



**We will overcome the coronavirus crisis in shortest time** **2**



**Iran resisting 'dangerous precedent' in IAEA** **3**



**The U.S. sanctions forced Wilmots to quit Iran** **11**



**Congratulations (on birthday of Imam Ali (AS and father's Day**

## Widespread outbreak of coronavirus in Saudi Arabia and WHO responsibility



©AFP

**PERSPECTIVE**  
**Mostafa Mousavi Sabet**  
Head of the Tehran Times  
Art & Culture Desk

### Coronavirus deals big blow to Iran's private theaters

Managers of the private theaters in Tehran conceded that they are on the verge of bankruptcy due to the sudden outbreak of coronavirus in the metropolis.

All theaters were shut down following the government's call for a national movement to fight against coronavirus.

The shutdown of the theaters came at a time before they had been able to recover from the recession, which had occurred over the past few months as a result of political events in the country and the region.

The private theaters have warned of bankruptcy if they do not receive support from the government. They must pay rent, their staff and various monthly bills for electricity, water, etc. even during this critical time despite the fact that they have been unable to generate income.

"Our theater was open to the public for only 55 days after the first month in autumn," Davud Namvar, manager of the Neauphle-le-Chateau Theater, told the Persian service of ISNA.

"We have spent the rest mourning and have had other abnormal days and now we're faced with the coronavirus," he lamented.

He said he cannot afford to pay the theater's monthly rent of 900,000,000 rials (over \$21,000). In addition, the theater has suffered a loss of 3 billion rials (over \$71,000) due to the shutdown of the hall after the outbreak of coronavirus in Tehran.

The manager of the Tehran Independent Theater, Mostafa Kushki, said that there is no doubt about the necessity of the cancellation of performances as the coronavirus is at epidemic levels in Tehran, and he is asking the government to indemnify the theaters against the financial losses.

"Any governmental support will be a comforting pacifier to help us pass through the upcoming months," he noted.

Actor and director Qotbeddin Sadeqi, who is also the manager of Shano Theater, likewise called upon the government to cover the loss.

"It seems highly probable that the shutdown of theaters will be extended for three months, and this has frightened the Iranian theater community," Sadeqi explained to the Persian service of Honaronline. **→12**

### Canada oil-sands plan collapses

By Salman Parviz

**TEHRAN** — Canada's MEG Energy Corp has asked Alberta Energy Regulator (AER) for a three-year delay for the approval process of a proposed oil sands project in the western province, the Globe and Mail reported Monday.

Last month the announcement for the cancellation of U.S. \$15 billion (CS20b) Frontier oil sands project by private sector developer Tect Resources in Alberta took all the involved parties by surprise.

Around 20 other oil sands projects are being put on hold in Alberta as companies delay investment decisions hoping for new pipelines and higher prices. The projects could add about two million barrels per day to an already oversupplied market. Lack

of pipeline infrastructure and low oil prices make these projects unfeasible for investors.

Oil sands, crude bitumen, or more technically bituminous sands, are a type of unconventional petroleum deposit. Alberta's oil sands are the third-largest proven crude oil reserve in the world, next to Saudi Arabia and Venezuela, according to the Alberta province's government website Alberta.ca.

Refining oil sands into petroleum and other energy products is an extremely expensive and carbon intensive proposition. Known for being the dirtiest fossil fuel, it is opposed by environmentalists, Nobel laureates and the First Nation (Canadian indigenous population) and the Canadian federal government's approval is fraught

with controversy because of the climate impact.

Teck's decision came against a backdrop of protests across the country that have blockaded railway lines in support of indigenous opposition to construction of a gas pipeline in the country's west, the latest chapter in a long-running culture war over Canadian oil and gas development.

The blockades, some of which had exceeded six days had the potential to shut down "significant parts of its Canadian National (CN) railway network imminently," the railway said in February. As a result CN obtained court injunction orders for two blocked locations, and the railway is working with local enforcement agencies to keep the network open. **→7**

### Holistic evaluation of assassination of General Soleimani: What next for USA, for Iran, for the region?

By Javad Heirannia

**TEHRAN** — Robert David Steele, a former Marine Corps infantry officer and CIA spy as well as an activist for Open Source Everything Engineering (OSEE), contributes regularly to Tehran Times.

■ From a legal perspective in the context of international law including the law of war, how do you evaluate the assassination of an Iranian official, General Sardar Suleimani, who was on a public diplomatic mission, traveling by commercial air, to a third country, Iraq, which was his host?

As a patriotic American; as an intelligence professional; and as a retired Marine Corps infantry officer, I consider the assassination

of General Sardar Suleimani to be an atrocity demanding atonement, and one of the single worst decisions ever made by a US President since Harry Truman was bribed into agreeing to the theft of Palestine from the Palestinians, or Barack Obama agreed to the sale of Libya to France and the sale of Syria and Yemen to Saudi Arabia so that he and Joe Biden and the Clintons could make billions in payoffs. At a very personal level, this act violated all applicable international laws to include directed by name assassination; assassination of an individual on an open diplomatic mission; and assassination of an individual in a third country where he was an invited guest.



©ISNA / Soheil Faraji

### Iranian doc explores Syrian women's resistance in war against Daesh

**TEHRAN** — Iranian filmmakers have recently made a documentary about women in the Syrian town of Salhab that chose to resist in the war against the Daesh terrorists instead of mourning for the martyrdom of their beloved ones.

Ahmad Zaeri and Esmaeil Torkzad are the directors of the documentary "The Salhab Mothers" produced at the Owj Arts and Media Organization. **→12**

**REPORT**  
**Faranak Bakhtiari**  
Tehran Times journalist

### Post-coronavirus crisis looming for the environment

The rapid outbreak of the novel coronavirus, known as COVID-19, among countries around the world is not only a huge challenge for the public health, but the environment will also bear its dire consequences.

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses. Some cause illness in people and others only infect animals. Very rarely have animal coronaviruses infected and spread between people. This is what's suspected to have happened for the virus that has caused the outbreak of the current severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2, known as SARS-CoV-2. This is the virus that causes the coronavirus disease 2019, COVID-19, according to the Conversation website.

Worldwide, more than 93,000 people have been infected and at least 3,100 have died, predominantly in China, where the coronavirus originated in late December. However, the virus appears now to be spreading much more rapidly outside the Asian country, WHO reported.

Since Wednesday, with over 2,990 infections, deaths in Iran surged to 92.

The global spread of the new type of virus triggered demand for face masks, disposable gloves, and detergents.

■ **Hazardous waste generation**  
Binge fear buying was clearly cited as people rushed to pharmacies to lay their hands on either N95 or a simple surgical face mask to protect themselves, the wave even reached medical gloves and detergents.

Many manufacturing companies have gone into overdrive to produce more such personal protection equipment; despite epidemiologists and infectious disease experts have been at pains to emphasize against a scramble for face masks in recent weeks. **→9**

**Dear readers,**  
The next issue of the Tehran Times will be published on Monday, March 9.



## No transaction has been done through INSTEX: Iranian diplomat

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Iran's Ambassador to Russia **d e s k** Kazem Jalali said on Tuesday that no transaction has been done through the Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges (INSTEX).

"The Europeans created the INSTEX, however, no transaction has been done within the framework of this mechanism up to this moment," he said during a meeting with Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Russian Federation Council Konstantin Kosachev.

Jalali also called for expansion of Tehran-Moscow ties in various spheres.

For his part, Kosachev attached importance to expansion of relations.

The two sides also held talks over the 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the JCPOA.

INSTEX has been designed by the European Union to facilitate legitimate trade with Tehran. It was introduced on January 31, 2019, by France, Germany, and Britain, the three countries party to the nuclear deal.

INSTEX was supposed to be a financial channel and a special mechanism for transferring money in spite of U.S. sanctions on Iran. Its objective was to facilitate Iran's transactions with European companies.

In late November 2019, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden issued a joint statement announcing becoming shareholders of INSTEX.

"In light of the continuous European support for the agreement and the ongoing efforts to implement the economic part of it and to facilitate legitimate trade between Europe and Iran, we are now in the process of becoming shareholders of the Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges (INSTEX) subject to completion of national procedures. INSTEX was established by France, Germany and the United Kingdom in January 2019," read the statement, published by the Foreign Ministry of Finland.

Iran has likened INSTEX to a beautiful car that has no gasoline. Iranian Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani said on February 23 that the INSTEX is ineffective and useless.

Matthew Anthony Evangelista, a U.S political science professor at Cornell University, has said that the Europeans have been "slow" in implementing the INSTEX.

"The Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges was a European initiative to facilitate trade with Iran despite U.S. sanctions that particularly affected the banking sector. But the Europeans were slow in getting the process going, and they met fierce opposition from the United States, so INSTEX was only established in January 2019," ILNA quoted him as saying in an interview published on Tuesday.

"I think it is difficult for the Europeans to continue trying to support Iran," he added.

He also noted, "The situation does not seem fair to Iran."

On May 8, 2019, exactly one year after President Trump abrogated the JCPOA, Iran said its "strategic patience" is over and started to gradually reduce its commitment to the JCPOA at bi-monthly interval. Finally, on January 5 Iran took the last and final step in reducing its commitments to the JCPOA.

However, Iran has insisted that it will reverse its decisions if the EU abides by its obligations under the multilateral pact.

## Pakistan supports Zarif's stance on violence against Indian Muslims

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Pakistan's Foreign Minister **d e s k** Shah Mahmood Qureshi has supported Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif's stance on the wave of organized violence against Indian Muslims.

"Fully share the concerns expressed by my brother Javad Zarif on safety and well-being of Indian Muslims facing naked violence from RSS mobs. India is in throes of grave communal violence. Their sinister and systematic killing of Muslims is inhuman and dangerous for whole region," Qureshi tweeted on Tuesday.

In a tweet on Monday, Zarif condemned 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.

"Path forward lies in peaceful dialogue and rule of law," he added. Iran's Ambassador to India Ali Chegeni was summoned on Tuesday to the Indian Foreign Ministry over Zarif's tweet.

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.

During his meeting with Indian Foreign Ministry director general for political affairs, Chegeni noted that India is famous among Iranians as the land of peaceful co-existence.

