.

Euben Paracuelles, economist with Nomura, said the cut was not likely to be the last as Malaysia confronts supply chain disruptions from the virus outbreak and political upheaval that will likely shake investor and business confidence.

Paracuelles said a good benchmark for how low the central bank can go with its interest rate is the global financial crisis, when it hit 2 percent.

“I think the signal is very clear, that BNM is willing to ease further ... they are willing to respond as quickly as they can if the growth outlook continues to worsen,” Paracuelles said.

Tuesday’s rate cut follows a week of political turmoil, which saw Muhyiddin Yassin take over as prime minister following the resignation of 94-year-old Mahathir Mohamad.

The change of government midterm could delay some reforms and fiscal aid that markets need to soften the blow from the coronavirus outbreak, said Charu Chanana, an analyst with Continuum Economics. (Source: channelnewsasia.com)

Plan for reviving small mines progresses over 95%: IMIDRO

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** – Over 95 percent of the Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO)’s plan for reviving small mines across the country has been realized in the first 11 months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2019-February 19, 2020).

Based on the mentioned plan, IMIDRO was going to revive 150 idle small mines across the country in collaboration with the Industry, Mining, and Trade Ministry, IRNA reported on Monday.

Implementation of the mentioned program is going to create 3,000 job opportunities in the country.

According to an IMIDRO report, as of February 19, a total of 1,483 idle mines were identified, for 881 of which necessary actions and solutions have been determined.

Back in January, IMIDRO Head Khodadad Gharibpour, announced that 66 percent of the program for reviving 150 small mines in the present year was realized.

The official said that his organization revived 99 small mines in the country since



the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year up to January 11.

IMIDRO head mentioned this plan as one of the most significant plans of “Resistance

TEDPIX, IFX climb on Tuesday



ECONOMY **TEHRAN**- TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), rose 14,910 points to 544,239 on Tuesday, IRNA reported.

Over 6.684 billion securities worth 56.072 billion rials (about \$1.33 billion) were traded at this market.

The first market’s index rose 10,917 points and the second market’s index went up 29,965 points on Tuesday.

TEDPIX had risen 45,640 points to 524,394 during the past Iranian calendar week (ended on Friday).

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 the index.

As previously reported, TSE witnessed the highest ever weekly rise of its main index in the Iranian calendar week ended on January 17, which was the last week

of Iran’s tenth calendar month of Dey. The index rose 45,638 points, or 12.9 percent, during the mentioned week to stand at 399,445 points.

Tehran Stock Exchange has been ranked as the second best performer among the members of the World Federation of Exchanges (WFE) in terms of the main index growth during the 12-month period of December 2018-December 2019.

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

During the Tuesday trades, IFX, the main index of Iran’s over-the-counter (OTC) market known as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB), also climbed 168 points to 6,952.

As reported, 3.275 billion securities worth 51.03 trillion rials (about \$1.21 billion) were traded at IFB on Tuesday.

Budget review committee OKs €2.795b withdrawal from NDF

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iranian parliament’s ad hoc budget review committee has passed a bill to allow withdrawing €2.795 billion from the National Development Fund (NDF) for compensating the next calendar year’s budget deficits.

The administration’s budget bill for the next Iranian calendar year (starts on March 19, 2020) had previously stated that the government should be allowed to withdraw €3.425 billion from the National Development Fund in the form of foreign currency facilities; however, the review

committee modified the figure down to €2.795 billion.

The mentioned facilities are going to be allocated for a variety of areas including development and infrastructure projects such as new irrigation systems, supplying water and electricity to rural areas, and establishing and supporting knowledge-based companies and projects, as well as increasing the government’s investment in the country’s Exports Guarantee Fund.

The parliament’s ad hoc budget review committee submitted its report on the administration’s budget bill for the next

Iranian calendar year to the parliament (Majlis) earlier this week.

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

Economy”, saying that his organization is strongly determined to carry out it.

The official has said reviving small mines stands among the top priorities of IMIDRO in the current Iranian calendar year.

He said based on an MOU signed two years ago, 500 small mines were planned to be revived throughout the country in a course of five years to create jobs for 25,000 people.

Based on the statistics released by Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade there are about 4,000 inactive mines in the country at present, the official said, adding they include nine percent of metals mines, 21 percent of decorative stones mines, 51 percent of constructional materials mines, and 15 percent of other minerals mines.

Holding 68 types of different minerals Iran stands at the 10th place in the world in terms of diversity of its mineral reserves.

The country has over 60 billion tons of untapped mineral deposits, of which 40 billion tons are proven reserves, placing Iran at the 15th place globally.

Production of antiseptics doubled in a month



ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iranian Industry, Mining, and Trade Minister Reza Rahmani says the production of antiseptic products in the country has doubled since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar month (February 20), IRNA reported.

According to Rahmani, the ministry has issued new licenses for the companies which have been able to produce such products.

Regarding the production of face masks, the official noted that since the Health Ministry has announced that 80 million of such products are currently needed in the country, the Industry Ministry has taken necessary measures to meet the needs of the people in the shortest possible time.

“Although production of this product has been two to three times higher than usual, but domestic production hasn’t been enough and, with the government’s support and the central bank’s allocation of foreign currency, imports are on the agenda as

quickly as possible,” Rahmani said.

The official noted that a coronavirus containment headquarter has been established in the Industry Ministry for taking necessary measures for production, distribution and monitoring the markets of health and hygiene products.

In late February, Rahmani had held a meeting with the producers of health and hygiene products to discuss the supply of such products amid at the coronavirus outbreak.

The meeting was attended by the representatives of the country’s major health products manufacturers as well as senior officials including the government’s spokesman Ali Rabiei.

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

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.

ECB ready to take ‘appropriate and targeted measures’ on coronavirus

Christine Lagarde, president of the European Central Bank (ECB), has said it is “ready to take appropriate and targeted measures” to address the economic impact of the coronavirus, signaling a growing willingness to intervene.

The statement by Ms Lagarde, issued on Monday night after an executive board meeting of the ECB, marks an escalation in the central bank’s communications about the deadly virus, which threatens to drag the eurozone economy into recession.

The “coronavirus outbreak is a fast developing situation, which creates risks for the economic outlook and the functioning of financial markets,” said Ms Lagarde, facing her first major test since she took over as ECB president in November.

The “ECB is closely monitoring developments and their implications for the economy, medium-term inflation and the transmission of our monetary policy,” she said. “We stand ready to take appropriate and targeted measures, as necessary and commensurate with the underlying risks.

The statement by Ms Lagarde follows similar statements from the U.S. Federal Reserve on Friday and the Bank of Japan earlier on Monday after stock markets suffered their biggest fall since the 2008 financial crisis.

Last week, Ms Lagarde downplayed the likelihood of an imminent monetary policy response to the virus by the ECB,



telling the Financial Times on Thursday that it was too early to determine if it would cause a “long-lasting shock” for the economy.

The ECB is still unlikely to cut interest rates from their already record low level of minus 0.5 percent when its governing council meets on March 12. This reflects its concern about the side-effects of negative interest rates and a fear that cutting them further may do little to address the impact of the virus.

■ Cheap money into economy
But the latest statement by Ms Lagarde — in particular

her reference to “appropriate and targeted measures” — indicates that it is considering other ways to inject cheap money into the economy.

One such route would be to increase the cheap loans provided to banks in return for them meeting certain lending targets under the targeted longer-term refinancing operation (TLTRO) program, which it relaunched last year. This could be done to give an incentive to bank lending to small businesses, which could be hit particularly hard by the disruption of the virus.

Even before the coronavirus started to upset the world economy, the eurozone had already slowed to its weakest growth rate since the bloc’s sovereign debt crisis seven years ago.

Now the virus has spread from China to other countries like Italy, South Korea and Japan, economists fear more disruption to supply chains, transport and tourism, piling pressure on the ECB to inject an extra dose of monetary policy stimulus.

Even before the latest statement by Ms Lagarde, investors were already pricing in a bet that the ECB would cut its main deposit rate from minus 0.5 percent to minus 0.6 percent as early as April.

(Source: ft.com)

South Pars offshore development to be completed by Mar. 19

E N E R G Y **TEHRAN** — All the offshore operations of the development project of Iran's South Pars gas field (in the Persian Gulf), except for phase 11, will be completed by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 19, 2020), Mohammad Meshkinfam, the managing director of Pars Oil and Gas Company (POGC) announced.

Speaking to the state TV on Monday evening, Meshkinfam noted that the platform 13C which is the last platform of the fields' offshore development project is planned to be installed on March 7 if the weather condition is good.

"This platform would be the 37th platform installed in this joint field," the official said.

The POGC head further reminded that Iran's daily gas extraction from the joint field has recently surpassed Qatar with which the country shares the giant field.

"Iran is currently producing 650 million cubic meters (mcm) of gas from South



Pars while Qatar's output currently stands at about 570 million cubic meters," he stressed.

South Pars gas 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. The field is divided into 24 standard phases.

In mid-September last year, Meshkinfam had announced that all the remaining platforms of the field will be installed by the end of the current Iranian calendar year.

"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", he had said.

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.

Oil extends gains amid optimism for coordinated effort to offset virus

Oil prices extended gains on Tuesday on expectations that central banks are likely to enact financial stimulus to offset the impacts of the coronavirus outbreak and growing optimism that OPEC will order deeper output cuts this week.

Brent crude LCO1c rose 56 cents per barrel, or 1.1%, to \$52.46 per barrel by 0756 GMT. U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) CL1 rose 71 cents, or 1.5%, to \$47.46 a barrel.

Both futures contracts rose by more than 3% earlier in the session.

Brent and WTI have rebounded somewhat over the past two days from a more than 20% drop from their 2020 peak in January that was caused by signs that the coronavirus spread has dented fuel demand.

"Oil prices got their groove back after the world's largest economies signaled they will be united in fighting off the economic impact of the coronavirus and on the Russian capitulation in agreeing to deliver deeper production cuts at this week's meeting," said Edward Moya, senior market analyst at OANDA.

G7 finance ministers will also discuss this week how best to cushion the impact of the outbreak on economic growth, French Finance Minister Le Maire said on Monday. That is occurring as other major central banks have promised monetary and fiscal stimulus.

"Assuming the central banks come to the party this week, a substantial production cut by OPEC+ would set oil up to regain all the losses of the past week," said Jeffrey Halley,

senior market analyst at OANDA.

"Inaction by either, or both, should see oil retesting its recent lows by the week's end," said Halley.

The coronavirus, which originated in China, has spread to more than 60 countries and has killed over 3,000 people globally.

The "coronavirus is still spreading globally and until markets can possibly calculate a return of normal travel and trade, oil will struggle," Moya said.

With lingering worries over oil demand amid the virus outbreak, several key members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) are mulling a bigger oil output cut of possibly 1 million barrels per day (bpd). The previous proposal was for an

additional reduction of 600,000 bpd.

OPEC and its allies, a group known as OPEC+, are expected to announce deeper output cuts at their meeting on March 5-6 in Vienna. The group had agreed to cut output by 1.7 million bpd in a deal that runs to the end of March.

Singapore-based analyst Margaret Yang at CMC Markets said the gradual resumption of business activities in China has also supported oil prices.

Oil stockpiles in the United States, the world's biggest crude producer and consumer, are expected to rise for a sixth week by 3.3 million barrels, while refined product inventories are forecast to fall, according to Reuters poll.

(Source: uk.reuters.com)

LNG shipping faces coronavirus negative impact, says market commentary

LNG shipping hasn't been able to avoid the negative impact from the drop in gas demand, as a result of the Coronavirus outbreak.

In a recent market commentary, LNG ship owner, AWILCO LNG said that the "story of LNG in 2019 has been one of massive supply growth and muted demand, leading to global gas prices falling to their lowest in 10 years. At the same time final investment decisions on new LNG liquefaction capacity in 2019 hit an all-time high of 71 MTPA, underpinning gas as an important and increasing part of the global energy mix."