## Rouhani: We will overcome the coronavirus crisis in shortest time

"If you (the U.S.) are really honest, at least lift the sanctions on drugs"

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — President Hassan Rouhani said on **d e s k** Wednesday that Iran will overcome the crisis caused by the coronavirus outbreak in the shortest period of time with the least number of victims.

During a cabinet meeting, he said many countries have become infected with the coronavirus, adding cooperation is needed to pass this stage.

"The issue of public health is important to us, and every effort is being made to ensure that the people, our parents..., our young people, and the elderly and the sick, who are most vulnerable to the virus, be able to pass this crisis," he explained.

Elsewhere, he pointed to a claim by the United States to helping Iran battle the coronavirus, saying, "If you (the U.S. officials) are really honest, at least lift the sanctions on drugs."

"Our people are well aware that you are lying; you are not telling the truth," Rouhani added.

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 said on Monday that Iran does not count on the United States' help to counter the outbreak of coronavirus.

# Zarif, Lavrov underlines peaceful settlement of Idlib battle

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif held a phone conversation with his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov on Wednesday over developments in the Syrian northwestern province of Idlib, urging an immediate de-escalation of tensions in the region.

Zarif and Lavrov laid emphasis on implementation of the Astana ceasefire agreement preventing more tensions in the war-hit region.

On January 23, 2017, Turkey, Russia and Iran launched the Astana talks in Kazakhstan to build on the existing ceasefire agreements.

The Astana meeting raised hopes in the sixth year of the war, at least for the start of a process moving towards a political solution, after the UN-brokered Geneva talks in 2012 couldn't stop the violence in Syria.

Astana then brought the strongest opposition groups on the field together and made them sit with Damascus for the first time since the beginning of the war. Brokers of the process were Turkey, Russia, and Iran, but Jordan and the U.S. also attended the talks later.

Later, Tehran, Ankara and Moscow started another peace process in Sochi in January 2018, that neither the U.S. nor the Syrian government were invited to. This time, the brokering parties of Sochi discussed the post-Daesh political order in Syria, as well as reducing violence in the country.

Now, Turkey has indirectly joined the war against Syria which is trying to drive out militants and the terrorists from Idlib and Aleppo provinces.

In this indirect war, at least 33 Turkish soldiers lost their lives on Friday in Idlib province in Syria's air strikes. It prompted



a reaction from the UN, warning on the rapidly-rising risk of escalation.

In the following days, at least 74 soldiers of the Syrian army and voluntary forces were killed by the Turkish airstrikes, the London-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) reported.

Also last Thursday, Russian and Syrian media outlets reported that Turkish military forces had been firing shoulder-fired missiles towards Syrian and Russian military aircraft providing air cover for Syria's anti-terrorist operations.

**■ Iran seeking trilateral summit on Idlib**

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

"Trilateral cooperation at different levels is of special importance, and as has been announced earlier Iran is quite ready to host the

next round of the trilateral summit," Rouhani said, according to the presidential media office.

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

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

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

Iran's Ambassador to Russia Kazem Jalali has also said that 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.

**■ Terrorists attempted to carry out chemical attack amid Syrian army gains**

Also, Sputnik quoted on Wednesday the Russian Reconciliation Centre for Syria as saying that the White Helmets had finished filming a staged provocation implicating the Syrian army for the use of chemical agents.

The center stated that a group of up to 15 terrorists had attempted to carry out a chemical attack in Idlib province.

"On 2 March, a group of up to 15 terrorists attempted to detonate explosive ammunition together with containers full of a poisonous chemical agent. The terrorists aimed to impede the advance of Syrian government forces in the western part of Saraqib city and then accuse the Syrian government of using chemical weapons", the statement read.

The terrorists accidentally unsealed one of the containers, which resulted in a leak. Terrorists received "significant chemical poisoning" and failed to carry out the attack, the center said.

The Russian military said they would soon publish the evidence on the failed chemical attack.

Back in 2018, the European Union and the U.S. blamed Damascus for an alleged chemical attack in eastern city of Douma. The Syrian government rejected the accusation and joined Moscow in saying that the attack was staged by local militants and the White Helmets non-governmental organization.

Following the accusations, the U.S., the United Kingdom and France targeted what they called Syria's chemical weapons facilities with over 100 missiles.

## Iran suspends officials' oversea trips due to coronavirus outbreak

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Iran's Vice **d e s k** President Es'haq Jahangiri, in an order on Wednesday, banned participation of the government staff and officials in international gatherings and exhibitions to lessen the consequences of coronavirus outbreak.

"In line with fulfilment of the president's verdict, the entire foreign trips of government officials and staff (except for the Foreign Ministry) to participate in the international gatherings and exhibitions will be cancelled until the next announcement," the vice president said in his announcement.

He further said, "Other exceptional cases will be handled at the request of the highest level official of the relevant body and confirmation of the vice president,"

the announcement read.

"The decision has been taken to reduce possible disease transmission to the country from foreign states. Obviously, those officials who have been dispatched abroad on mission will be allowed to attend their job and normal life after their health is confirmed by the Health Ministry," Jahangiri said.

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.

According to the Health Ministry, official data on Wednesday showed that totally 2,922 Iranian nationals have been infected by the virus that 92 have lost their lives.

The ministry also said 552 patients have recovered.

The virus has affected 28 out of 30 provinces in Iran.

On Tuesday, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said 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.

## CIA behind massacre of Indian Muslims: Iranian MP



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."

In an interview with the pro-reform Etemad newspaper published on Tuesday, Mir-Mahmoud Mousavi, Iran's former ambassador to New Delhi, has expressed disgust over violence against Indian Muslims, saying, "We should not close our eyes to the realities of the Islamic world."

Abolfazl Zohrevand, Tehran's former ambassador to Italy and Afghanistan, has also said, "Unfortunately, we are not seeing

any stance toward the Indian issue by the Islamic world, and if that continues, we will see more violation of Muslims' rights in India," he.

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. Extremists 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.

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.

## Collective efforts needed to contain coronavirus, Zarif tells counterparts

**1 →** Zarif and Alexander Schallenberg, the Austrian foreign minister, also exchanged views about the need for collective effort to counter the contagious disease.

The Iranian foreign minister and Pakistan's Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi also discussed the spread of coronavirus as well as the situation in Afghanistan.

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

Italy is also hardest hit in Europe.

The Iranian Health Ministry announced on Wednesday that the total number of people with coronavirus infection has reached 2,922. It also said so far 92 people have died and 552 others have recovered.

Since the outbreak of coronavirus in the Middle East, Iran has called for collective measures to contain the

contagious disease.

Iranian officials are holding regular meetings and telephone consultations with foreigners to exchange views on how to stop the spread of the virus.

In an order on Wednesday, Iran's Vice President Es'haq Jahangiri banned participation of the government staff and officials in international gatherings and exhibitions to lessen the consequences of coronavirus outbreak.



# Envoy blames MEK cult for coronavirus propaganda campaign

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Iran's ambassador to London says the anti-Iran terrorist group of Mojahedin-e Khalq (MEK) and other foreign-based anti-Iran groups have launched a propaganda campaign to mislead the public opinion about the coronavirus outbreak in the country.

The MEK cult and similar groups have been trying to exploit the epidemic to push the public opinion in Iran into a "mental deadlock", Hamid Baeidinejad said on his Telegram channel on Tuesday.

The campaign features a "very duplicitous" news policy, the envoy said, according to Press TV.

As of Wednesday, the death toll from the coronavirus outbreak in Iran has risen to 92 with 2,922 confirmed cases. 552 have also recovered.

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.

Baeidinejad said in the early stages of the virus emergence in Iran, when the country had not yet sensed the urgency to seek foreign aid, certain media outlets launched a propaganda campaign implying that the Tehran government would resist Western assistance even at the expense of its people's lives.

At the time, they were trying to create the impression that Iran was facing international isolation, and that no country was willing to provide it with emergency aid, Baeidinejad noted.

In the second phase, the propaganda drive alleged that the foreign medical supplies that



had entered the country, including testing kits, were contaminated, he said.

The envoy gave assurances that Iran procures the foreign items required through trusted suppliers, and that all the relevant sanitary standards are observed in the process.

"The main goal pursued by this propaganda is to create distrust between the people and the authorities," he said, dismissing the "delusions" by those who think such cam-

paigns would yield result.

The MEK was established in the 1960s to express a mixture of Marxism and Islamism. It launched bombing campaigns against the Shah, continuing after the 1979 Islamic Revolution, against the Islamic Republic. Iran accuses the group of being responsible for 17,000 deaths.

Based in Iraq at the time, MEK members were armed by Saddam Hussein to fight against Iran during a war which

lasted for 8 years.

In 2012, the U.S. State Department removed the MEK from its list of designated terrorist organizations under intense lobbying by groups associated to Saudi Arabia and other regimes opposed to Iran.

A few years ago, MEK members were relocated from their Camp Ashraf in Iraq's Diyala Province to Camp Hurriyet (Camp Liberty), a former U.S. military base in Baghdad, and were later sent to Albania.

## Iran has crossed a key threshold: IAEA

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — The United Nations' International Atomic Energy Agency announced in a report on Tuesday that Iran's growing stockpile of nuclear fuel recently crossed a critical threshold.

According to the report, for the first time since U.S. President Trump abandoned the 2015 nuclear deal, Tehran appears to have enough enriched uranium to produce a single nuclear weapon.

This is while based on a fatwa of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, it is illegitimate to produce or use nuclear weapons and it has no place in Iran's security ideology. Iran has on numerous occasions repeated such position.

The IAEA also documented for the first time how Iran's leadership blocked its inspectors from visiting three critical sites where there was evidence of past nuclear activity, according to the New York Times.

The agency's newly appointed director, Rafael Mariano Grossi, an Argentine diplomat who has spent most of his life working on nuclear issues, said it was urgent for "Iran immediately to cooperate fully with the agency" by allowing it access to the sites, and to answer additional questions "related to possible undeclared nuclear material and nuclear-related activities."

"The situation is a paradox," Mr. Grossi said in a recent interview in Washington, his first since taking over at the IAEA. "What we're verifying is the gradual diminishing compliance with the agreement we're supposed to be verifying."



Trump unilaterally quit the nuclear deal in May 2018 and introduced the harshest ever sanctions in history on Iran as part of his administration's "maximum pressure" strategy against Iran.

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

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

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

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

On January 5, Iran announced that it is taking the last and final step to stop its commitments to the JCPOA.

Under the JCPOA signed in July 2015 between Iran and the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, Germany and the European Union, Iran agreed to put limits on its nuclear activities in exchange for termination of economic and financial sanctions.

Reuters first reported on Monday that the IAEA planned to issue a second report in addition to its regular quarterly update on Iran's nuclear activities, rebuking Iran for less than full cooperation in general and for failing to grant UN inspectors access to one or more sites of interest.

The regular report showed Iran's stockpile of low-enriched uranium nearly tripling since November to more than a ton, as Tehran continues to breach key limits of its steadily eroding nuclear deal in response to renewed U.S. sanctions against it since Washington pulled out of the accord in May 2018.

"I judged it necessary to produce a second report because I thought the situation is serious enough to merit such a move on my part," Reuters quoted Grossi as saying in an interview in Paris.

## U.S. House to vote soon to limit Trump's war powers with Iran: Rep. Hoyer

*By staff and agency*

U.S. House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer said on Tuesday that the House will vote within weeks to limit U.S. President Donald Trump's war powers with Iran.

"Whether we'll do it next week, the following week or the next work session, we're still working on it. But I want that to come to the floor," The Hill quoted Hoyer as saying.

Hoyer said he supports the war powers legislation that passed the Senate last month and expects to bring it to the floor "in the near future."

The U.S. Senate passed a legislation on February 13 to limit Trump's ability to wage war against Iran.

According to AP, the measure, authored by Sen. Tim Kaine, D-Va., says Trump must win approval from Congress before engaging in further military action against Iran.

Eight of Trump's fellow Republicans joined Democrats to pass the war powers resolution by 55-45. The measure would require Trump to remove U.S. troops engaged in hostilities against Iran unless Congress declares war or passes a specific authorization for the use of military force, Reuters reported.

The U.S. House of Representatives passed two pieces of a legislation on January 30, seeking to limit Trump's authority to go to war with Iran.

"The Constitution gives Congress, not the president, the power to declare war. And with President Trump taking steps toward dangerous conflict with Iran - without any consultation with Congress - we need to reassert the responsibility given to us," Democratic Representative Eliot Engel, chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, said in support of the legislation.

In an interview with Geo News published on January 25, Engel criticized Trump for



beating drums of war against Iran.

"The United States, frankly, has been involved in too many wars in the last twenty years. And, I think it's time to back off and not have a perpetual war," he said.

He also called the January 3 assassination of General Qassem Soleimani in a drone strike in Baghdad "an ill-advised action."

U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi tweeted on February 14, "Today, with this strong War Powers Resolution, the Senate is joining the House in honoring our responsibility: keeping the American people safe. The Congress and the American people know we cannot afford war."

Trump did not inform Congress about the drone strike until after it took place and then, according to many lawmakers, his administration held back too much information about the reason for the strike

and its legal justification.

In a retaliatory move, Iran fired dozens of ballistic missiles at a major U.S. military base in Iraq on January 8.

Many members of Congress, including some Republicans, have been pushing the administration for more information about assassination of Soleimani, Reuters reported.

The House Foreign Affairs Committee has slammed Trump's justification for assassinating Soleimani.

In a tweet on February 18, the House Committee said the Trump administration "continues to change their story".

"There was a lack of a specific, immediate threat to U.S. forces or other personnel that would merit the killing of Soleimani," the committee said.

It added, "We look forward to @SecPompeo's public testimony before the committee

and American people February 28th."

The Trump administration has made several contradicting statements as it explains why the U.S. assassinated Soleimani.

In a legally-mandated memo, the White House told Congress, "The purposes of this action were to protect United States personnel, to deter Iran from conducting or supporting further attacks against United States forces and interests."

Although the notice references that the threat of "further attack existed", the memo makes no mention and gives no evidence of the "imminent attacks" the Trump administration initially gave as a justification for killing Soleimani.

In another tweet on February 15, the House committee said, "The White House's official report directly contradicts the President's false assertion that he attacked Iran to prevent an imminent attack against United States personnel and embassies."

In an interview with CNN aired on February 15, veteran U.S. diplomat Joseph Nye said Trump revoked an executive order signed by President Gerald Ford by directing the Pentagon to assassinate Soleimani.

"By assassinating of a high official in a third country when you are not at war, you are revoking what Gerald Ford had done after Vietnam which says we are not to get into the business of assassination. I don't think we really want to drop that norm," Nye said.

"What happens for example if Secretary [Mike] Pompeo goes to Baghdad and somebody shoots him? We'd have no right to complain if we've shot Soleimani."

He noted, "We gave up assassination after the Vietnam war after Gerald Ford signed an executive order. I am not sure that Trump thought through what it means if you drop that moral principle."

## Iran resisting 'dangerous precedent' in IAEA: diplomat

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Kazem Gharibabadi, Iran's ambassador to the Vienna-based international organizations, told reporters on Tuesday that Iran is countering a "bad and dangerous precedent" in the IAEA which tries to "give credibility to fake reports by spy services" run by the U.S. and Israel.

"Unfortunately, once again the United States and the regime of Israel, by putting pressure on the Agency, are trying to undermine the relations and active and constructive cooperation between Iran and the Agency" in order to derail the UN body from its professional task, the Iranian diplomat said.



Gharibabadi made the remarks in reaction to a recent IAEA report concerning the safeguards issues in Iran.

Gharibabadi made it clear that any request from the IAEA for additional verification or access on the basis of fake reports of the spy agencies, including the Israeli spy services, not only will be in contradiction to the IAEA's founding documents and to the verification system, but also do not commit Iran to agreeing to those requests, Tasnim reported.

"If countries do not take fundamental measures against these plots, their national sovereignty will be undermined," he warned.

The International Atomic Energy Agency released two reports about Iran's nuclear program on Tuesday. In one of the reports, the IAEA repeated the claim that it had identified three locations in Iran where the country possibly stored undeclared nuclear material or undertook nuclear-related activities without declaring it to international observers.

It said it had sent questions to Iran in three separate letters but received no answers.

"The agency identified a number of questions related to possible undeclared nuclear material and nuclear-related activities at three locations in Iran that had not been declared by Iran," the agency said in the report.

Commenting on the claims, IAEA Director-General Rafael Grossi demanded Iran's "clarifications" over the so-called undeclared sites.

Grossi told the AFP that "Iran must decide to cooperate in a clearer manner with the agency to give the necessary clarifications."

"The fact that we found traces (of uranium) is very important. That means there is the possibility of nuclear activities and material that are not under international supervision and about which we know not the origin or the intent," claimed the IAEA's head.

The IAEA has not specified the origin of the allegation, but since April 2018, the U.S. and Israel have been busy making a fuss about unsubstantiated Tel Aviv-sourced allegations about undeclared nuclear activity by Tehran.

Iran has repeatedly warned the agency against attempts by the U.S. under President Donald Trump and Israel — a staunch opponent of diplomacy with Iran — to put pressure on the IAEA with the goal of killing the JCPOA.

## Nothing extraordinary in IAEA report on Iran's nuclear program: Russia

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Mikhail Ulyanov, Russia's permanent representative to the Vienna-based international organizations, has said that there is nothing extraordinary in latest report of the International Atomic Energy Agency about Iran's nuclear program.



"As always, #IAEA reports on #Iran today were leaked to mass media immediately after or even before they were circulated among the Governors of the Agency. Alarming publications in the press. Calm down. There is nothing extraordinary," he tweeted on Tuesday.

In an IAEA's report released on Tuesday, it is claimed that the agency had identified three locations in Iran where the country possibly stored undeclared nuclear material or undertook nuclear-related activities without declaring it to international observers.

"The agency identified a number of questions related to possible undeclared nuclear material and nuclear-related activities at three locations in Iran that had not been declared by Iran," the agency said in the report, according to Press TV.

Kazem Gharibabadi, Iran's ambassador to the Vienna-based international organizations, told reporters on Tuesday that Iran is countering a "bad and dangerous precedent" in the IAEA which tries to "give credibility to fake reports by spy services."

The ambassador held the U.S. and Israeli spy agencies for such a claim by the IAEA.

"Unfortunately, once again the United States and the regime of Israel, by putting pressure on the Agency, are trying to undermine the relations and active and constructive cooperation between Iran and the Agency" in order to derail the agency from its professional task, the Iranian diplomat said.



STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	555,328
IFX	7.104

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	\$52.44/b
WTI	\$47.79/b
OPEC Basket	\$51.65/b
Gold	\$1,644.50/oz
Silver	\$17.32/oz
Platinum	\$882.15/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

IIEC to hold Tehran’s virtual exhibits under coronavirus outbreak

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Iran International Exhibitions Company (IIEC) plans to host exhibitions, due to be held in Tehran, virtually for the first time as the coronavirus outbreak has put the country in danger.

As reported by the Public Relations and International Department of the company, the virtual exhibitions are expected to be participated by nearly 20,000 domestic producers.

Holding virtual exhibitions is initiated by Iran International Exhibitions Company in a bid to avoid cancellation of exhibitions and help growth of domestic industry despite the condition created by the mentioned virus. In the fact, the company is turning the threat into opportunity.

Elaborating upon the issue, Bahman Hosseinzadeh, the managing director of the company, said to visit the virtual exhibits, the visitors can refer to the website of the company (iranfair.com) in which different exhibitions and commodity groups are categorized.

Coronavirus sends Hong Kong business activity plunging to record low in February

The coronavirus epidemic dealt a severe blow to businesses in Hong Kong in February with activity plummeting to the lowest on record, a private survey showed on Wednesday, in a sign of a sharp economic downturn in the first quarter.

The adjusted IHS Markit headline Hong Kong Purchasing Manager's Index (PMI) dived to 33.1 in February, from 46.8 in January and marked the steepest downturn since at least 1998, when the survey began. The previous record low, at 38.1, was posted during a 2003 epidemic of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome, another coronavirus.



The 50-mark separates growth from contraction on a monthly basis.

The fast-spreading virus has killed nearly 3,000 people and infected over 80,000 in China, a vital source of trade for the city which has so far reported two deaths and around 100 cases.