Total LNG trade in 2019 ended at 361 MT according to Fearnleys LNG, a growth of 11 % on 2018 volumes and a doubling in 10 years. Muted demand from key LNG importers Japan and South Korea, both down 8 % on 2018 imports due to mild weather and higher nuclear power generation, were partially offset by larger imports to China and India which grew by 16 and 5 % respectively."

According to the ship owner, "Europe has been the main buyer of incremental LNG volumes in 2019, growing imports by 61 % y-o-y to about 91 MT and taking advantage of low gas prices to switch its energy mix from coal to gas."

Driven by volume growth, but partly offset by larger imports to Europe reducing average sailing distances, total shipping demand as expressed by growth in ton-mile increased by about 8.5 % in 2019 compared to a fleet growth of 7.3 % according to Fearnleys LNG.

Normal seasonal effects

According to same headline spot TFDE day rates started the quarter at D 88,000 and D 83,000 per day West and East of Suez respectively, and ended Q4 at D 95,000 and D 87,000 respectively. In line with normal seasonal effects from the winter market spot rates peaked at D 130,000 in



both basins in mid-October 2019.

A total of 71 MTPA of new capacity was sanctioned in 2019, representing about 20 % of total LNG traded in 2019.

In total 121 MTPA of new LNG production capacity is under construction and expected to commence production in 2020 to 2026. According to market analysts a further approx. 800 MTPA of new LNG production is in various stages of planning".

In terms of tonnage supply, AWILCO LNG added that "38 new buildings were delivered and 43 vessels were ordered at four different yards in 2019."

According to shipbrokers the current orderbook year end 2019 for LNG vessels above 150,000 cbm (excl. FSRU and FLNG) was 110 vessels, of which about 38 are assumed available for contract. 43 vessels are scheduled for delivery in 2020, 43 in 2021, 22 in 2022 and 2 in 2023".

In terms of the market's outlook, the shipowner noted that "LNG production has grown strongly in 2019 with de-

mand unable to keep up so far. As a result, global gas prices have been under pressure and in addition to being at all-time lows have also converged between the main basins reducing ton-mile demand.

The increasing LNG volumes

Although increasing LNG volumes are expected to continue to drive tonnage demand, it may be challenging for shipowners to secure utilization and capture higher charter rates in the near term due to the current muted end-user demand as exacerbated by the outbreak of Covid-19."

AWILCO LNG added that "gas demand from industry and power utilities in China, the world's second-largest LNG importer in 2019, has reportedly been reduced by 10-14 % so far in 2020. Natural gas is on average currently priced at around 25 % of oil on an energy equivalent basis."

In the longer perspective low prices and the growing supply of molecules is expected to support growth in demand for natural gas as a flexible and clean fuel compared to other fossil alternatives.

More than 110 MTPA of new LNG production capacity under construction is expected to start up the next five years.

Tonnage demand and supply appear balanced going forward, noting that about 50 % of the new production capacity is being built in the U.S., which depending on transport distances will underpin demand for LNG carriers beyond current fleet and orderbook.

Over the same time period about 75 smaller and less economical steam LNG carriers are expected to roll of long-term contracts, whereby modern vessels have an economic advantage as replacement tonnage. However, periods of volatility and seasonality should be expected", the ship owner concluded.

(Source: hellenicshippingnews.com)

OPEC tries to head off oil glut as coronavirus saps demand

By Stanley Reed

Rising expectations that some of the world's major oil producers will agree to production cuts appeared to steady oil prices on Monday.

But as the coronavirus continues to fan out across the globe, sapping economic activity, analysts were doubtful that a cut in production of as much as one million barrels a day would be enough to stem a weeks-long slide in prices.

Officials from the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and Russia are expected to meet in Vienna this week to try to halt plunging oil prices, which sank about 14 percent last week alone.

The spreading coronavirus epidemic is cutting into demand for oil and weakening OPEC's clout, but the meeting will still be watched closely by market participants because countries representing roughly half of world oil supplies will be present.

Hopes that the gathering will lead to new and deeper production cuts helped lead to price rises on Monday, ending last week's slide. Brent crude, the international benchmark, rose by about 4 percent to \$51.68 a barrel.

President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia bolstered those hopes by suggesting on Sunday that his country was willing to work with OPEC to try to stabilize prices. The markets have been unsettled in recent weeks by Russia's reluctance to join OPEC in an emergency meeting to discuss output trims to offset the effects of the coronavirus outbreak.

The spread of the virus

Instead, OPEC and Russia in early February convened a technical committee that recommended cuts of around 600,000 barrels a day. Now, after the virus has spread to at least 65 countries and oil prices have fallen further, the Saudis and other OPEC members are likely to push for larger cuts of one million barrels a day.

Russian officials have argued in the past that it was too early to fully understand the full impact of the coronavirus and that an existing shortfall of about one million barrels a day, caused by political turmoil in Libya, was helping to offset reduced demand from the virus outbreak.

Putin told a group of energy officials on Sunday that although Russia had sufficient financial reserves to weather upcoming economic storms, the country's three-year alliance with OPEC had "proved to be an effective instrument to ensure long-term stability on global energy markets," Reuters reported.

Analysts say Russia now seems likely to support additional production cuts at this week's meeting, which was scheduled in December. One reason: Continued discord with OPEC might lead to further price plunges.

"Nothing concentrates a producer's mind like the prospect of a crude oil price bust," said Robert McNally, president of Rapidan Energy Group, a market research firm.

In 2014, after failing to bring Russia and others on board for production trims, Saudi Arabia, OPEC's de facto leader, walked away from market management efforts, leading prices to eventually fall below \$30 a barrel. That rupture led to the 2016 accord between OPEC and Russia that helped prop up the markets for three years.

The bulk of the cuts

In addition, Russia's participation is likely to come relatively cheaply. So far, the Russians have contributed relatively small amounts to production cutbacks, while the Saudis, with help from their Persian Gulf allies, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates, have absorbed the bulk of the cuts. This pattern is likely to continue, analysts say.

Brent prices have fallen about 20 percent since late January. Forecasts of demand for oil this year are being lowered as the spreading coronavirus outbreak cuts into air travel and other activity.

On Monday, for instance, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development said that if the outbreak swept widely through the Asia-Pacific region, Europe and North America, global growth could fall to 1.5 percent this year, half of the 3 percent it had projected before the virus surfaced. That puts pressure on prices, and OPEC, despite all the barrels it commands, will struggle to reverse the trend, analysts say.

"It is not really in their hands," Bhushan Bahree, senior director at IHS Markit, a research firm, said of the OPEC group. "They are just chasing demand down; people don't want to buy their oil and don't have a need for it."

Mr. McNally said OPEC and Russia needed to make a further cut of about one million barrels a day, or about 1 percent of world supply, this week in Vienna to help put a "floor under Brent," or about \$40 a barrel. Even a cut of that order, he said, which would come on top of 2.1 million barrels a day of existing cuts, could prove over time to be insufficient to keep pace with falling demand.

The impact from the "coronavirus could be much more wide reaching and put demand under downward pressure," he said.

(Source: nytimes.com)

First Announcement



1398.7632

NATIONAL IRANIAN SOUTH OILFIELDS COMPANY AHVAZ-IRAN

TENDER NO.: 01-31-9580036

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

Items	Material Description	Quantity
45	P/F " SOLAR" GAS TURBINE REF.: SOLAR DIV. INTERNATIONAL	331

Vendors who intend to participate in aforesaid tender are requested to send their "Intention To Participate" letter via fax to the following number along with their resume according to Qualitative Assessment Form No.1, available at: www.nisoc.ir, not later than 14 days after the second announcement, otherwise, their requests for participation in the tender will be disregarded. The applicants should have relevant background in supplying the required goods and capability to provide and submit a bid bond of 6,586 EURO or 886,931,082 RIAL, in favor of NISOC.

Tender documents including the materials thorough technical specifications and Qualitative Assessment Forms can be accessed via: www.nisoc.ir-material procurement management tab ONLY ACCEPTABLE DELIVERY TERM IS D.D.P., NISOC'S WAREHOUSE, PAYMENT TERM IS C.O.D., SUBSEQUENT TO NISOC'S MATERIAL APPROVAL NO ADVANCE PAYMENT WILL BE PAID

FOREIGN PURCHASING DEPARTMENT
Bldg. No. 104, Material Procurement Management Complex

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

E.MAIL: KALA.F.P@nisoc.ir Tel. No.: 061 34 12 34 55 Fax No.: 061 34 45 7437

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تهران تایمز : نوبت اول ۹۸/۱۲/۱۴ نوبت دوم ۹۸/۱۲/۱۷

First Announcement



1398.7675

NATIONAL IRANIAN SOUTH OILFIELDS COMPANY AHVAZ-IRAN

TENDER NO.: 01-31-9280019

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

Items	Material Description	Quantity
40	PARTS FOR " RUSTON" GAS TURBINE TYPE TA 1750	1370Nos

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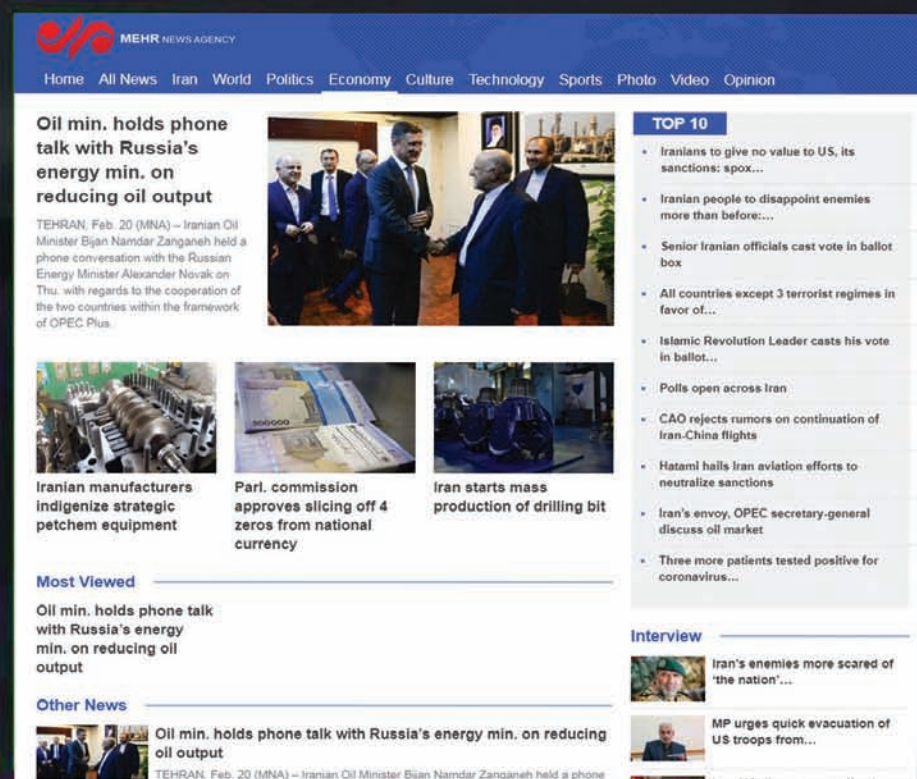
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**Mehr News English**

West continues to target Iran as it refuses to be a 'Puppet' Nation: U.S. researcher

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – An American researcher said the West has long been seeking to target Iran through its disinformation campaigns because the Islamic Republic has remained a “politically-independent” nation in the face of western globalist vision and that it refuses to be a “hand-picked puppet”.

“Iran is one of the few remaining independent nation-states that are politically independent of this globalist agenda. These are the main reasons why Iran is consistently targeted by the West through disinformation campaigns, economic warfare, and as we saw recently---assassination. Coronavirus is new on the scene and its origins and growing influence remain a mystery to the general public, journalists, and at least most scientists. It's not out of the question that the coronavirus phenomenon is a deliberate attempt by the globalists to increase their power and influence over the world. It is certainly consistent with their standard behaviors,” Walt Peretto told Tasnim in an interview.