The outbreak has dealt a double blow to Hong Kong's economy and its retail and tourism sectors, which have been battered by months of political protests.

"Measures taken in response to the Covid-19 situation and general fear of being infected saw business activity and new sales sinking at a record pace in an economy that has been beset earlier by political protests and US-China trade war tensions," said Bernard Aw, principal economist at IHS Markit.

"Business confidence plummeted in the city, with a majority of firms anticipating lower future output amid expectations that the coronavirus situation will persist in coming months."

Underscoring the virus' debilitating impact on factories, the output gauge plunged to 22.5 last month, from 46.7 in January while that for new orders showed an equally steep dive to 22.7 from 43.0 the month earlier.

Demand from mainland China shrank to a survey-record low in February. There were also reports of a rise in order cancellations.

Business confidence, a forward-looking subcomponent in the survey, plummeted to the lowest level since the data were first available in April 2012, with a majority of survey respondents predicting lower output over the next 12 months due to concerns that the negative impact of the virus on activity was likely to persist in the months ahead.

Official forecasts for the Hong Kong's economy range between a 1.5 percent contraction in 2020 and 0.5 percent growth. The government has announced a record budget deficit this year to tackle the impact of the virus and of months of often violent protests.

(Source: Reuters)

Economic bodies call on govt. to support businesses against coronavirus outbreak

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Heads of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA), Iran Chamber of Cooperatives (ICC), and Iran Chamber of Guilds (ICG), in a letter to President Hasan Rouhani, called for special measures to be taken for supporting various economic sectors at least until the end of the next summer (September 22, 2020) amid the coronavirus outbreak.

In the letter, the chamber heads underlined the fast spread of coronavirus (Covid-19) and its negative impact on manufacturing, services, education, trade,

etc., and pointed to the possibility of severe recession in these sectors.

ICCIMA Head Gholam-Hossein Shafeie, Head of ICG Saieed Mombeini and Bahman Abdolahi, head of ICC, urged the government to take necessary actions in order to prevent the escalation of the economic crisis, especially in the fields of production, trade, services, and transportation and distribution networks.

In the said letter, they called for special decisions and supporting acts such as extending the facility installment dues, supplying working capital, tax exemption



or deduction for especial cases, providing resources and facilities with low interest rates for people and traders, etc.

Iran has reported 77 deaths from COVID-19, and 2,336 confirmed cases of

infection, as of Tuesday.

The coronavirus outbreak comes at a time when Iran is already facing the economic pressures resulted from the U.S. sanctions on the country.

More growth for stock markets on Wednesday



**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN**—Iran's two major stock markets, i.e Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE) and Iran's over-the-counter (OTC) market known as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB), witnessed some more growth on Wednesday, IRNA reported.

As reported, TEDPIX, the main index of TSE, rose 10,943 points to 555,328. Over 7.198 billion securities worth 60.483 billion rials (about \$1.33 billion) were traded at this market.

The first market's index rose 14,254 points and the second market's index went up 13,631 points on Wednesday.

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 Wednesday trades, IFX, the main index of IFB, also climbed 141 points to 7,104.

As reported, 2.82 billion securities worth 30.023 trillion rials (about \$714.8 billion) were traded at IFB on Wednesday.

TPO’s foreign trade council holds meeting amid Covid-19 outbreak

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Iranian Trade Promotion Organization (TPO)'s Foreign Trade Coordination Council held an extraordinary meeting to explore ways of facilitating trade exchanges with the neighboring counties amid the coronavirus outbreak, the TPO portal announced.

"To discuss the issues pertaining to the trade with neighboring countries in the current situation [corona outbreak], an extraordinary meeting of the Foreign

Trade Coordination Council was held on Monday," TPO Head Hamid Zadboum said.

"The meeting was chaired by Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Diplomacy Gholamreza Ansari," he added.

In the meeting, which was attended by representatives of the country's ministries, government agencies, and the private sector, the latest measures taken to address the concerns of our foreign trade partners were discussed, according to Zadboum.

As reported, at the end of this extraor-

dinary meeting, some decisions were made to facilitate cross-border traffic and trade with neighbors following the Coronavirus outbreak.

Iran has been communicating with its neighbors for taking actions regarding the coronavirus containment.

Earlier on Monday, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and his Iraqi counterpart Mohammad al-Hakim emphasized taking joint measures to counter coronavirus outbreak in a phone conversation.

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.

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.

Bank of England prepared to cut interest rates to soften impact of coronavirus

Mark Carney has signaled that the Bank of England would be prepared to cut interest rates and allow banks to use "rainy day" funds to soften the impact of the coronavirus outbreak on the UK economy.

Giving evidence to the parliamentary Treasury committee on Tuesday, the outgoing BoE governor said the central bank's role was "to help UK businesses and households manage through an economic shock that could prove large but will ultimately be temporary".

"We don't want viable businesses to go out of business because of the very necessary steps that need to be taken to protect and serve the British public," he told the committee. "Supply disruption, as opposed to permanent impairment of supply, is important."

He added that the monetary policy committee would need to judge how far disruptions to supply caused by the virus were affecting aggregate demand — which central banks are more able to influence.

In a clear hint that the BoE would be ready to cut interest rates, Mr. Carney said disruption from the virus could hit companies' cash flow, affect the availability of finance and hit confidence — and that it was "reasonably plausible that the demand effect would be greater than the supply effect in the near term". He did not rule out a rate cut before the MPC's next meeting this month.

Mr. Carney also said the BoE was looking at ways of ensuring that banks could use their balance sheets as effectively as possible to lend to businesses needing working capital to stay afloat if they were affected by the spread of the virus.

This could involve allowing banks to draw down some of the countercyclical buffer, which forces them to hold



Bank of England Governor Mark Carney

more capital in good times to use in times of economic hardship, mirroring the step the BoE took after the June 2016 referendum.

The countercyclical buffer is currently set at 2 percent of banks' total assets when adjusted for risk.

Mr. Carney added that the BoE's stress tests of the financial system had shown banks' resilience in scenarios including economic shock emanating from China, but that it would be equally important for prudential regulators to review institutions' practical contingency planning, including their ability to continue operating with split teams and home working.

He said the BoE would apply the same standards to its own critical functions, including payment systems, liquidity facilities and putting monetary policy into operation.

He also stressed that the BoE was in close contact with

the Treasury and with other central banks around the world, saying it was "reasonable to expect a response that reflects a combination of fiscal measures and central bank initiatives."

The economic shock of the coronavirus outbreak could be large, Mr. Carney said, but in contrast with the 2008 financial crisis — which had lasting effects on the economy — "the prospect with this situation is that we will have disruption not destruction, and that should be and will be the focus of policy." Separately, Mr. Carney was asked what the central bank was doing to tighten security after last year's revelation that some traders had been paying for early access to an audio feed of key BoE press conferences, provided by a third party supplier.

Mr. Carney said that as well as the investigation being conducted by the Financial Conduct Authority, the UK financial regulator, the BoE would report findings of an internal review of its controls and procedures in April.

He said that more broadly, the BoE was working jointly with the FCA on "a host of issues around latency in markets" to establish what should be done to ensure all market participants could access information on a level playing field.

He added that following reports that a media organization had shared market sensitive central bank material with traders before its official release, the BoE might need to opt for "maximum security" and stop sending material out under embargo.

This would mean "more noise" in markets when speeches and other material was released, he said, as traders would need to react quickly to complex material.

(Source: Financial Times)



# Daily gasoline consumption falls to 70m liters

**ENERGY** **TEHRAN** – Average daily gasoline consumption in Iran has fallen another 10 percent to reach 70 million liters following the implementation of the rationing scheme, according to National Iranian Oil Products Distribution Company (NIOPDC) planning director.

“The average daily consumption of gasoline in the previous month of Bahman (January 21-February 19) stood at 80 million liters, the figure fell to 70 million in the current calendar month of Esfand,” Shahram Rezaei told Shana.

According to the official, the fall in gasoline consumption as a result of the implementation of the rationing scheme is significant because the country’s fuel consumption was following an upward trend before gasoline was rationed.

The average daily gasoline consumption since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2019) up to the implementation of the rationing scheme on November 15, was about 95 million liters, which showed a 6.1-percent increase compared to the average daily consumption for



the previous year.

In the mentioned period, an average of

134.400 million liters of gasoil was also consumed in the country, which shows an increase

of 41.3 percent compared to the same period last year, he said.

Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh had earlier pointed to curbing consumption and increasing export capacity as the most important goals of the gasoline rationing plan.

In mid-November 2019, the Iranian government started rationing of subsidized gasoline and increased fuel prices as part of a plan to reduce the energy subsidies to use the revenue for supporting underprivileged families.

Later that month, deputy finance and economic affairs minister said the fuel rationing plan would make the country able to export 3.65 billion liters of gasoline every year and earn about 14 trillion rials (about \$3.3 billion) from the exports.

“On average, 100 million liters of gasoline is produced in the country on a daily basis. If we could reduce fuel consumption by 10 million liters and sell it to other Persian Gulf neighbors, we would export about four billion rials (about \$952,000) a day, that would be 14 trillion rials a year,” Mohammad-Ali Dehqan Dehnavi said.

## OPEC may extend cuts beyond February’s 600,000 bpd target

OPEC and its allies have started reviewing their estimate of the damage to oil demand from the coronavirus, laying the ground for ministers to discuss production cuts at a crucial meeting later this week.

The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries and allies face an unprecedented challenge as the epidemic that started in China threatens to become a global pandemic. Growth in fuel consumption could be wiped out this year and prices have just had their biggest weekly drop since the global financial crisis.

To secure a supply cut that could stop the rout, the group must overcome Russian resistance while also grappling with the risks of bringing together delegations from 23 nations as the deadly disease continues to spread. One of those members, Iran, has a serious outbreak at home affecting top government officials.

There’s an “extremely grave situation” in the oil market, Algerian Energy Minister Mohamed Arkab said on Tuesday, according to state-run Algeria Press Service. “Algeria calls for a concrete, credible, cohesive and rapid action.”