Walt Peretto is an American writer, researcher, analyst, and sociopolitical psychologist. He is a regular contributor to Press TV and he writes for several online news magazines. He is also working on a book that will introduce the groundwork for sociopolitical psychology which is the study of the behaviors behind social systems and their interactions.

Following is the full text of the interview:

■ Mark Dubowitz, Chief Executive of Washington-based Foundation for Defense of Democracies (FDD), said on Twitter last Tuesday that coronavirus has halted Iran's non-oil exports, achieving “what American economic sanctions could not.” Why do you think some US officials are cheering for this deadly virus to spread – and enjoy seeing Iranian people suffer?

A: The world is afflicted with a disease that is much more influential and dangerous than any airborne viral pathogen to date. This disease is genetic in origin and called clinical (primary) psychopathy. It is characterized by an innate inability to feel the normal emotions of empathy, guilt, or remorse. In sum, psychopaths can not identify with, nor feel the suffering of others. Over many millennia some psychopaths have formed ruling families that consistently produce progeny that are born psychopathic and are ‘trained’ to carry on the family ‘businesses.’ Their core goals are to dominate and control all aspects of life on Earth for self-serving means. Many of these elite psychopaths are intelligent enough to understand that these goals cannot be reached overnight. They understand that this is a long-term multigenerational effort. Global hard currencies are created and regulated by these financial elites and used as a means to influence and control economies, media,



and ultimately populations. Mark Dubowitz is clearly representing the pathological aspirations of these global one-world government proponents. Iran is one of the few remaining independent nation-states that are politically independent of this globalist agenda. These are the main reasons why Iran is consistently targeted by the West through disinformation campaigns, economic warfare, and as we saw recently---assassination. Coronavirus is new on the scene and its origins and growing influence remain a mystery to the general public, journalists, and at least most scientists. It's not out of the question that the coronavirus phenomenon is a deliberate attempt by the globalists to increase their power and influence over the world. It is certainly consistent with their standard behaviors. These are the same pathological mind-sets responsible for the 9/11 attacks that they falsely blamed on the Muslim world. Since the fall of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, the Muslim/Arab world has become the target group for diverting attention off global organized psychopathy. Dubowitz is their agent using the research institute (think-tank) methodology in the form of FDD.

■ In another outrageous and unfounded claim, Dubowitz said that Tehran has “spread terrorism” in the Middle East and “now it's spreading the coronavirus” Do you believe it is Tehran that is spreading terrorism in the region?

A: If Tehran was led by a hand-picked puppet of the globalists as it was in the days of the Shah---Dubowitz would be parading Iran as a model of ‘democracy.’ But since Iran is independent of the globalist vision---they are naturally going to be targeted as

a purveyor of terror and disease. This is not a difficult task since the globalists own virtually every major mainstream news source in the nations they control. This means that billions of people are receiving their ‘official’ news and information from sources controlled by pathological one world proponents. The internet age has given rise to an unprecedented free flow of information that has created factually based outlets that compete with the mainstream media. These internet sources have offered the common people an alternative to incessant monopolistic propaganda and disinformation. Since the globalists (control) the mainstream media, they can project their worldview to billions on a daily basis, while the truth media is slower to actually accumulate and vet the facts before reporting. This gives the globalists a tactical advantage by being ‘first on the scene. So the Dubowitz accusation that Iran is spreading terrorism and coronavirus can be instantly disseminated for consumption by billions of people without vetting and verification. This incessant disregard for facts has turned much of the public into news zombies who can't process the contradiction of the Dubowitz claims that coronavirus has ‘halted Iran's non-oil exports’ while Iran is simultaneously spreading the disease.

■ Growing economic pressure on Iran has hampered the country's efforts to confront the outbreak of coronavirus as health bodies face restrictions importing test kits to detect the infection. What are your thoughts on this?

A: I read a report that health scientists in Iran are in the final stages of developing coronavirus test kits. Hopefully, this is the case. I just want to add that the pathological globalists only recognize currencies that they

create and control. The global market pays Iran hard (globalist recognized) currency in exchange for oil. This currency is the US Dollar which the entire world uses to exchange oil. This ensures demand for the US Dollar which is backed by nothing of substance and created out of thin air by the globalists. This ensures control of the US economy through the Federal Reserve System which is not part of the US government and is largely under foreign control. Iran's currency is strategically undervalued by the financial globalists which coerce Iran to export oil in exchange for globalist recognized ‘hard’ currency. By impeding oil exports, Iran's economy suffers. This plays into the hand of the globalist desire for regime change in Tehran and Iran's absorption into the one-world government vision. In conclusion, we can't rule out the possibility that the spread of coronavirus is another high crime of the globalists. As witnessed with Dubowitz's contradiction, Iran is not responsible for the spread of coronavirus. With regard to terrorism, Iran has been at the forefront of fighting it, not spreading it. This is the reason why Gen. Soleimani was assassinated.

■ Many countries in the region, including Saudi Arabia, refuse to announce the exact number of coronavirus deaths in their countries. This is while certain media outlets (like BBC Persian) are claiming that the death toll in Iran could be far higher than the government is letting on, blaming Iran for being untruthful. What is behind this disinformation campaign?

A: Any nation that asserts independence from the one-world government vision is systematically chastised. In these cases, double-standards become standard. If Saudi Arabia engages in human rights abuses, it is OK...boys will be boys. If an independent country like Iran, Venezuela, or Syria continues to resist one-world government---they are accused of behaviors that are common among the New World Order nations. It's very contradictory and hypocritical. Iran has been a target of propaganda and misinformation by the West ever since they brought down the Shah in 1979. Iran was left alone for a while as the West gobbled up Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya after the 9/11 Zio-Neocon attacks were falsely blamed on the Muslim/Arab world. The false script written for 9/11 portrayed hijacker scenarios using ‘Saudis,’ yet invaded Afghanistan and Iraq in ‘retaliation.’ It is finally Iran's turn, so they are now incessantly targeted. This would be a joke if it wasn't so serious and deadly. The remedy is to disregard the Western mainstream media and research available information independently and use one's own mind if one values truth over a comfortable but false belief system.

Javad Zarif's brain should be duplicated at the U.S. State Department

➡ in the same way, perhaps, that the Nobel Peace Prize has been cheapened in this century, particularly by its award to Barack Obama in the early stage of his reign and who later never did anything of note for peace, particularly in the Middle East where his administration soon sparked the destruction of Libya and Syria by terrorists.

But again, the truly honorable and honest Mr. Zarif is so correct. The U.S. never should have invaded Afghanistan, he said, except as others may note that Usama ibn Laden, the alleged mastermind of the 9/11 attack, was allegedly there, and yet to this day no one has ever come clean about all the actors who were involved (the CIA, the Mossad, the Saudi leadership?) in the planning or execution of the attack in Manhattan.

But now we have the spectacle of the U.S. signing a peace deal with the Taliban. Trump HAS lived up to one of his campaign promises, which was to pull the U.S. out of Afghanistan, where to date more than \$2 trillion has been spent, no real U.S. friends were ever made, and many thousands died. Imagine what \$2 trillion could have done to solve real problems and make real friends in Asia, no war making permitted. Imagine the friends the U.S. could make in Iran if the U.S. dropped and then apologized for the hideous economic sanctions and realized that friendships with Iranians could be far more profitable and beneficial than propping up a racist, Apartheid regime in what is still called Palestine most everywhere.

Zarif has said, also correctly, that the U.S. “surrendered” to the Taliban after years of “humiliation”. And again correctly, that the U.S. is and has been THE problem in West Asia, which eventually it will be forced to leave altogether. Inshallah. But what Zarif has failed to mention is just this: that the U.S. Military Industrial Complex and its many corporate and contractor minions, which President Eisenhower warned about in 1960, have gotten rich murdering faraway foreigners and stealing control of resources since the 1950s...and the U.S. today has become virtually bankrupted, too.

Indeed, it is the recognition of horrific policies that have not benefitted most all Americans that underscores Senator Bernie Sanders' bid for the Democratic Party's nomination for the Presidency in November. He seems to be the front runner currently, but his competitors are trying to ensure he will not be nominated ... against the will of most Democratic Party and independent voters together. This is a travesty. The screaming question is why do party members oppose Sanders, who are claiming he cannot beat Trump, when he is the best of the candidates against Trump? Partly the answer is that Sanders' economic programs may not work, but that not the prime reason.

Simply put, those of the “Establishment” so long established in positions of power and with reams of perks and privileges increasingly not available to average Americans, whose fortunes have been in decline for half a century since the Vietnam War, cannot conceive of giving up their power. Indeed, it has been noted that the privileged, enjoying great relative prosperity, would often sooner engineer their own destruction through their own rigidity and blindness than giving up even a small portion of their perks for the greater good.

Which one is the ultimate winner in the U.S.: The coronavirus or armed violence?

➡ The U.S. president's stance on the matter, however, led to a backlash inside the country as he downplayed the danger of the coronavirus outbreak in the United States.

There is also a lot of controversy these days between Trump and the Democrats over the impact of the coronavirus in the budget, and it looks like the U.S. president is going to get around the issue of the coronavirus by ignoring it.

Some experts believe that by looking at the death toll of the flu in the U.S., evaluating the country's healthcare system and considering the U.S. government's indifference to the coronavirus outbreak, it will be concluded that victims of the virus will be soon more than the death toll from gun violence.

Ex-ambassador calls on govt. to defend Muslims' rights in India

TEHRAN (MNA) – Former Iranian ambassador to Afghanistan and Italy, Abolfazl Zohrevand, has called on the Iranian government to play a more active part regarding what is happening to the Muslim community in India.

“The adoption of the issue by the Islamic Republic of Iran will cause the public opinion inside India to put pressure on the government to stop violence against Muslims,” he told Mehr News Agency on Monday.

At least 46 people, mostly Muslims, were killed and over 200 others injured in days-long violence in New Delhi, following protests against a controversial citizenship law. The riots coincided with US President Donald Trump visiting the South Asian country for the first time.

“I believe that what is going on in India under the

current government will not be in favor of Iran in the future and given New Delhi's special relationship with Trump and the Zionist regime one should be vigilant of what is going on in India,” added Zohrevand.

“What we are seeing in India today is a process and it is not just something that developed overnight,” he said, adding, “The ruling party in India is a hard-line Hindu party that treats Muslims in the country with extremism. The process started in Kashmir and continued with US' support as the Muslim world was struggling with internal problems.”

“Unfortunately, we are not witnessing the Islamic world taking a stance towards the Indian issue, and if that continues, we will see more violation of Muslims' rights in India,” he regretted.



First Announcement



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TENDER NO. : 01-31-9350104

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

Items	Material Description	Quantity
07	PARTS FOR DRESSER FRANCE” TURBINE (POWER TURBINE) TYPE DJ-125, CT NO-DF-7096 SER. NOS. 36035-1345 .TAG NOS. C-702A CD & E, AND TYPE DJ - 160 R.CT NO. SP-7101 SER. NOS. 36036-2& 36034-4 5.TAG NOS. C 101 A B D E, TYPE DJ – 160R CT NO. DF -7102 .SER. NOS – 36034-1 2 3 TAG NOS. C401A B& C.REF. DRESSER CLARK - FRANCE.	22NO

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First Announcement



1398.7683

NATIONAL IRANIAN SOUTH OILFIELDS COMPANY AHVAZ-IRAN

TENDER NO. : 01-31-9280012

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

Items	Material Description	Quantity
26	PARTS FOR " RUSTON" GAS TURBINE TYPE TA 1750, TA 1750,TB5000	4371Nos

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‘Astounding new finds’ suggest ancient empire may be hiding in plain sight

SAN JUAN TEOTIHUACAN, MEXICO — On 16 January 378 CE, a stranger arrived in Tikal, a large Maya city in what is now northern Guatemala. His name was Sihyaj K’ahk’ (SEE-yah Kak), or Fire is Born, and he was likely a mighty warrior from a distant land. Many archaeologists think he hailed from Teotihuacan, a metropolis of 100,000 people about 1000 kilometers northwest of Tikal, near today’s Mexico City. And he may have come with an army.

The stone Maya monuments that record Sihyaj K’ahk’s arrival don’t say why he came or how he was received by Chak Tok Ich’aak, or Jaguar Paw, the long-reigning king of Tikal. But the day Sihyaj K’ahk’ marched into the city was the day Jaguar Paw died.

The engravings suggest Sihyaj K’ahk’ had been sent by a powerful foreign ruler called Spearthrower Owl. Within 2 years, Spearthrower Owl’s young son was crowned the new king of Tikal. In portraits carved on stone monuments there, the new king, named Yax Nuun Ayiin, holds an atlatl, a spearthrower used by Teotihuacan warriors, and wears a Teotihuacan-style headdress adorned with tassels. Some images of him and his father on monuments at Tikal are even carved in the flat, geometric style of Teotihuacan art, distinct from the intricate, naturalistic portraits of the Maya. Under the exotic new king and his descendants, Tikal became one of the most powerful cities in the Maya region.

Archaeologists have known the outline of those events for decades, but have long debated their meaning. Now, new evidence from both Teotihuacan and the Maya region has brought the relationship between those two great cultures back into the spotlight—and hints it may have been more contentious than most researchers had thought.

Evidence from Maya writing and art suggests Teotihuacan conquered Tikal outright, adding it to what some archaeologists see as a sweeping empire that may have included several Maya cities. Defaced art in Teotihuacan suggests that about the time Tikal fell under its sway, Teotihuacan may have turned against Maya expatriates who had lived there peacefully for decades.

But doubts about that narrative persist, underlining the challenge of interpreting the archaeological traces of empires that fell short of complete domination. Some researchers say the events of 378 may have been a more limited case of palace intrigue, with the nobles of one powerful region elbowing their way into the politics of another. Archaeologists might even be falling for ancient propaganda: Sihyaj K’ahk’ and his army may have been local Maya usurpers who appropriated the symbolism of faraway Teotihuacan. Either way, archaeologists say they are glimpsing a political and cultural collision that helped spark the flourishing of Tikal in the centuries to come.

“It’s a thrilling time to be working in this area,” says Stephen Houston, an archaeologist at Brown University. “We’re getting astounding new finds that amplify what had just been a sketched story before.”

Maya travelers visiting Teotihuacan during the fourth century would have encountered a city like no other they had ever seen. Three enormous pyramids loomed over the main street, now known as the Avenue of the Dead, their shapes reflecting snow-capped volcanoes visible in the distance. An orderly grid of roads extended from the avenue, and the city’s 100,000 residents—far more than in even the largest Maya cities of the time—lived in comfortable, standardized apartment complexes. Economic inequality was strikingly low. Depictions of warriors in Teotihuacan’s art, as well as human sacrifices entombed in military regalia, spoke of the city’s military might. Merchants from far-flung places such as Oaxaca to the southeast and the Gulf Coast brought goods for Teotihuacan’s markets, and pilgrims flocked to the city for religious ceremonies.

Some of those foreigners settled here and set up ethnic enclaves that archaeologists can identify from their foreign household goods and burial practices. “Teotihuacan was a great urban center, almost like Los Angeles or New York City. People from all over Mesoamerica were there,” says Karl Taube, an archaeologist at the University of California (UC), Riverside.



ROUND THE GLOBE

Wet Tropics of Queensland

The Wet Tropics of Queensland, or Wet Tropics, stretches along the northeast coast of Australia for some 450 kilometers.

Encompassing some 894,420 hectares of mostly tropical rainforest, this stunningly beautiful area is extremely important for its rich and unique biodiversity.

It also presents an unparalleled record of the ecological and evolutionary processes that shaped the flora and fauna of Australia, containing the relicts of the great Gondwanan forest that covered Australia and part of Antarctica 50 to 100 million years ago.



All of Australia’s unique marsupials and most of its other animals originated in rainforest ecosystems, and their closest surviving relatives occur in the Wet Tropics.

These living relicts of the Gondwanan era and their subsequent diversification provide unique insights to the process of evolution in general.

They also provide important information for the interpretation of fossils of plants and animals found elsewhere in Australia, and about the evolution of Australia’s sclerophyll flora and marsupial fauna in particular.

The property supports tropical rainforests at their latitudinal and climatic limits, and unlike most other seasonal tropical evergreen equatorial forests, is subject to a dry season and to frequent cyclonic events.

Many of the distinct features of the Wet Tropics relate to its extremely high but seasonal rainfall, diverse terrain and steep environmental gradients.

In addition to its complex array of species and life forms, the Wet Tropics is also recognized as an area possessing outstanding scenic features, natural beauty and magnificent sweeping landscapes.

(Source: UNESCO)

Peace campaigners overwhelmed by warmth, goodwill and love of Iranians

TOURISM TEHRAN — Members of **d e s k** “Jai Jagat 2020”, a global peace campaign trekking from India to Switzerland in an estimated one year schedule, say they’ve been overwhelmed by warmth, goodwill and love of Iranians.

“The Iranians showed great enthusiasm to associate with Jai Jagat march and propagate its objectives in their communities. Soon, the Iranian authorities extended the visit till the 24th Feb. These goodwill gestures and the reception immediately dispelled all apprehensions before the visit while the originally planned period of three weeks visit for peace,” they posted on Facebook on Monday.

“After many changes to the Iran visit owing to sensitive developments over the last two weeks, a six-member delegation reached Tehran on the 4th of February and was enthralled to receive a heartwarming welcome.”

The trekkers visited Tehran, Shiraz, Ahvaz, Bushehr, Yazd, Isfahan and Kashan during their Iran excursion before entering Armenia and join the rest of the Jai Jagat team on Monday.

According to organizers, one of the aims of the Jai Jagat global peace walk is to strengthen people’s perspective and tools for peacebuilding.

“In this context, while the mission largely remained a cultural visit, it also included detailed and meaningful meetings with cross section of society including academics, diplomats and civil society and development organizations along with members of the public in both cities and the villages. The



interactions facilitated individual, group discussions, and large meetings to communicate the objective of the Jai Jagat global peace march and the practice of nonviolence.”

“Jai Jagat 2020”, carrying Mahatma Gandhi’s message of non-violence, justice

and peace, started from Raj Ghat in New Delhi on October 2, 2019, which marks the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, the renowned anti-colonial nationalist and political ethicist who employed nonviolent resistance to lead the successful campaign

for India’s independence from British Rule.

The journey is planned to come to an end in Geneva, Switzerland, where a dialogue will take place with UN agencies on implementation of UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Susa, once capital of Elamite, Achaemenid empires



Ceramics depict Persian soldier (“immortal”), Susa; ca. 500 BC

➔ 1 Part of Susa is still inhabited as Shush, Khuzestan province on a strip of land between the rivers Shaour (a tributary of the Karkheh) and Dez.

According to UNESCO, “the excavated architectural monuments include administrative, residential, and palatial structures” and the site contains several layers of urban settlement dating from the 5th millennium BC through the 13th century CE.

Relics unearthed from the region demonstrates that even earliest potteries and ceramics in Susa were of an unsurpassed quality, decorated with birds, mountain goats, and other animals designs.

The finest pottery was found in the lowest strata and belonged to two different civilizations, both Neolithic, according to Britannica.

The archaeological site, identified in 1850 by W.K. Loftus, consists of four mounds. One held the citadel and was excavated (1897–1908) by Jacques de Morgan, who uncovered, among other objects, the obelisk of the Akkadian king Manishtusu, the stele of his successor Naram-Sin, and the code of Hammurabi of Babylon. A second mound to the east was the location of the palace of Darius

I and was excavated (c. 1881) by Marcel Dieulafoy. A third mound to the south contained the royal Elamite city, while the fourth mound consisted of the poorer houses.

■ Early Susa

“In the fourth millennium BC (the ‘Uruk Period’), the city became the capital of Elam and was able, at times, to challenge the Sumerian and Akkadian towns in southern Iraq. The city itself expanded to the east, to that part of the city that is now called the royal city. From written sources, we know that there must have been ziggurat. A third part is the artisan’s quarter, which was even further to the east,” according to Livius.org; a website on ancient history written and maintained since 1996 by the Dutch historian Jona Lendering.

The kings of the Awan dynasty are known to have been the rulers of Elam in the last third of the third millennium; they were contemporaries of the dynasty of Sargon of Akkad, who was temporarily able to incorporate Susa into his empire. However, the Awan kings managed to regain their independence and a treaty between Sargon’s grandson Naram-Sin and his colleague in the east proves that in the end, mutual respect reigned.

The kings of Awan even conquered the kingdom of Anshan, east of the Zagros. This was just the first of several unifications of these two kingdoms; although there were periods in which they were separated, the title “king of Susa and Anshan” was to become common.

The Awan dynasty collapsed when the Gutians descended from the mountains and created havoc on the alluvial plains of Elam and Mesopotamia. Susa was controlled by king Shulgi of Ur and later by other Mesopotamian rulers, and still under attack from the Gutians. Still, the city, although claimed by the kings of Larsa, was independent under an Elamite dynasty. However, this was not to last forever: king Hammurabi of Babylon (1792-1750) annexed Elam.

■ The middle Elamite period

After the disintegration of the Old Babylonian Empire, Elam was independent again, and a new dynasty, probably from Anshan, seized power in Elam. These Kidinuids were later replaced by the Igehalkids and the Shutrukids. Under these dynasties,

Susa saw its greatest flourishing. The city of Anshan was destroyed and its kingdom was integrated into the Elamite state; although it would regain its independence, the city was never rebuilt.

Many buildings were erected in Susa, like the Dynastic Temple of the Shutrukids, and many objects found in Susa confirm what is known from written sources: that the Elamites were able to capture Babylon, sacked it, and took away everything they could use or found interesting, like the Codex of Hammurabi. However, the Babylonians reorganized themselves, and were able to loot Susa, according to Livius.

■ Neo-Elamite Susa

During the eleventh, tenth, and ninth centuries, which are Dark Ages in most of the ancient world, Elam is almost absent from our sources. Assyrian sources mention that Elamites and Babylonians unitedly opposed the expansion of Assyria, and that may well be true, as we can see the same coalition in the next centuries. This alliance was to become Susa’s misfortune: when the Babylonians had been defeated by the Assyrian king Sennacherib (705-681), the next target of Assyrian aggression was Elam. In the end, it was king Assurbanipal who destroyed the Elamite capital between 645-640 BC.

However, Assyria was doomed; its capital Nineveh was sacked in 612, and the Babylonians started to rule the Near East. Elam appears to have been divided into several princedoms, the rulers of which all called themselves “king of Susa and Anshan”.

■ Achaemenid capital

At some stage, they were integrated into the empire of Cyrus the Great (559-530), the founder of the Achaemenid Empire. One of his successors, king Darius the Great (522-486), built one of his residences in Susa. An inscription in the palace, known as DSf, describes how Darius built it. Susa was clearly his favorite palace. The Greek researcher Herodotus of Halicarnassus, who wrote a lot about the Achaemenid empire, did not know of another capital.

We can catch a glimpse of the beauty of the city in some of the scenes of the Biblical book of Esther, the story of which is situated in Susa, at the court of king Ahasverus (Xerxes). Unfortunately, a



Clay tablet shows a list of Awan kings; Susa; ca. 2400 BC–ca. 2000 BC

big fire during the reign of king Artaxerxes I Makrocheir (465-424) destroyed much of the buildings from this age. An inscription, D2Sa, records reconstruction works from the age of this king and his son and successor Darius II Nothus. King Artaxerxes II Mnemon (404-358) built a second audience hall on the opposite bank of the river.