In an effort to limit potential contagion, OPEC will take the unprecedented step of blocking journalists from entering its Vienna headquarters during the meeting, while also seeking to limit the size of members’ delegations to “a bare minimum,” according to a statement. The cartel’s meetings typically attract



a contingent of hundreds of officials, reporters, TV crews, analysts and consultants from around the world.

The OPEC+ Joint Technical Committee gathered in the Austrian capital on Tuesday to reappraise the impact of the epidemic. At their previous meeting in February, they recommended a production cut of 600,000 barrels a day, but the outbreak has worsened since then.

“The recommended 600,000 barrel-a-day additional cut for the second quarter of 2020 will be seen as too little,” Mohammad Darwazah of consultant Medley Global Advisors said in a note. “It is clear that the group is mulling a deeper

production pullback.”

OPEC+ has been struggling to manage the price impact from the U.S. shale boom since it was formed in late 2016. It launched a new round of supply curbs at the start of this year, removing about 2.1 million barrels a day from the market. Any cut agreed on this week would deepen that reduction.

The group’s experts are looking at five scenarios for demand, said one delegate, who asked not to be named because the talks were private. Those numbers will determine whether the previous recommendation for the size of the cut is maintained, said another delegate.

With flights canceled in Europe, schools closed in Japan, towns quarantined in Italy and a rising death toll from Iran to Washington state, the coronavirus crisis has gone global, and with it, its impact on energy demand. For only the fourth time in almost 40 years, oil consumption may not grow at all in 2020, according to a growing minority of traders, investors and analysts.

That possibility is reflected in crude, which slumped 16 percent in New York last week, the biggest drop since December 2008. The market has rebounded somewhat, but at about \$48 a barrel on Tuesday prices remain too low for most of the cartel’s members to balance their budgets.

(Source: Bloomberg)

## Oil rise as OPEC, allies move closer to deeper output cuts



Oil prices rose on Wednesday on hopes that major producers have made progress towards sealing an agreement to implement deeper output cuts aimed at offsetting the slump in demand caused by the global coronavirus outbreak.

Brent crude rose by 20 cents, or 0.39 percent, to \$52.06 a barrel at 0736 GMT, after settling down 4 cents in the previous session. U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) futures CL1 rose by 27 cents, or 0.57 percent, to \$47.45 a barrel, up for a third session.

A panel of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and its allies, a grouping known as OPEC+, recommended cutting oil output by an extra 1 million barrels per day (bpd) on Tuesday. The recommendation may mean that Russia and Saudi Arabia, the two biggest producers in the OPEC+ group, are close to a deal to support prices.

That would be in addition to 2.1 million bpd in output cuts that include 1.7 million bpd in curbs by OPEC+ and other voluntary reductions by Saudi Arabia, the world’s biggest exporter. The group is set to meet in Vienna on March 5-6.

“This is no time for caution for OPEC+. Second-quarter oversupply needed some heavy lifting from the group to offset even before the COVID-19 (coronavirus disease) outbreak, but now it is a must,” Barclays analysts said in a research note.

Brent and WTI have each fallen about 27 percent from their 2020-peak reached in January.

The expected 1 million bpd additional cut by OPEC+ would still fall well short of the

newly increased 2.1 million bpd expected global demand loss in the first half alone, Goldman Sachs analysts (GS.N) wrote in a research note.

U.S. crude oil inventories rose in the most recent week, while gasoline and distillate stocks fell, data from industry group the American Petroleum Institute showed on Tuesday.

Crude inventories rose by 1.7 million barrels in the week to Feb. 28 to 446.6 million barrels, compared with analysts’ expectations for a build of 2.6 million barrels.

Goldman has again cut its Brent price forecast to \$45 a barrel in April, while expecting Brent gradually recovering to \$60 a barrel by year-end.

Morgan Stanley on Tuesday also cut its second-quarter 2020 Brent price forecast to \$55 per barrel and its WTI outlook to \$50 on expectations that China’s 2020 oil demand growth would be close to zero and that demand elsewhere may weaken because of the virus.

Elsewhere, the U.S. Federal Reserve cut interest rates on Tuesday in a bid to shield the world’s largest economy from the impact of the coronavirus.

“(The Fed’s emergency rate cut underscores fragility of economic fundamentals, and this urges OPEC+ to expedite a deeper output cut to shore up energy prices,” said Margaret Yang, market analyst at CMC Markets.

Yang said from a technical analysis perspective, Brent has found strong support at around \$50-52, while immediate resistance can be found at \$54.70.

(Source: Reuters)

## UK government to revive onshore wind subsidies



Boris Johnson has given the go-ahead to onshore wind farms four years after his predecessor, David Cameron, imposed a moratorium on subsidies for land-based wind turbines.

The prime minister’s move follows lower prices of electricity produced by wind farms in recent years, making the technology significantly cheaper than other forms of low-carbon electricity such as nuclear power.

Ahead of November’s Cop26 global climate change talks in Glasgow, the government is under growing pressure to adopt a strategy to hit its target of net-zero carbon emissions by 2050. In a plan set out to climate groups in Downing Street on Monday, onshore projects will be allowed to compete for government subsidies alongside other renewable energy technologies, such as offshore wind.

Onshore wind farms have long been unpopular with grassroots Conservatives in rural areas because of their visual effect on the landscape as well as their impact on birdlife.

Cameron in effect killed off the construction of new onshore wind farms in the wake of the 2015 general election when he said he wanted to “rid” the countryside of the “unsightly” structures after pressure from many of his own MPs.

In 2016, he excluded onshore wind from the government’s system of subsidies for low-carbon electricity. The moratorium led to new onshore wind capacity falling to its lowest level in a decade in 2019.

However, Alok Sharma, business secretary, said cutting carbon emissions rapidly would mean “making the most of every technology available” including onshore

wind and solar. He pledged that the government would do this in a way that did not alienate local communities.

Under the new plan, projects will be eligible to apply for a new “contracts for difference (CFDs)” auction in 2021, which means wind farms could be up and running by the mid-2020s. Campaigners cautioned that because of planning restrictions, most of the new projects were likely to be built in Scotland rather than England.

Scottish Power, for example, has drawn up a list of potential wind farm projects north of the border in anticipation that the government could loosen its resistance to onshore schemes.

The government’s system of CFDs provides a fixed price for electricity to low-carbon projects. Last autumn some offshore wind projects agreed to prices as low as £39.65 per MWh, reflecting the increased efficiencies in the industry, such as higher turbines with longer blades.

By contrast, EDF’s proposed nuclear power station at Hinkley Point in Somerset agreed a strike price with the government in 2016 at £92.50/MWh in 2012 prices – equivalent to at least £102/MWh in today’s prices.

Onshore wind has traditionally been cheaper than offshore wind, reflecting the complex challenges involved in building huge wind turbines far off the coast, often in deep waters — although the gap has been closing in recent years.

John Sauven, executive director of Greenpeace, said onshore wind and solar were some of the cheapest available sources of energy.

(Source: Financial Times)

## Zanganeh arrives in Vienna to attend OPEC meeting

**ENERGY** **TEHRAN**– Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh arrived in Vienna on Wednesday to take part in the 178th Meeting of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), Shana news agency reported.

OPEC meets on Thursday in Vienna, followed by talks with non-OPEC allies such as Russia on Friday, as they weigh how to react to a sharp drop in global oil demand due to the outbreak of the new coronavirus (known as Covid-19).

In the extraordinary two-day meeting, OPEC and allies will explore the ways of halting the fall in oil prices in the past two months as the epidemic has spread.



At their previous gathering in December, the group agreed to cut production by 500,000 barrels per day, with Saudi Arabia offering a further 400,000 barrels of “voluntary” cuts.

Prices were already under pressure at that point from abundant reserves and weak global growth.

The cuts announced in December initially had the desired effect of an uptick in prices but the epidemic has since sent them plunging back down again.

The two benchmarks for oil prices, Brent in Europe and WTI for the U.S., have fallen nearly 30 percent since early January and have reached their lowest levels for more than a year.

## Fossil fuels for power at turning point as renewables surged in 2019: data

The use of fossil fuels such as coal and oil for generating electricity fell in 2019 in the United States, the European Union and India, at the same time overall power output rose, a turning point for the global energy mix.



Those countries and regions are three of the top four largest producers of power from fossil fuels. The declines suggest the end of the fossil fuel era could be on the horizon, said Tomas Kaberger, an energy professor at Chalmers University of Technology in Sweden, who provided the power generation data to Reuters.

Kaberger, who is also the chair of the executive board for Japan’s Renewable Energy Institute and a member of the board at Swedish utility Vattenfall AB, provided data covering more than 70 percent of the world’s power generation that showed for most of 2019 the amount of power sourced from fossil fuels dropped by 156 terawatt hours (TWh) from the year before. That is equal to the entire power output of Argentina in 2018.

The data also indicates that renewable power generation increased at a faster rate than the overall growth in power output for the first time, rising by 297 TWh versus 233 TWh for overall output, Kaberger said.

“It is economics driving this as low-cost renewable electricity outcompetes against fossil and nuclear power plants,” said Kaberger.

With electric vehicle usage surging and their batteries being increasingly recharged by renewable electricity supplies the decline of fossil fuels is likely to accelerate, he said.

“New renewables are even cheaper than oil per unit of energy electricity generated and even fuels produced from electricity will outcompete against fossil fuels at increasing speed in transport, heating and industry,” he said.

“Peak oil demand is close,” Kaberger said.

Kaberger relied on data from official sources such as the International Energy Agency and the U.S. Energy Information Administration that covered China, India, the EU, the U.S., Japan and the rest of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), or around 75% of global electricity output. The data for Japan and the OECD members outside of the EU and the U.S. were only through to November.

China, the world’s biggest power producer, was the exception to the decline, with power produced by fossil fuels rising by 120 TWh in 2019, though renewables outpaced that with an increase of 157 TWh, the data showed.

Fossil fuel power generation last declined in 2009 after the global financial crisis, at the same time that overall global electricity output fell, according to BP’s Statistical Review of World Energy. That year was the first time overall power output dropped since BP began publishing the review in 1985.

The shift from fossil fuels, especially coal, has been driven by countries trying to implement their commitments under the Paris Agreement on climate change and reduce pollution.

In the U.S., power companies closed down 15.3 gigawatts of coal capacity last year as renewables surged, while in India electricity generation from coal fell in 2019 for the first time in a decade.

The contribution of nuclear to the global power mix rose last year by 91 TWh as Japan restarted more reactors following the shutdown of sites after the 2011 Fukushima nuclear crisis, the data showed.

(Source: Reuters)



**TEHRAN TIMES**

Iran's Leading International Daily

**Advertising Dept****Tel: 021 - 430 51 450**

times1979@gmail.com



tehrantimesdaily



tehrantimes79

## Modern Stadium of Martyrs of Khuzestan Football Club (KSC)



PIC-COLLAGE

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

Get in touch  
**www.mehrnews.com**

**MEHR NEWS AGENCY**

Home All News Iran World Politics Economy Culture Technology Sports Photo Video Opinion

**Oil min. holds phone talk with Russia's energy min. on reducing oil output**

TEHRAN, Feb. 20 (MNA) -- Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh held a phone conversation with the Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak on Thu. with regards to the cooperation of the two countries within the framework of OPEC Plus.

**Iranian manufacturers indigenize strategic petchem equipment**

**Parl. commission approves slicing off 4 zeros from national currency**

**Iran starts mass production of drilling bit**

**Most Viewed**

Oil min. holds phone talk with Russia's energy min. on reducing oil output

**Other News**

Oil min. holds phone talk with Russia's energy min. on reducing oil output

TEHRAN, Feb. 20 (MNA) -- Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh held a phone

**TOP 10**

- Iranians to give no value to US, its sanctions: spok...
- Iranian people to disappoint enemies more than before...
- Senior Iranian officials cast vote in ballot box
- All countries except 3 terrorist regimes in favor of...
- Islamic Revolution Leader casts his vote in ballot...
- Polls open across Iran
- CAO rejects rumors on continuation of Iran-China flights
- Hatami hails Iran aviation efforts to neutralize sanctions
- Iran's envoy, OPEC secretary-general discuss oil market
- Three more patients tested positive for coronavirus...

**Interview**

Iran's enemies more scared of 'the nation'...

MP urges quick evacuation of US troops from...

en.mehrnews.com

@Mehrnewscom

Catch up with the latest news in Iran and beyond with

**Mehr News English**



# Holistic evaluation of assassination of General Soleimani: What next for USA, for Iran, for the region?

**I →** I understand Iran's earlier need to launch a counter-attack on a US base in Iraq in order to quell public anger over this atrocity but I believe that going forward from today Iran is best served by demonstrating the level of restraint that President Vladimir Putin has demonstrated, to include forgoing any targeted assassination of any US senior official including the fat blustering fool that we have in place as Secretary of State.

■ The Secretary of Defense, Mark Esper, disagreed publicly with President Donald Trump's declaration that General Suleimani was organizing threatening actions against US Embassies in the region. How do you interpret this public divergence of view?

Although our Secretary of Defense is from the same West Point Class of 1986 as Mike Pompeo, he appears to be much more balanced and I hold him – and the President – blameless for this assassination. From where I sit, three things went very wrong: Secretary Pompeo, arguably an agent of a foreign power (Israel), was able to persuade the President to approve this action; our intelligence community (particularly Gina Haspel, Director of the CIA) failed to provide the President with compelling holistic intelligence (decision-support) against the assassination; and the Secretary of Defense chose not to put his job on the line against the decision. In publicly diverging from the President on this matter after the fact Secretary Esper was making the honest and obvious point: there was no threat to our Embassies and in fact it is known that part of the reason for General Suleimani's visit to Iraq was to disperse the crowds outside the US Embassy, which was done.

■ When Iran counter-attacked, in a proportional response, against a US military encampment at Ayn al Asad, President Trump initially claimed no casualties, then a few casualties, then he mocked many of those evacuated to Germany, and now there are one hundred and ten stated casualties. How do you account for this "casualty creep" and could the President have been aware from the beginning of the facts on the ground?

I grew up in Viet-Nam as the son of an oil engineer, and in my subsequent professional reading as a Marine Corps officer have always marveled at the degree to which we lie to ourselves. From enemy body counts that are inflated to friendly casualties that are under-stated, we are simply not capable of telling the truth. I like to say that "the truth at any cost lowers all other costs." Our President has three big problems, all centered on the amount of false information and the lack of truthful information available to him. The Department of State is controlled by Zionists. The CIA is led by professional liars, most of them overweight bureaucrats far removed from the rigors of either clandestine tradecraft on the street or all-source holistic analytics. The Department of Defense has too many officers who believe that telling their chain of command a lie is justified when the chain of command makes it clear that it wants to be lied to. The single greatest work on this point is from the US Army Strategic Studies Institute, Lying to Ourselves: Dishonesty in the Army Profession.

I am quite certain our President was not aware of the casualties from the beginning, and the creeping numbers are more a sign of a very flawed and generally dishonest reporting system within the US military.

Whatever the number of our casualties, they pale in comparison to the 75,000 amputees we have suffered, or the 250,000 mentally injured individuals on disability, unable to find em-



ployment, and of course nothing can compare to the pain of the mothers of the Fallujah mutant babies resulting from the use of depleted uranium there, or the hundreds of thousands of dead across the Middle East, and the millions of displaced, a large number now in or about to enter Europe.

I have myself been personally and directly threatened with assassination by the leaders of a country where I was responsible for penetrating the extreme left, and I oppose both directed assassination, and elective wars fought for the profit of the banks without regard to the human and social cost for all engaged countries.

In my view, the 110 casualties are helpful as a stopping point. Restraint should be the order of the day.

■ Dr. Susan Rice, President Obama's national security adviser and some other US politicians, believe that the cost of assassinating of Sardar Suleimani has outweighed the US benefits. What do you think about this?

I despise Susan Rice at multiple levels – this is a woman who should be in jail for her complicity in the unmasking of US citizens (which is against the law pertaining to signals intelligence privacy) associated with the totally illegal investigation and framing of our President for collusion with the Russians – the witch-hunt, all lies with the active complicity of MI-6 and the Prime Minister of Great Britain. On this point I have to agree with her. I am particularly upset with the assassination because the US and Iran were on the verge of making some significant advances aided by President Vladimir Putin's encouragement, and I have to say that I believe that the Zionists fed Secretary of State Pompeo a number of lies – and perhaps some financial incentives if not outright blackmail with Jeffrey Epstein videos – to get him to push our President into approving this utterly

terrible and unjustifiable assassination.

Let me emphasize this: I believe the assassination was intended to destroy the growing rapprochement between Iran and the USA, which President Trump was actively seeking and to the best of my knowledge continues to seek today. It is my hope that Iran will join me and others in focusing on justice against those who manipulated our President, and not make the mistake of being manipulated, as our President was manipulated, into further escalation.

■ Since the assassination of General Soleimani, one of Iran's most beloved leaders, Israel and Turkey have become more aggressive against Syria, Russia has become more engaged, and China was briefly sidelined by the coronavirus panic. How do you evaluate the current and near future of the West Asian region and do you anticipate the complete US withdrawal from Iraq and the region?

I am not an expert on this region so my impressions are based on general reading. As best I can tell, history and the passage of time favor Iran, Syria, and Palestine. Turkey is over-extended and I have the impression that President Erdogan is nearing the end of his life. Russia and China will continue to grow in influence while the US does eventually withdraw militarily from the region. I anticipate some major changes in US national security policy after President Trump's inevitable re-election. Put simply, the return on investment for military occupation forces that cannot win wars or repress belligerent native tribes is not as great as the return on investment in homeland infrastructure and job creation, or in emerging markets development. China's One Belt One Road initiative – and its cyber overlay – have finally forced the Americans to confront the fact that they have been willfully stupid for the past fifty years, allowing the Deep

State to use our military as enforcers (General Smedley Butler was the first to say this in his book War is a Racket), and our military bases as lily pads for smuggling guns, drugs, cash, gold, and small children.

Our President is going to be inaugurating a new national monument soon, to General and President Ike Eisenhower, whose great-grand-daughter I know. I expect the President to use that occasion to reflect on President Eisenhower's earlier warning against the military-industrial complex, and perhaps to announce his own vision for a future in which America is no longer engaged in endless war.

At some point the Middle East is going to have to deal with the reality that the current crop of Arab dictators is unsustainable; the current oil-based economies are unsustainable; and the current practice of sending millions of refugees to Europe is unsustainable. We must create peace and prosperity across the Middle East for the good of all including the hapless Europeans whose leaders sold them out with the 1995 Barcelona Declaration, which loosened migration controls in return for bribes.

The single greatest lesson I have learned in my life about transformation and reform is that it must be job and revenue neutral at the sub-state level. George Will's new book, The Conservative Sensibility, is strongly against what he calls "rent seekers" – companies that use the bribing of Members of Congress, and federal contracts, as a substitute for hard work and innovation. I am more practical – I now know how to make this corrupt system migrate from wars that profit the banks to peace profiting the poor.

I have outlined my personal vision for the future of America and the world in three recently published books on Reinventing National Security, Reinventing Intelligence, and Reinventing Engineering.

My vision calls for the closure of all US military bases overseas, to bring all those jobs – both military jobs and the support jobs that now go to local citizens – back to America. We need to redirect at least 40% of what we spend on a heavy-metal military that cannot win wars toward diplomacy, development, and commerce. My vision also applies to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and is outlined for them in NATO 2040: Intelligence (Decision-Support) as Root for Transformation.

Let me end by saying that I believe the way is open for Iran and Russia to facilitate a new form of information sharing and intelligence (decision-support) for the Middle East that integrates open sources of information in all languages, holistic analytics, true cost economics, and Open Source Everything Engineering (OSEE) including free energy and unlimited water desalination.

General Suleimani was assassinated by order of President Trump in the context of a dysfunctional US government process incapable of telling our President the truth. It is my personal goal to wage peace and enable prosperity with both open and secret intelligence that is shared among nation-states and I am deeply and personally committed to ensuring President Trump is never again blind-sided by lies.

I pray that day might come when the Supreme Leader of Iran, and the President of the United States of America, can share the same intelligence (decision-support) about every aspect of the Middle East, toward making evidence-based decisions that create peace and prosperity for all.