■ Seleucid, Parthian, Sasanian age

After the fall of the Achaemenid empire and the reign of Alexander the Great, who married in Susa, the city became part of the Seleucid empire. It was now called Seleucia on the Eulaeus. A palace in Greek style was erected, next to Darius’ palace. The administrative center, however, was in the southern part of the city, where nearly all Greek and Parthian inscriptions were discovered. In the Parthian age, the city minted coins.

During the Sasanian age, the city had a large Christian community. It was sacked by the Sasanian king Shapur II, who transferred the population to Iwan-e Karkheh, but Susa was sufficiently recovered in the early seventh century to fight against the Arabs, who nevertheless captured the city which remained important until the thirteenth century CE.

‘Losing €1 billion a month’: Coronavirus hits European tourism

Across Europe, normally bustling tourist sites have seen visitor numbers plummet amid fears over the coronavirus epidemic. On Monday, the EU’s industry chief said the tourism sector was losing around €1 billion a month because of the virus.

The figure was announced by the EU’s Internal Market Commissioner, Thierry Breton, who had previously warned that tourism was one of the sectors likely to be hit hardest financially as the virus continues to spread.

European tourism has seen a drop off in two waves, firstly as the virus began to take hold in China, curtailing the number of travelers from that country, and



secondly as the virus has spread around Europe, leading to visitors staying away from impacted areas, and governments to close tourist attractions and cancel events to prevent further outbreaks.

In Paris, the Louvre Museum was closed for a second day on Monday as employees refused to work over fears of contracting the disease.

Meanwhile Italy, for which tourism makes up 13 percent of the economy and where nearly 1,700 cases of the virus have now been reported, has seen hotel cancellations rates reaching up to 90 percent in some areas, according to the government.

(Source: France24)

No problem with Iran's statistics on coronavirus: WHO

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — The World Health Organization's director-general, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, said on Sunday that the organization has not noticed any problem with Iran's statistics on coronavirus outbreak.

Some media have doubted the official statistics provided by the Iranian health ministry, citing COVID-19 death toll in Iran is far exceeding that of official statistics.

There are "specific mechanisms" for investigating the facts, the WHO official told CNBC.

"There are reports in the media, but here is the World Health Organization which is a technical organization and needs to investigate the facts; We don't repeat what the reporters say, we have our own mechanism, and we haven't seen faults in the statistics."

Kianoush Jahanpour, head of the Iranian health ministry's public relations and information center, told IRNA on Friday that "the BBC Persian news network claiming that at least 210 people have died from coronavirus, is irrelevant."

The BBC Persian is seeking to take political advantage of the coronavirus outbreak, he added.

"The media outlet's claim is irrelevant. This time too it has drawn a blank," the Iranian official said, adding that even the number of fatalities among those suffering from acute respiratory syndromes may not reach that high.



The novel coronavirus has so far infected 2336 people across the country, raising the death toll to 77.

Jahanpour said the channel had intentionally come up with the figure to sow fear

among Iranians, and reminded that it has stopped short of naming its sources.

He said the Islamic Republic viewed the issue of the outbreak as one that was tied to the public health, and would, therefore, avoid politicizing it.

The country has observed rigor and transparency in its reports on the spread, while many others are either incapable of exactly recording their cases or would deny the number of victims for political reasons, according to the official.

"I have to tell you that Iran is the first and the only country to release its information about coronavirus without any processing and in a fully transparent manner since the beginning of the outbreak," Jahanpour told Press TV on Friday night.

The level of Iran's transparency "has taken many by surprise," including some media outlets, which are known for their siding with Iran's enemies, and their support for the sanctions that have come to target Iranians, including Iranian patients, he stated, referring to the BBC Persian and similar media organizations.

It was "inhumane" for a media organization that claims to be professional not to name its sources, Jahanpour asserted, reiterating that the British channel's claims were "politically-motivated" and aimed at disturbing the public opinion and creating "horror" among the Iranian nation.

The novel coronavirus has so far infected 2336 people across the country, raising the death toll to 77.

Fighting off locusts underway in southern Iran

ENVIRONMENT **TEHRAN** — Some 2,000 hectares of land in southern parts of the country are undergoing locust control operations, IIRB news agency reported on Tuesday.

Farmlands in the provinces of Hormozgan and Sistan-Baluchestan have undergone aerial spraying of chemical insecticides and ground pest control operations.

Pest control operations have been carried out on 800 hectares of rangelands in Hormozgan province with Parsian city being the most affected by desert locusts, the provincial agriculture organization Mehdi Torabi stated.

He said that in the city of Parsian, so far, 48,000 hectares of rangelands have been tracked to identify areas contaminated with locusts.

In Bastak and Jask counties, 9 hectares have been sprayed against desert locusts, along with 21 hectares of Kish Island, he added.

The new wave of locusts attacking the province has begun

since late February, Torabi said, adding, some 15 task forces are tackling and tracking desert locusts in different provinces.

He further stated that the damage caused by desert locust outbreak is under investigation.

Meanwhile, Heidar Zoraghi, head of agriculture organization of Sistan-Baluchestan province, said that 1,103 hectares of land in the cities of Sarbaz, Nikshahr, Konarak, Chabahar and Fenuj have been sprayed against the pest.

He called on all farmers in the province's agricultural sector to report the matter to the nearest agriculture organization in case of sighting a locust outbreak.

Last year, desert locusts penetrated into the provinces of Bushehr, Fars, Hormozgan, Kerman, Khuzestan, and Sistan-Baluchestan, which resulted in major losses on over 500,000 hectares of farmlands and gardens.

FAO explains that desert locust infestations are normally present in southeast Iran during the spring. Local breeding coincides with seasonal rains that often occur from about

February or March until April or May. In warmer years, rains that occur during the winter can lead to late winter and early spring breeding.

By June, vegetation is usual dry again and any adults that were produced during the spring move east towards the Indo-Pakistan summer breeding areas. Most of the spring breeding occurs along a 450 km stretch of coastal plains on the Arabian Sea from Jask (Hormozgan) and the Strait of Hormuz and Gulf of Oman in the west to Chabahar and Gwatar (Sistan-Baluchestan) near the Pakistan border in the east.

The most important area along the coast is the Vashnum Plains near Chabahar. If rains fall and temperatures are warm, breeding may also occur in the interior, namely the Jaz Murian Basin from Kahnuij to Iranshahr, and in the Zaboli, Suran and Saravan valleys that lead to Panjgur, Pakistan. Desert Locust adults rarely cross the mountains to the north of these areas.

Australia's summer of 2019-20 country's second-hottest on record

The summer just finished was Australia's second-hottest on record, with the temperature 1.88C above average, the Bureau of Meteorology says.

The only hotter summer on record was the previous year, which was 2.14C above average. Temperatures this summer were above average across almost the entire country.

Dr Blair Trewin, a senior climatologist with the bureau, said the hot summer, which was marked by the unprecedented bushfire crisis that devastated communities and wildlife in much of the country, was part of a long-term warming trend that had seen the country warm by 1.4C since 1910. Most of that warming has come since 1950.

Trewin said: "That tells us the baseline is higher, and with that you have a higher risk of high extremes like we have seen in the past two summers. Our baseline expectation now is for warmer than average summers, and other seasons more generally."

The heat records are relative to the long-term average for the years between 1961 and 1990.

The bureau's summer report came as its officials told a Senate estimates hearing in Canberra that Australia is heating more rapidly than the global average.

Karl Braganza, the head of climate monitoring, was asked how much Australia was projected to warm, given a scientific analysis involving the

World Meteorological Organisation last year found average global temperatures were expected to rise between 2.9C and 3.4C by 2100 under commitments put forward by national governments as part of the Paris agreement.

Braganza said the increase in Australia would be expected to be "closer to 4C" heating than the global average under that scenario, assuming countries did not do more than promised in Paris. Adam Bandt, the Greens leader, said the government was undertaking no planning for the possibility of 4C warming in Australia. "Australia saw this horrific bushfire season with just over one degree of warming. We're hurtling towards 4C and it's

only going to get worse from here," he said.

This summer saw many more heat records broken than cool records. The bureau data shows 43 sites in NSW broke high temperature records but only five sites saw record lows. In Queensland, there were 10 heat records broken across different monitoring stations, but only one record for cool weather.

The 2018-19 summer also saw below average rainfall across the country, with western NSW, south-western Queensland and the Top End particularly dry. Some areas, including Western Australia's west coast, and parts of the east coast, saw above average rainfall.

(Source: The Guardian)

Knowledge-based companies unite to counter coronavirus

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — All knowledge-based companies in the country have been united to combat the coronavirus and many startups have been activated in this field, said Sourena Sattari, vice president for science and technology.



Some 200,000 nano masks are produced daily in the country, Sattari said, hoping that the output will reach 300,000 by the end of the week, IRNA reported.

He said Iran is one of the few countries that are able to manufacture machinery for producing nano masks which block particles less than three-tenths of a nanometer, including viruses.

Manmade climate change effect on weather now as powerful as El Nino phenomenon, meteorologists warn

The impact of the human-driven climate crisis is now as powerful as the Pacific Ocean El Nino weather phenomenon, which naturally pushes up temperatures when it occurs roughly every four years.

Many parts of the world are now likely to see above-average temperatures in the coming months, even without 2020 becoming an El Nino year, the World Meteorological Organisation has said.

The impact of "human-induced climate change is now as powerful as that from a major natural force of nature," said WMO secretary-general Petteri Taalas.

The WMO said it estimates there is a 60 per cent chance of "neutral conditions" during March-May 2020, with neither an El Nino, nor its opposite, La Nina, forming which would raise or lower temperatures.

The naturally occurring phenomena are known collectively as the El Nino Southern Oscillation (ENSO).

El Nino has a warming influence on global temperatures and is also linked to heavy rains, floods and droughts. La Nina lowers temperatures.

The WMO said there is a 35 per cent chance of an El Nino and only a 5 per cent chance of a La Nina weather pattern developing this year.

But despite the likely absence of an El Nino, the WMO warned there will still be above-average sea surface temperatures in many parts of the world, which will lead to higher than normal land temperatures, particularly in the tropics.

Mr Taalas said: "Even ENSO neutral months are warmer than in the past, as air and sea surface temperatures and ocean heat have increased due to climate change."

"With more than 90 per cent of the energy trapped by greenhouse gases going into the ocean, ocean heat content is at record levels."

"Thus, 2016 was the warmest year on record as a result of a combination of a strong El Nino and human-induced global warming. 2019 was the second-warmest year on record, even though there was no strong El Nino."

(Source: The Independent)

WORDS IN THE NEWS

Afghan's first computer specialists

(April 09, 2003)

The first computer specialists trained in Afghanistan have graduated from Kabul University. Their course was launched last October by the United Nations' Development Programme and a computer systems company. This report from Catherine Davis: The contrast could hardly be greater, **state of the art technology** in a university where most classrooms are **spartan** and **patched up**. In one room though, stand rows of brand new computers. This is the future Afghanistan. It's what those present at the **graduation ceremony** are dreaming of.

In his speech, the communications minister said the country had missed developments in information technology because of two decades of civil war. It had to **catch up** quickly. The graduation of Afghanistan's first **home-grown computer specialists** was, he said, a small, but very important step.

Six women are among the graduates. They're keen to make their contribution to the **reconstruction** of the country. My **goal**, said one, is to share this knowledge with other Afghans, especially Afghan women.

While there is concern over what Afghanistan has missed, the UN said the country was in fact in a **unique position**. It could **leapfrog** straight to the information technology of today.

Words

state of the art technology: modern and up to date computer equipment

spartan: a few items of furniture and little decoration

patched up: badly repaired

graduation ceremony: an event that marks the successful completion of a university course

catch up: to spend time doing something you have not given enough time to in the past

home grown computer specialists: computer experts who received training in their own country

reconstruction: the process of making a country normal again after a war

goal: something that you hope to achieve

unique position: an unusual and special situation

leapfrog: leapfrog is a children's game in which one group of children bend over and others jump over their backs. It is used idiomatically here to mean making rapid progress in the area of computer technology

(Source: BBC)

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → ع

Iran pioneer in cancer innovation, research among Islamic countries

Iran has the most research and innovation in the field of cancer both in the region and among Islamic countries, deputy health minister Reza Malekzadeh has stated.

Referring to the great progress in cancer research, he said that "We have been able to play a role in this area globally."

He added that one of the hopes for early detection of cancer is the use of urine and blood tests for people who are susceptible to cancer. "We have conducted researches in the field of blood and urine biomarkers, which will help control cancers in the country," he said.

Pointing out that there are about 250,000 cancer patients in the country, Malekzadeh noted that 50,000 people die each year from the disease and 125,000 new patients develop cancer, so that the number of people with the disease increases each year.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

"centro, centri -"

■ **Meaning**: around, center

■ **For example**: **centrifugal** force appears to act on all objects when viewed in a rotating frame of reference.

PHRASAL VERB

Reel something off

■ **Meaning**: to repeat a lot of information quickly and easily

■ **For example**: Jack reeled off a list of names.

IDIOM

Down in the dumps

■ **Explanation**: Someone who is down in the dumps is depressed or feeling gloomy

■ **For example**: Alex has been down in the dumps since he failed his exam.

ایران بیشترین نوآوری و تحقیقات سرطان را بین کشورهای اسلامی دارد

معاون تحقیقات و فناوری وزیر بهداشت، درمان و آموزش پزشکی گفت: ایران هم در منطقه و هم بین کشورهای اسلامی بیشترین میزان تحقیقات و نوآوری ها در حوزه سرطان را داشته است.

دکتر رضا ملک زاده روز شنبه در گفت و گو با خبرنگار علمی ایرنا با اشاره به اینکه ما در زمینه تحقیقات سرطان پیشرفت های خیلی خوبی داشتیم، گفت: ما در سطح جهانی هم توانستیم در این حوزه نقش آفرین باشیم.

وی افزود: یکی از امیدهای خیلی روشن برای تشخیص زودرس سرطان، استفاده از آزمایش ادرار و خون برای افرادی است که استعداد سرطان را دارند.

معاون وزیر بهداشت گفت: در ایران تحقیقات خیلی خوبی در زمینه بیومارکرهای ادراری و خونی در دست اجرا داریم و امیدواریم با این کار، امکان کنترل سرطان ها در کشور میسر شود.

ملک زاده با اشاره به اینکه در حال حاضر تعداد ۲۵۰ هزار مبتلا به سرطان در کشور داریم، گفت: هر سال حدود ۵۰ هزار نفر بر اثر این بیماری می‌میرند و ۱۲۵ هزار بیمار جدید اضافه می‌شوند. در نتیجه هرساله تعداد مبتلایان این بیماری بیشتر می‌شود.

Trump accepted Putin's proposal to hold UN Security Council summit

U.S. President Donald Trump accepted Russian President Vladimir Putin's proposal to hold a meeting of the U.N. Security Council's five permanent members, the Interfax news agency cited Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov as saying on Tuesday.

Russia expects the time and location of the summit to be agreed soon, Lavrov said.

A senior U.S. administration official last week said Trump was willing to meet the leaders of Russia, China, Britain and France with the aim of discussing arms control.

(Source: Interfax)

Saudi Arabia restricts entry for PGCC citizens, residents

Saudi Arabia Tuesday barred citizens and residents of Persia Gulf Cooperation Council (PGCC) countries from entering the kingdom for 14 days after returning from outside the region due to coronavirus concerns, state news agency SPA reported.

Travelers coming from any fellow PGCC state, which include the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman and Qatar, must spend 14 continuous days in that country and show no signs of the coronavirus before being granted entry, SPA said.

It also cited an interior ministry source as saying that Saudi citizens or residents entering from a PGCC country must inform authorities upon arrival in the kingdom of any travel outside the GCC in the preceding 14 days.

(Source: Daily Star)

U.S. willing to give Turkey ammunition for Syria's Idlib

The United States is willing to provide ammunition alongside humanitarian assistance to Turkey in Syria's war-torn Idlib region, the U.S. special representative for the region James Jeffrey said on Tuesday.

"Turkey is a NATO ally. Much of the military uses American equipment. We will make sure that equipment is ready and usable," Jeffrey told reporters.

Separately the U.S. Ambassador to Turkey, David Satterfield, said at the briefing that Washington is examining Ankara's request for air defense systems.

(Source: AP)

Pakistan calls on Kabul to abide by Taliban prisoner swap deal

→ 1 "According to my knowledge, [US Afghan peace envoy] Zalmay Khalilzad has been keeping the Afghan leadership updated on the negotiations," he said. "There has been an exchange of prisoners in the past as well. When you move from war to peace, you need to do these things to generate goodwill."

The latest statement from Qureshi comes two days after he said that Afghan political players should set aside their "personal interests" to move the peace process forward.

The Pakistan foreign minister said he told US 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".

But Javid Faisal, Afghan National Security Council spokesman, dubbed Pakistan's comment as a "clear interference in our sovereignty".

"The issue of prisoners is a domestic decision for Afghanistan to take, there have to be talks and trust. It's not an easy decision to make without a clear analysis of the situation," Faisal told Al Jazeera.

"Pakistan making a comment on this is a clear interference in our sovereignty. Just as we don't interfere in their internal matters, we expect them to keep from interfering in the matters of the Afghan state. This is an Afghan decision for the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan."

Under the deal signed between the US and the Taliban on Saturday, foreign forces would withdraw from Afghanistan within 14 months, subject to Taliban security guarantees and a pledge by the group to hold talks with the Kabul government.

Obaid Ali, an analyst at Afghanistan Analyst Network, said: "What Qureshi said is not relevant. This is an issue that is at the discretion of the Afghan government. It's an internal matter for the government."

"The Afghan government is correct to say that it is up to them to decide the fate of the prisoners. The initial agreement was between the Taliban and the US. Now the Taliban and the Afghan government have to come to certain agreements and assessments ahead of the intra-Afghan talks."

"Pakistan has no place to make statements about any aspects of these agreements."

(Source: al Jazeera)

Syrian government forces shoot down Turkish drone in Saraqib

Turkey downs Syrian fighter jet as it intensifies Idlib attacks

→ 1 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."

(Source: agencies)

Iraq's acting prime minister gives up most duties, calls for snap elections

Iraq's acting Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi says he will stop fulfilling most of his duties while calling for snap elections, a day after prime minister-designate, Mohammad Tawfiq Allawi, withdrew his candidacy after the divided parliament failed to approve his new cabinet.

In a letter to President Barham Salih on Monday, Abdul Mahdi said he would take "voluntary absence" and would not carry out most of his official duties. He asked for a deputy prime minister or minister to chair the cabinet meetings.

"I announced on February 19 that the constitutional deadline of 30 days to secure the vote of confidence in the new government from the parliament and its ministerial platform would expire on March 2. And I stated that at the end of this period, 'I will have no choice but to resort to the solutions stipulated in the constitution or the internal system of the Council of Ministers,'" Abdul Mahdi said in his letter.

The Iraqi constitution now puts the president, a Kurd, in charge as acting premier. He has 15 days to designate a new candidate but there is a bumpy road ahead as parties still remain divided along ethnic and sectarian lines.

Political turmoil began in Iraq in ear-



ly October 2019, when public grievances grew, pressing the government to initiate reforms that would eliminate corruption

and alleviate the economic woes.

Protests, however, soon turned violent, amid reports of foreign interference. Hun-

Hamas thanks Russia for supporting Palestinian rights, rejecting U.S. pro-Israel plan

During a visit to Russia, the head of the Palestinian Hamas resistance movement's political bureau has praised Moscow for defending Palestinian rights and dismissing a pro-Israel proposal devised by the US on the Middle East conflict.

At a meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov in Moscow on Monday, Ismail Haniyeh said that Russia has a long history of backing the Palestinian cause.

According to a press release on the Hamas website, Haniyeh "thanked Russia for supporting the Palestinian rights at different regional and international platforms."

"He also expressed his appreciation to Russia for its position towards [US President Donald] Trump's deal, as rejecting the deal comes in line with the consensual stance of the Palestinian people," it added.

Trump released his self-proclaimed "deal of the century" during an event at the White House alongside Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Washington on January 28.

The so-called 'Vision for Peace' bars Palestinian refugees from returning to their homeland, regards Jerusalem al-Quds as "Israel's undivided capital" and allows the regime to annex West Bank settlements and the Jordan Valley.



All Palestinian groups have unanimously rejected the US scheme, which largely meets Israel's demands while creating a Palestinian state with limited control over its own security and borders.

On February 2, Kremlin Spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Trump's proposal is not fully compliant with United Nations Security Council resolutions

Peskov further noted that the negative reaction of Palestinians to the US initiative "raises doubts over its viability."

Elsewhere in his remarks during Monday's meeting, Haniyeh stressed that Hamas supports all endeavors towards Palestinian reconciliation, saying he is ready to meet President Mahmoud Abbas along with the other Palestinian factions under the auspices of Russia, Egypt or both.

Lavrov, for his part, reiterated the importance of Palestinian unity and expressed Russia's readiness to help Palestinians unite in order to stand strong against Washington's scheme. Moscow, he added, "rejects the deal and does not think it is a plan that achieves peace and security in the region."

The Russian Foreign Ministry said in a statement that Lavrov and Haniyeh had "held in-depth discussions on measures to restore Palestinian national unity on the political platform of the Palestinian Liberation Organization, as well as on various aspects of developments in Gaza, including in the context of efforts made towards a lasting and comprehensive settlement in the Middle East based on international law."

(Source: Press TV)

Libya's eastern government opens Damascus embassy, pledges united fight against Turkey

Libya's eastern-based government linked to military commander Khalifa Haftar opened an embassy in Syria on Tuesday and called for the two countries to unite in their common fight against Turkey-backed militant groups.

Syria has faced resistance from Turkish forces allied to rebels in its northeast.

Libya has two governments, one based in the capital Tripoli and widely recognized internationally, and another based in the east. Eastern commander Haftar has launched an assault to capture Tripoli, and is fighting forces aligned with the government there which are backed militarily by Turkey.

"Terrorism will kill any Arab country if it's permitted and if the criminal

(President Tayyip) Erdogan is permitted to win this fight," Syria's deputy foreign minister Faisal Mekdad said at a ceremony to open the embassy.

President Bashar al-Assad has looked to shed his country's pariah status and regain Arab support. The United Arab Emirates, which backs Haftar in Libya, re-opened its Damascus embassy in December 2018 and has forged closer ties after once supporting rebels fighting against Assad.

Libya's diplomatic missions are generally aligned with the government based in Tripoli, but diplomats in some foreign capitals have supported the rival government based in the east.

(Source: Reuters)

Israel election: Exit polls show Netanyahu holds edge over rival

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu gained seats in Israel's election on Monday, according to early exit polls that put him almost within grasp of a right-wing governing coalition.

But it is unclear whether Netanyahu can clinch a parliamentary majority needed to claim victory.

Exit polls on Israel's main TV channels projected Netanyahu's Likud Party and its religious and nationalist allies would capture 60 seats, leaving it one seat short of the majority needed to claim victory.

Netanyahu's Likud Party won about 37 seats, ahead of his rival Benny Gantz of the centrist Blue and White alliance, according to media channels.

The early results came after a hard-fought campaign for the country's third election in less than a year.

If final results give Netanyahu a parliamentary majority, it would pave the way for a new term and give him a boost as he prepares to go on trial for corruption charges.

But if he falls short, the country's year-long political deadlock will continue and it could potentially face a fourth consecutive election.

Israeli exit polls are often imprecise and final results could change. Official results are expected to come in throughout the night.

(Source: al Jazeera)

Morales says fears fraud in next Bolivia vote, or coup after

Bolivian former president Evo Morales, who resigned last year under pressure from the military, says while he is confident his political party will win re-run elections scheduled for May, he fears they will be fraudulent or followed by a coup.