**I →** That is why pundits believe that the decision to shelve these projects has helped Prime Minister Justin Trudeau dodge a political problem as the federal government was due to rule on Teck's application in coming days. The developer abandoned a nine-year effort to extend mining, sparing Trudeau a choice between energy interests and environmental concerns.

The Frontier Project was set to produce 260,000 bpd and supported 7,000 jobs – but would also have emitted up to four million tons a year of greenhouse gases. More than the entire country of Iceland emits a year.

Alberta's Conservative Premier Jason Kenney blames "urban-green-left zealots" and says it will "further weaken national unity." In the past Alberta has threatened to walk out of the Canadian Confederation, as has been the case with Quebec and other Canadian provinces in the past.

Temporary Conservative opposition leader Andrew Sheer, who lost the last year's Canadian elections blamed "Trudeau's inaction has emboldened radical activists" and "Make no mistake: Justin Trudeau killed Teck Frontier."

## Investor and Insurer qualms

Due to the high cost of extraction in the oil sands industry Teck needed \$95 a barrel to break even and Canadian oil is selling for \$38. Low oil price is

due to recent coronavirus outbreak and the excess supply of crude. So the question is who was going to lend Teck \$15 billion, when the people who fund these projects are pulling out of the market?

Investors are taking climate crisis seriously and ensure they're considering the risks from emissions and higher temperatures. The World Bank in 2017 pledged to "no longer finance upstream oil and gas" after 2019. However, recently the Washington-based institution has announced it will provide \$55 million to aid for fossil fuel extraction in Guyana, with \$20 million to pay for training and \$35 million to revamp the banking and insurance sectors in the country.

Guyana, a tiny South American country of only 800,000 people and less than \$5,000 GDP per person in 2018, is expected to become one of the world's largest oil producers after U.S. firm ExxonMobil, along with the consortium partners Hess and China's state-owned CNOOC, found sites that could deliver eight billion barrels of oil.

Guyana in late February sent its first shipment of one million barrels to markets in Asia and the

## Canada oil-sands plan collapses

### Climate crisis pushing energy transition towards low-carbon products



A pond collects soil and water residue from oil-sands mining near Fort McMurray, Alberta. The oil sands account for 60 percent of Canada's oil output. (Photo: Ian Willms for The New York Times)

U.S. as part of a production-sharing agreement.

Voters in Guyana will head to the polls on Monday in a crucial election that will decide which party oversees an oil boom that is expected to transform the economy. Guyana could become one of the world's richest countries per capita – or another country marked with the resource curse, analysts say.

A growing number of global insurance firms are divesting from fossil fuels. French insurer Axa, the third-largest globally, said last year that it will be divesting \$700 million worth of interests in Canadian oil sands production and pipelines. The insurer said the oil sands are a very carbon-intensive industry "and a serious cause environmental pollution," and it would no longer invest in it.

Another example Zurich, the world's seventh biggest insurer, has shifted away from coal.

Insurance companies are increasingly affected by the consequences of climate change and selling holdings in oil sands companies and refusing to underwrite their operations.

The topic of insurance is prominent on the agenda of UN climate talks, where the focus is the lack of coverage for small islands and other nations most affected by rising sea levels and worsening droughts.



**TEHRAN (MNA)** – Consultations between a delegation from eastern Libya and Syrian officials regarding Turkish aggressions in both countries have drawn the attention of analysts.

Currently, the situation of foreign policy and military aggressions of Turkish

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in the regional countries is not desirable at all. One on hand, he has waged a war against the Syrian government and reports of attacks launched by the Turkish military and its terrorist groups against the Syrian army and villages are released every day.

## Damascus, Tobruk close relations against a common enemy

One the other hand, the Turkish military has become involved in military clashes in the Libyan front, especially Tripoli. Erdogan has sent military troops to Libya to support the Government of National Accord against the Libyan national army led by Khalifa Haftar.

In both fronts, there are reports of the Turkish military getting killed and their drones and equipment destroyed. Meanwhile, there has been a report that attracted the attention of many analysts who believe that this move is, in fact, the first action carried out by Arabs against Erdogan's aggression.

Recently, a delegation led by the Deputy Prime Minister of the Libyan government Abdulrahman Al-ahirash (based in Tobruk) and the Libyan Foreign Minister Abd Al-hadi Al-havij traveled to Syria. During the trip, the two sides signed a memorandum of understanding regarding the opening of diplomatic headquarters along with coordinating the stance of Damascus and Tobruk in

international circles.

The delegation also met with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and held talks on the fight against terrorism and countering Turkish actions. It appears that the focus of these talks is how to respond to Turkish aggression in both countries. The East Libyan government, which sees Erdogan against itself, has no choice but to come close to Syria in order to create unity against their common Enemy that is Turkey.

In the meantime, conflict arose between Turkey and Russia over Idlib in Syria. While the death toll of Turkish soldiers in Syria is reported, Erdogan maintains that Russia failed to comply with the agreements reached between Moscow and Ankara. Turkey claims that the Syrian army has violated agreements signed in Sochi and launch a series of attacks on its military. Russia sides with the Syrian army, however, Turkish aggression against Syria and its army is an indefensible action.

Erdogan is striving to convince Russian officials that the Turkish attacks in Syria are in fact in line with the fight against terrorism and that the response of the Syrian army to these aggressions disrupts the peace process in Syria.

It is true that Russia and Turkey have strategic ties, but it seems that they have encountered a conflict of interest over Idlib, with some analysts suggesting that Russia's support for Syria over the Idlib case is intended to make it possible for Moscow to put pressure on Turkey over Libya.

Disputes between Turkey and Russia emerged after an agreement on the delineation of maritime borders was signed between the Libyan Government of National Accord and Turkey within the framework of a security agreement. Many countries criticized the agreement. In addition to sending troops to Libya, Turkey has repeatedly transferred terrorists to the country from Syria in order to fight alongside the Libyan Government

of National Accord against the national army. Ankara's move to transfer these terrorists to Syria has also been controversial and has drawn criticism from many countries.

Erdogan's statements have been contradictory after military failures in both of these countries. Turkish President once speaks of supporting the demands of Syrian and Libyan nations, and later notes that Turkey is pursuing its interests in Syria and Libya.

Today, it appears the fight against terrorism has become a good excuse for Erdogan to initiate military intervention in Syria and Libya. However, Erdogan's effort to partner with US President Donald Trump to plunder Syria's oil resources should not be overlooked.

One cannot ignore the fact that Turkey's military aggression in Arab countries is due to differences and gaps between them, and Erdogan's dreams of Syria and Libya appear to be diminishing as Damascus and Tobruk come closer.



## Excavations suggest 6000-year-old administrative system in Iran

**HERITAGE** TEHRAN – Relics including seals, which have newly been unearthed in southeastern Kerman province, suggest that an administrative management system was practiced some 6000 years ago in the country.

“Evidence such as seals and other relics came to light from [recent] archaeological excavations in Tom Gavan [a village in Jiroft county of Kerman province] has proved an administrative management system was existed in the south of Kerman [province] at least 6,000 years ago,” IRNA quoted provincial tourism chief Fereydoon Fa’ali as saying on Wednesday.



“Based on evidence from Tom Gavan (excavations), this site was once an important pottery-making center near the Halil River,” the official stated.

Fa’ali said this archaeological season took two months to be finalized, adding “Listed on the National Cultural Heritage list, the ancient hill of Tom Gavan embraces three important cultural periods; the Chalcolithic; the Bronze Age, as well as Achaemenid and Parthian periods.”

The archaeological season, the first on Tom Gavan, was held in close collaboration between the Research Institute of Cultural Heritage & Tourism, he said.

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

## Emirates airline asks staff to take one month unpaid leave over coronavirus

**DUBAI (Reuters)** — Major international airline Emirates is asking staff to take unpaid leave for up to a month at a time due to the rapidly spreading coronavirus that has led to flight cancellations around the world.

Emirates has canceled flights to Iran, Bahrain and to most of China because of the virus, and countries around the world have placed strict restrictions on entry of foreigners.

The airline has more resources than it needs as a result of cutting frequencies or cancelling flights to some destinations, said Chief Operating Officer Adel al-Redha in a statement on Tuesday. “Considering the availability of additional resources and the fact that many employees want to utilize their leave, we have provided our employees the option to avail leave or apply for voluntary unpaid leave for up to one month at a time,” he said.

Emirates Group, the state-owned holding company that counts the airline among its assets, has asked staff to consider taking paid and unpaid leave as it seeks to manage a “measurable slowdown” in its business, Reuters reported on Sunday, citing an internal company email.

The group had more than 100,000 employees, including more than 21,000 cabin crew and 4,000 pilots, at the end of March 2019, the end of its last financial year.



## ROUND THE GLOBE

### Anjar

Anjar (meaning “unresolved or running river” (, located in modern Lebanon, is an example of an inland commercial center, at the crossroads of two important routes: one leading from Beirut to Damascus and the other crossing the Bekaa and leading from Homs to Tiberiade.

Founded during the Umayyad period under Caliph Walid Ibn Abd Al-Malak (705-715), the city of Anjar, bears outstanding witness to the Umayyad civilization.

The site of this ancient city was only discovered by archaeologists at the end of the 1940s. Excavations revealed a fortified city surrounded by walls and flanked by forty towers, a rectangular area (385 x 350 m).



Dominated by gates flanked by porticos, an important North-South axis and a lesser East-West axis, superposed above the main collectors for sewers, divide the city into four equal quadrants.

Public and private buildings are laid out according to a strict plan: the great palace of the Caliph and the Mosque in the South-East quarter occupies the highest part of the site, while the small palaces (harems) and the baths are located in the North-East quarter to facilitate the functioning and evacuation of waste waters.

Anjar was never completed, enjoying only a brief existence. In 744, Caliph Ibrahim, son of Walid, was defeated and afterwards the partially destroyed city was abandoned. Vestiges of the city of Anjar therefore constitute a unique example of 8th century town planning.

(Source: UNESCO)

# Tourism minister asks people to delay travels in face of coronavirus

**TOURISM** TEHRAN – Iranian tourism minister has asked people to postpone or reschedule tours so as to help the tourism industry deal with the coronavirus outbreak.

“My suggestion to my dear people is that they do not cancel their hotel reservations and domestic tours as far as possible in order to help the tourism industry and prevent it from bankruptcy by making their reservations in time after virus is controlled,” Ali-Asghar Mounesan said on Wednesday.