In an interview with Reuters in Argentina, where Morales is currently living in exile, the socialist former leader accused the "right" and the United States of preventing his presidential or Senate candidacies, and of trying to keep his Movement to Socialism (MAS) out of power.

He cited a recently published independent analysis of the election he was initially judged to have won in October

by two researchers at MIT's Election Data and Science Lab as evidence for his claim.

An Organization of American States audit that found serious irregularities in October was flawed, the MIT study said, and concluded that it was "very likely" Morales won the vote by the 10 percentage points needed to avoid a runoff.

Morales has been barred from running in the May polls but is backing his former economy minister Luis Arce Cat- aco as the candidate for MAS.

Morales, who resigned on Nov. 10 after the OAS audit, called for a severe sanction against OAS Secretary-General

Luis Almagro and the audit team in response to the new analysis, which has stirred international debate.

"Unfortunately, the method used by the OAS is uncited and untested within the field [of election science], and it is unlikely that this method can be justified within the field," Jack R. Williams, one of the authors of the study, told Reuters in an email.

Morales, 60, faces charges of sedition and terrorism related to accusations from the interim government that he has been stirring unrest since resigning.

(Source: Reuters)

Austrian Chancellor Kurz blasts Turkey for migration 'attack' against EU

Turkey, EU and the imperiled refugee deal

Europe has been put to the test after Turkey provided free passage for waves of migrants heading westward, Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz said, describing Ankara's move as an "attack on the EU."

The latest move by Turkey to allow migrants to leave its territory over the weekend is an attack "on the European Union and Greece," and also a "test for the EU," Kurz said on Tuesday.

If European countries cave in to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's pressure, then 13,000 migrants desperately waiting at the EU border will only be "the beginning," the Austrian chancellor warned.

According to Kurz, the migrants gathered at the Greek border didn't come from war-ravaged parts of Syria – their exodus was "deliberately organized" by Turkey.

Erdogan himself doesn't care for refugees because he wants to employ them "as a bargaining chip, a weapon and a pres-

sure tool," Kurz said. He also warned that a new migration crisis similar to that of 2015 should be averted "at all costs," while calling on EU members to resist Turkey's pressure together.

Turkey announced last week it would not block the passage of refugees wishing to head to Europe amid escalating violence in northwestern Syria and the risk of a fresh influx of hundreds of thousands of people from the war-torn country through its southern frontier.

The move on Thursday threatens to unravel a deal Turkey signed with the European Union in 2016 to stop arrivals in the bloc in exchange for funds allocated to the handling of the millions of the refugees it hosts, among other benefits.

Following the opening of the Turkish side of the border, which came hours after the killing of dozens of Turkish soldiers in Syrian government air raids, dramatic

footage showing refugees trying to cross over sea and land into neighboring Greece - an EU member - have been widely shared.

Turkey had threatened many times in the past to go ahead with such a move, accusing the EU of not fulfilling its promises.

"We have been calling for a more equitable burden and responsibility-sharing for a long time," Hami Aksoy, the Turkish foreign ministry spokesman, told Al Jazeera.

"All our efforts contributed significantly to the security of Europe. However, our calls were ignored by the EU and member states."

According to the United Nations refugee agency, Turkey hosts the largest number of refugees worldwide: close to 4.1 million, including 3.7 million Syrians and nearly 400,000 asylum seekers and refugees of other nationalities.

Turkey also controls swaths of land in northern and northwestern Syria following the three operations it carried out in recent



years targeting fighters it considers "terrorists". Ankara has invested in schemes to redevelop these areas to facilitate "voluntary returns" for the refugees it hosts.

"We are the largest refugee-hosting country in the world since 2014," Aksoy said. "If we take into account of Syrians in northern Syria, we practically assume the burden of more than nine million Syrians."

(Source: agencies)

Karim Bagheri on brink of becoming Iran assistant coach

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Football Federation Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI) is set to offer Karim Bagheri the assistant's job.

Ex-Team Melli midfielder Bagheri, who announced his retirement from national duty in a friendly match against Brazil in 2007, is a strong candidate to assist Dragan Skocic in Iran national football team.

Bagheri started his coaching career in Persepolis in 2012 and has played a key role in the team's successes in the recent years.

As Branko Ivankovic's assistant, he helped Persepolis win three titles in Iran Professional League, one Hazfi Cup and three Super Cups during a three-year period.

The Iranian federation has also negotiated with former Iran striker Vahid Hashemian who worked as assistant coach of Marc Wilmots.

Iran will have four must-win matches in late March and early June in the 2022 World Cup qualification.

Team Melli are expected to entertain Hong Kong on March 26 in Tehran and will meet Cambodia five days later in an away match.

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

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

The eight group winners and four best runners-up will advance to the AFC Asian Cup China 2023 Finals and the final round of qualifying for the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022.

The next best 24 teams from the second round of the joint qualifiers will compete in a separate competition for the remaining 12 slots in the 24-team AFC Asian Cup China 2023.



Majid Jalali sets Iran Professional League milestone



S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Gol Gohar coach Majid Jalali has made 400 Iran Professional League (IPL) appearances.

Jalali started his coaching career in Vahdat football club in Tehran in 1986 when he was 21 and coached the team for seven years.

Jalali took charge of Pas in 2003 and won IPL title at the same year.

He also won a Hazfi Cup title with Saba

Battery a year later.

Jalali has coached in several Iranian teams. The 63-year-old trainer the local press dubbed Agha Moallem (Mr. Teacher), has introduced so many players and coaches to Iran football since he has worked at the grassroots levels as well.

He has coached Saipa, Paykan, Esteghlal Ahvaz, Foolad, Tractor and Nassaji in Iran Professional League.

IPC flag at half-mast for Siamand Rahman



S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Tributes have been paid following the death of a two-time Paralympic champion Siamand Rahman of Iran.

Rahman passed away on Sunday due to cardiac arrest in his hometown Oshnavieh.

International Paralympic Committee (IPC)'s flag is flying at half-mast in honor of the late powerlifter.

Superstar Rahman, who won gold medals in London 2012 and Rio 2016, was prepar-

ing 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. Rahman was laid to rest in his hometown on Monday.

IOC confident of Tokyo Games success despite coronavirus

LAUSANNE, Switzerland (Reuters) - The International Olympic Committee (IOC) on Tuesday gave further strong backing to this summer's Tokyo Olympics and urged athletes to prepare "full steam" despite the coronavirus threat.

"We are preparing for a successful Olympic Games Tokyo 2020," IOC head Thomas Bach said at an executive board meeting to discuss the situation.

The 66-year-old German lawyer and former Olympic fencing champion has a firm grip on IOC decision-making and is known for sticking to his guns in adversity.

Both Tokyo 2020 Olympics organizers and the IOC have repeatedly stressed that the July 24-Aug. 9 Games will go ahead as planned despite the outbreak, and that there is no plan B.

"I would like to encourage all the athletes to continue their preparation for the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020 with great confidence and full steam," Bach later told reporters.

"From our side, we will continue to support the athletes and the National Olympic Committees."

However, multiple sports events around the world have been canceled during the epidemic, which has killed more than 3,000 people in China and spread to more than 60 nations including Japan where infections are near 1,000 and 12 people have died.

And earlier on Tuesday, Japan's Olympics minister Seiko Hashimoto acknowledged that Tokyo's contract would allow for a postponement until the end of the year.

Despite concerns over possible health risks to spectators

and participants, the Olympic body is unwilling to publicly discuss any other option, such as cancellation or postponement, knowing that would throw the Games into confusion.

The IOC board said a joint task force had been created in mid-February with itself, the Tokyo Games organizers, the city, the government, and the World Health Organization to help deal with the coronavirus ahead of the Olympics.

"The IOC EB appreciates and supports the measures being taken, which constitute an important part of Tokyo's plans to host safe and secure Games," it said in a statement.

Tokyo has pumped in more than \$12 billion to organize the event while billions more were spent on related projects.

Tokyo Games organizers are due to deliver a report via video conference to the executive board on Wednesday.

Para Powerlifting world shocked by Siamand Rahman death

Two-time Paralympic champion Siamand Rahman of Iran passed away on Sunday (March 1) due to cardiac arrest in his hometown Oshnavieh.

Dubbed as the world's strongest Paralympic, 31-year-old legend is remembered as role model to many powerlifters and other athletes in the Paralympic movement — an athlete who has always pushed limits, setting world records on the way and inspiring umpteen sportsmen and women in the process.

Athletes, coaches and associations have expressed shock at the sudden demise and extended condolences to Rahman's family and friends.

Highlighting Rahman's power and results during his career, Asian Paralympic Committee president, Majid Rashed, along an emotive video from Rio said, "Siamand's achievements demonstrate what a superb athlete he was but away from the competition arena, he was a lovely gentleman who always had time for everyone. He has gone too soon and will be much missed by us all."

Sharing Rahman's achievements through photos and videos, The Iran National Paralympic Committee's social media announced: Goodbye to the world's most powerful man with disabilities, Siamand Rahman.

Rahman started his professional career in 2008 with a gold at the IWAS Junior World Games in the US followed by three more in 2010 — two world titles in Libya and Malaysia, and one Asian gold in Guangzhou, China.

At the Guangzhou 2010 Asian Para Games, he set another



World record in the over 100kg category, lifting 287.5kg, and won gold medal. In 2011, Rahman finished as a gold medalist in Jordan's International Open.

In the same year, he broke his own record once more, during IWAS World Games lifting 291kg in the United Arab Emirates.

During the London 2012, he broke the Paralympic record with a lift of 280kg.

In April 2014, Rahman registered a 285kg win at the World Championships in Dubai, United Arab Emirates while he beat his own Asian record by 3.00kg registering 290kg during the Asian Para Games in Incheon, South Korea in the same year.

Lifting 295kg, he took another gold in the men's over 107kg world record at the 2015 IPC Powerlifting Asian Open Championships in Almaty, Kazakhstan.

The world's strongest Paralympian, who had lifted 296kg at a World Cup in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, February 2016, was widely expected to break the 300kg barrier after years improving his marks.

In Rio 2016, he made history by clearing the bar at 310kg in the men's over 107kg, setting a new world record and claiming his second consecutive Paralympic gold.

At the 2018 Asian Para Games, Siamand came first at the Men's Over 107.00 kg with 295kg. In the same year, he comfortably won the men's over 107kg at the Asia-Oceania Open Championships in Kitakyushu, Japan.

After winning gold medal in Mexico City 2017, he clinched the third Worlds title, in his last international appearance, in Nur-Sultan 2019.

With a slew of achievements to his credit, Rahman was also awarded the best male athlete award at the 2017 Paralympic Sport Awards held in Abu Dhabi, and was also shortlisted for the prestigious Laureus Sports person of the Year with a disability award.

Rahman who was preparing to compete in his third Paralympic Games in Tokyo 2020, where he wanted to set a new world record in World Para Powerlifting, will always be remembered for his kind smile and enthusiasm - An epitome of hope, humanity, faith, love and peace.

(Source: Paralympic.org)

Iranian football teams keep training sessions despite coronavirus crisis

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Although the outbreak of coronavirus has led to the suspension of all sports events in Iran, most of the Iranian teams, especially football teams, are continuing their training sessions.



Iran has been particularly badly hit by the virus and IPL matches scheduled for Thursday and Friday including Paykan, Persepolis match and Esteghlal clash with Saipa have been postponed as a precautionary measure.

However, the Iran Professional League (IPL)'s teams are training these days as it was planned before and the coaches are also looking for friendly matches with other teams, to keep their teams ready, despite growing coronavirus threat.

The IPL football matches were held behind closed doors last week, but in a later statement, the Iran Football League Organization announced that all the football and futsal matches have been canceled until further notice.

The questions are that while the matches are canceled and people are advised to avoid shaking hands or touching each other, is it true to continue training in such a situation?

In other countries, all domestic football fixtures at all levels are postponed. Asian Champions League matches have been canceled amid coronavirus.

The start of the Korean K-League season is postponed and Japan's J-League has postponed all domestic games until the middle of March.

The most important goal of the cancellation of the sports matches is to protect players from infection and it should be taken into consideration by all the staff of the teams to make the best decisions for their teams.

Persepolis to file complaint to FIFA against Anthony Stokes

TASNIM — Iranian football club are going to file complaint against Irish striker Anthony Stokes.

The 31-year-old forward, who was arrested on an outstanding warrant at London's Gatwick Airport as he returned from a Dubai break, was supposed to join Persepolis one day after the Iranian team met Emirati side Sharjah in AFC Champions League but went AWOL.

Amir Shafizadeh, who runs the club's 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."

Now, Persepolis want to file a complaint against Stokes to FIFA.

Daniel Sturridge suspended for betting

Former Liverpool and England striker Daniel Sturridge has been suspended from all football-related activity until June 17 after he was found guilty of breaching betting rules, English football's governing body (FA) said on Monday.

Sturridge became a free agent earlier on Monday after mutually agreeing to terminate his contract with Turkish side Trabzonspor.

He had been charged by the FA in July with 11 alleged breaches of its betting rules, nine of which were dismissed by an independent regulatory commission, and banned for six weeks — four of which were suspended.

The 30-year-old was accused of passing on inside information about his potential transfer moves away from Liverpool in Jan. 2018 to close friends and relatives that was then used for, or in relation to, betting.

However, the FA appealed against the charges and said an independent Appeal Board had found that the Regulatory Commission "misapplied" the FA's rules in relation to the use of inside information and made findings of fact which could not be sustained.

"The Appeal Board agreed with the FA that the penalty originally imposed on Mr Sturridge was unduly lenient and therefore increased his effective playing ban from two weeks to four months," the FA said in a statement.

Sturridge's fine was also doubled to £150,000 (\$191,400) and the FA said world governing body FIFA confirmed the suspension would be effective worldwide.

In a video he posted to his YouTube account, Sturridge said the decision was "disappointing and upsetting."

"I'm going to continue to campaign for professional footballers to be able to speak to their families and close friends freely, without the real risk of being charged."

"I feel the betting companies and the practice and process of people placing bets on players moving clubs has to be stopped."

Sturridge, who joined Trabzonspor on a three-year deal in August, had seven goals and four assists for the Turkish Super Lig side in all competitions, last making an appearance in a 2-2 draw with Besiktas last month.

"We thank Daniel Sturridge for his contributions to our club and wish him success in his future career," the club said in a statement on Twitter.

Sturridge began his professional career at Manchester City in 2006, moving to Premier League rivals Chelsea three years later before sealing a switch to Liverpool in 2013.

He won the Premier League, two FA Cups and the Champions League at Chelsea. He added another Champions League medal at Liverpool last season.

(Source: ESPN)

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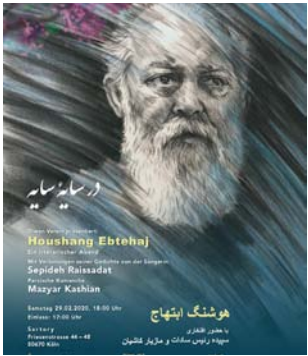
GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

The most worthless knowledge is one which comes only on the tongue, and the loftiest is one that manifests itself in the significant parts of the body, such as the head and heart.

Imam Ali (AS)

Cologne Persian poetry night postponed over coronavirus

C U L T U R E **TEHRAN** — “Under the Shadow of Sayeh”, a Persian poetry night that was scheduled to be held in the German city of Cologne on March 7, has been postponed indefinitely in an attempt to prevent the spread of the new coronavirus, the organizers announced on Tuesday.



A poster for the “Under the Shadow of Sayeh” poetry night.

Iranian artists and cultural activists were scheduled to attend the program.

Iran Job Center launches intl. photo competition

A R T **TEHRAN** — The Iran Job Center has launched an international photo competition, which will take place in Tehran during April, the organizers have announced.

The International Job Photo Competition aims to highlight the job as an important social topic through pictures depicting the reality of a job.



A poster for the 1st Iran International Job Photo Competition.

The competition will be held simultaneously with the 3rd Iran Job Expo, which is scheduled to be held at the Tehran International Fairground from April 20 to 24.

Submissions will be judged by a jury composed of Afshin Shahruddi, Masud Zenderuh Kermani and Hassan Ghaffari.

Interested photographers are asked to submit their photos to the secretariat of the competition before April 3, and the works will be judged on April 8.

The top selected works will be awarded on April 24.

Taylor Swift ranks as bestselling global artist in 2019

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — Pop superstar Taylor Swift topped the list of the world’s best-selling music artists in 2019, thanks to the success of her album “Lover,” beating popular acts including Korean pop sensation BTS, recording industry group IFPI said on Monday.



2019 American Music Awards - Show - Los Angeles, California, U.S., November 24, 2019 - Taylor Swift accepts the Artist of the Year award. (Reuters/Mario Anzuoni/File Photo)

It was the second time the 30-year-old singer-songwriter had led recorded music sales globally. The first was in 2014 when she debuted her album “1989.”

“Lover” was Swift’s seventh studio album and included hits such as the title track, a ballad, and the upbeat single “ME!”

Just behind Swift in the 2019 rankings was British singer-songwriter Ed Sheeran, followed by rapper Post Malone and teen singer Billie Eilish who swept the top Grammy Awards in January.

Queen, the rock band formed in London in 1970, landed in fifth place. The group’s music enjoyed resurgence after the release of the Freddie Mercury biopic “Bohemian Rhapsody.”

BTS, the popular South Korean boy band, finished in seventh place.

Instrument maker Zolfaqar Beitaneh picked as Living Human Treasure

A R T **TEHRAN** — The South Khorasan Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Department (SKCHTHD) has selected dotar maker Zolfaqar Beitaneh as a Living Human Treasure.

The 58-year-old master, who lives in Ferdows, South Khorasan Province, has also skills in crafting a kind of reed flute, which is used in the folk music of Khorasan.

“Zolfaqar Beitaneh is the sole survivor of the Bitaneh family in the Ferdows region, which has been famous for their skills in making and performing dotar for several generations and has had their own style of crafting and performing the indigenous instrument,” the SKCHTHD official Ahamad Barabadi said in a statement published on Tuesday.

Beitaneh learned to play and make the dotar from his father, Ali, who had his own special pattern for making the dotar, a string instrument with a pear-shaped body that is mostly made and performed in the Iranian northeastern region of Khorasan.

The traditional skills of crafting and playing the dotar in Iran were inscribed on the UNESCO list of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in December 2019.

“Music is part of a largely oral culture in the Khorsan region, and the oral culture has narrators who are the hidden treasures of the traditional culture of the area,” Barabadi said.

“The first step to preserve the intangible heritage is to search for master craftsmen in various areas and veteran artists,” he added.



Zolfaqar Beitaneh performs in an undated photo.

“Weightlessness” named best at Peruvian film festival



A scene from “Weightlessness” by Iranian director Mehdi Fardqaderi.

A R T **TEHRAN** — Iranian director Mehdi Fardqaderi’s drama “Weightlessness” was crowned best at the 3rd Insolito International Horror and Fantasy Film Festival in the Peruvian capital of Lima on Monday, the organizers have announced.

The film received the award in the Fantasies without Rules Section.

The film tells the story of a groom who has gone missing the day after his glittering wedding ceremony. The bride,

groom’s mother, groom’s sister, and his lover who attends the wedding uninvited, are all looking for him.

“His Master’s Voice” by Hungarian director Gyorgy Palfi scooped awards in several categories, including best film and best director, in the international section of the festival.

The film is about a young man, who searches for his father after he disappears while working on a highly classified project for the United States government that involves extraterrestrials.

Movies from Iran scoop awards at Big Muddy Film Festival



A scene from “Driving Lesson” by Marzieh Riahi.

A R T **TEHRAN** — The Iranian movies “Driving Lesson”, “In Between” and “One Night” won awards at the 42nd Big Muddy Film Festival in Carbondale, Illinois, the U.S. on Sunday.

“Driving Lesson” directed by Marzieh Riahi won the Best Long Narrative Award and “In Between” by Aliyar Rasti received second best film in this section.

“One Night” by Aida Alimadadi was also crowned best short narrative.

“Driving Lesson” tells the story of Bahareh, a young woman who, according to Iranian law, must have a man from among her relatives accompany her on driving lessons so she and her male instructor won’t be alone.

“In Between” is about a young woman who tries to prove her innocence in her boyfriend’s death.

“One Night” is about a middle-aged woman who tries to have a connection with her deceased husband.

Tehran’s Art Bureau to hold Sign of Spring sale online over coronavirus fears

A R T **TEHRAN** — The Art Bureau in Tehran, which was due to hold its first art sale named “Sign of Spring” last week, has been forced to hold it online due to the outbreak of new coronavirus.

“The spread of coronavirus is serious and this is why the sale’s exhibit that was due to open on Tuesday of last week was canceled,” the director of the Visual Art Center of the bureau, Masud Shojaei-Tabatabai, explained.

“However, the catalog of the exhibit has been published in 500 editions and distributed among art aficionados and private collectors so they can choose their works and purchase them online or via telephone,” he noted.

The sale offers works by young promising artists as well as works by prominent masters such as Kazem Chalipa, Sadeq Tabrizi, Kambiz Derambakhsh, Parviz Kalantari and Jalil Rasuli.

Over 250 works by about 200 artists are offered at the sale.

“Inside the Actors Studio” creator James Lipton dies at 93

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — James Lipton, the creator and host of the long-running U.S. television show “Inside the Actors Studio” has died at the age of 93, his wife told The Hollywood Reporter and celebrity website TMZ on Monday.

Lipton, who hosted in depth interviews with hundreds of Hollywood stars for more than 20 years, died on Monday at his home in New York of bladder cancer, his wife Kedakai Turner told the two entertainment outlets.

Lipton created the show in 1994 and retired as host in 2018, but it continues with other hosts.

Ovation television, which has broadcast the show since 2019 after a long run on Bravo, said on Twitter: “We’ll miss him dearly, but we wish him peace as he arrives at those pearly gates.”

Lipton’s guests included Bradley Cooper, Sean Penn, Robin Williams, Paul Newman, Julia Roberts, Meryl Streep, Lauren Bacall, Steven Spielberg, Tom Hanks, Harrison Ford, Tom Cruise and many more.

His interviews ended with a list of rapid fire questions, including “If heaven exists, what would you like to hear God say when



James Lipton poses at the 2014 Creative Arts Emmy Awards in Los Angeles, California August 16, 2014. (Reuters/Danny Moloshok/File Photo)

you arrive at the pearly gates?” and “What is your favorite curse word?”

“I’m sure he would like to be remembered as someone who loved what he did and had tremendous respect for all the people he worked with,” Turner told TMZ on Monday.

“Amazing Race” suspends filming as virus precaution

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The globe-trotting reality series “The Amazing Race” is taking a breather as a precaution due to the virus outbreak affecting several countries.

CBS said in a statement Friday that it had temporarily suspended production and was sending contestants and crew members home as a precautionary measure. Filming on the show’s 33rd season was in its early stages.

“At this time, no racers or anyone on the production team traveling with them have contracted the virus, or shown symptoms, and we are not aware of anyone being exposed to it,” a network spokesperson said in a statement. “Out of an abundance of caution, everyone involved in the show will continue to be monitored when they return home.”

Nearly 60 nations have reported cases of coronavirus, including China where the current outbreak emerged. China has the majority of confirmed cases and has reported more than 2,700 deaths.

In Asia, attractions including Tokyo



This image released by CBS shows host Phil Keoghan in a scene from last season’s competition series “The Amazing Race.” (CBS via AP)

Disneyland and Universal Studios Japan announced closures, and events that were expected to attract tens of thousands of people, including a concert series by the K-pop group BTS, were called off.