“Public health is a top priority for us in the tourism ministry as we were among the first bodies started collaborating with the Ministry of Health as soon as the coronavirus outbreak was announced in Iran. And at the first step we put restrictions on both inbound tours and domestic trips.

With cases of novel coronavirus reporting around the country and around the globe, potential travelers are wondering what this means when it comes to their personal safety—and for their upcoming trips with many have/aiming to cancel reservations or reschedule them.

As of Feb 23, Iran temporarily closed cultural heritage museums and historical sites in 15 provinces in a preventive measure amid fears of coronavirus outbreak.

Mounesan in January issued a statement, inviting all travelers and holiday-makers to visit the ancient land, saying that the country-size guesthouse is wholeheartedly ready to receive tourists from around the world.”

■ **Over \$16m returned over cancellations**

Deputy tourism minister Vali Teymouri said on Wednesday that more than 700 billion rials (over \$16 million) have so far been paid back to people who have cancelled their tour or hotel reservations over the coronavirus fears.

Teymouri also thanked “dear compatriots” and tourists for their cooperation with the “family of the tourism industry” in the country, who are considering the special economic conditions of the tourism activists at this time and attempt to postpone their travels to a more convenient time, if possible.

Domestic travel in Iran reaches its climax from mid-March to early April, a time corresponding to the Persian New Year (Noruz) holidays.

Iranians made 74 million overnight stays in their domestic trips during the Noruz holidays last year, which showed a 20 percent increase year on year.

■ **Global travel industry may not recover for years**

The travel boom has come to a screech-



ing halt since late January, when the novel coronavirus outbreak hit mainland China, and it could be years before the global tourism industry recovers.

An industry group has said the coronavirus could scythe \$560 billion from spending on corporate global travel this year, a 37 percent drop from its 2020 global expenditure forecast, as meetings and events are cancelled and companies limit travel to protect employees.

The U.S.-based Global Business Travel Association said late in February that two-thirds of polled members had postponed at least a few events, while 95 percent had suspended or cancelled most or all trips to China and 23 percent to European countries such as France, Germany

and Italy.

The virus was fundamentally affecting the way companies do business, said the association’s chief operating officer Scott Solombrino.

The growing death toll has sparked worldwide travel ramifications, forcing the cancellation of major conferences like Berlin’s ITB—the largest travel and tourism event in the world—closures of tourist sites such as the Louvre museum in Paris, airlines cancelling flights and companies cancelling business travel at alarming rates.

According to a recent Global Business Travel Association (GBTA) survey of 401 companies, 65% report that they have cancelled meetings or events due to the

**Domestic travel in Iran reaches its climax from mid-March to early April, a time corresponding to the Persian New Year (Noruz) holidays. Iranians made 74 million overnight stays in their domestic trips during the Noruz holidays last year, which showed a 20 percent increase year on year.**

## Oriental Institute and its Persian expeditions in 1930s

During the winter of 1930-31, the Oriental Institute organized a Persian Expedition to conduct excavations in the largely unexplored mountainous regions east and southeast of the Mesopotamian plain.

James Henry Breasted requested, and was granted, a concession to excavate the remains of Persepolis, an Achaemenid royal administrative center in the province of Fars.

Thanks to an anonymous benefactress, work started the same year under the direction of Ernst Herzfeld, Professor of Oriental Archaeology at the University of Berlin. Herzfeld served as director of the Persian Expedition until the end of 1934, when he was succeeded by Erich Schmidt, who continued to excavate in the region until 1939.

Over an eight-year period, the Persian Expedition worked not only in the royal center of Persepolis, but also at a number of sites that fell within a radius of 10 km. - the two prehistoric mounds of Tall-i Bakun, an Achaemenid tower and tombs of the Achaemenid kings at Naqsh-e Rostam, and portions of the Sasanian/Islamic city of Istakhr. In addition, Erich Schmidt led two air-reconnaissance and ground expeditions into the mountains of Luristan in 1935-36 and 1937.

■ **Persepolis**

Persepolis was founded as a royal administrative center by the Achaemenid king Darius I between 520 and 510 BC and was destroyed by the troops of Alexander the Great in 330 BC.

The Oriental Institute cleared and investigated most of the buildings that stand on the Achaemenid terrace, including the gatehouse of King Xerxes, the great audience hall (Apadana) with its monumental eastern stairway begun by Darius and finished by Xerxes; the treasury of the Persian kings; the residential areas; and fortifications including garrison quarters along the eastern edge of the terrace.

■ **Naqsh-e Rostam**

Over the course of several seasons, the Persian Expedition conducted archaeological excavations at Naqsh-e Rostam and recorded the major monuments on the site.

Darius the Great and his three succes-



sors chose the imposing cliff face at Naqsh-e Rostam, north of Persepolis, as the site of their rock-cut tombs. Near these tombs stands a square tower, which may have been built by Darius I to shelter the royal fire of the Achaemenid monarchs. Both the tower and the royal tombs were enclosed in a sacred precinct, whose outer wall, with rounded towers, was traced by Herzfeld. Further Oriental Institute excavations within the precinct revealed occupation extending from the Achaemenid into the Early Islamic period (ca. 500 BC-800 CE).

During the early Sasanian period (third-fourth centuries CE), numerous reliefs were carved into the foot of the rock-cut tombs, indicating that the site continued to play a

significant role during the reigns of later rulers.

■ **Tall-i Bakun**

The Oriental Institute excavated the two low mounds of Tall-i-Bakun, southeast of Persepolis, in 1932 and 1937. Mound A was found to contain at least four levels of prehistoric houses dating roughly to 4000 BC.

The main level was surprisingly well preserved, suggesting a sudden abandonment of the settlement. The walls of some of the houses were preserved to a height of 6-7 feet and bore the remains of geometric wall paintings in red and yellow. Resting on the floors, as though still in use, were knives and other household utensils, including cooking pots that still contained the bones of the meat that was being prepared in them.

**In 1935-36 and 1937, Erich Schmidt led two expeditions into the rugged mountains of Luristan. Both endeavors combined aerial surveys from the plane with archaeological excavations in an attempt to learn as much as possible about this little explored region of Iran.**

Much of the pottery found on Mound A bore elaborate painted designs of extraordinary beauty and sophistication.

Mound B was comprised of earlier remains (ca. 4600 BC) of a culture that used only unprinted wares.

■ **Flights over ancient Iranian cities and the Holmes expeditions to Luristan**

On August 7, 1935, a Waco biplane, donated by Erich Schmidt’s wife, Mary-Helen Warden Schmidt, arrived in Teheran. Over the next two years, Schmidt used the plane, which he christened “Friend of Iran,” to photographically document the sites he was excavating and to make aerial explorations of other parts of the country.

In 1935-36 and 1937, Erich Schmidt led two expeditions into the rugged mountains of Luristan. Both endeavors combined aerial surveys from the plane with archaeological excavations in an attempt to learn as much as possible about this little explored region of Iran.

In addition, the group prepared maps and compiled data concerning temperature, altitude, landscape, and the local population. They conducted brief excavations at more than a dozen sites, one of the most interesting of which was Surkh Dum-i-Luri in the Kuhdasht plain.

Here they cleared several levels of a sanctuary dating to the first half of the first millennium BC. The shrine contained quantities of votive offerings to the goddess Ninnil, including cylinder and stamp seals and quantities of bronze pins with elaborately decorated heads.

The Oriental Institute’s collection of bronzes from Surkh Dum-i-Luri is a unique corpus. It is the only large collection of excavated Luristan bronzes in the world. The vast majority of “Luristan Bronzes” are of unknown origin, and forgeries are common among them. The Oriental Institute’s collection plays a pivotal role in all efforts to define the characteristics - both stylistic and scientific - of excavated Luristan bronzes against which those purchased on the art-market can be evaluated.

(Source: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago)



# Post-coronavirus crisis looming for the environment

➔ However, people have not yet stopped panic buying face masks and other equipment to protect themselves from the fast-spreading coronavirus; with many negligently tossing their used face masks and gloves on the streets.

While an exact shelf life time period is dependent on what specific material the gloves are made of, a general rule is three years for disposable natural latex gloves and up to five years for disposable nitrile gloves.

That means more and more waste ends up in the landfills despite the environmental threat these kind of hazardous waste can cause both for the environment and people.

## Antiseptics: double-edged swords

Detergents are the second choice for people to prevent novel coronavirus infection, and these days many consumers are rushing to get these items from stores and shopping malls.

Detergents with certain compounds can be harmful to health as much as they can relieve people of disease.

Excessive consumption of detergents is a risk factor for environment in addition to water and soil resources; wastewater from these substances enters our life cycle and can come up with a health hazard, Mohammad Khaleqi, head of Bojnourd department of environment told IRNA on Wednesday.

There is no doubt that the environment is affected by the excessive use of detergents, so people are expected to be careful not to damage nature when taking care of their health, he added.



Single discarded latex glove on the street, used by people preventing coronavirus infection

Until recently, it was widely believed that antiseptics do not cause any harm, and do not affect human health or the environment. However, after conducting numerous studies and tests, some of their risks which can be caused by the excessive use of household antiseptics have emerged.

Some of these risks include affecting the environment, where it has become clear that some of the substances used in household antiseptics, especially aerosols, may contaminate the air. In addition, they are dangerous if applied to the skin continuously; though they eliminate harmful organisms, they also kill useful microorganisms located under

the layers of the skin, which helps the cells to renew and wounds to heal.

Moreover, a recent American study has revealed a major surprise that might make using antiseptics a real public health hazard. The study revealed that they help creating advanced types of germs and bacteria that are difficult to eradicate, according to the Biblex website.

## 40% rise in water consumption

Following outbreak of the coronavirus in Iran, water consumption has climbed up due to hand washing and cleaning possessions, ISNA reported.

Furthermore, Norouz (Persian New Year)

is approaching and every year during the same period water consumption rate increases because home cleaning is at its peak; but water consumption in Tehran raised by 14 percent, which is unusually high.

In normal conditions, however, average water consumption in Tehran is 2.5 times more than the global average, so the infectious disease has only made a bad situation worse.

Increasing consumption in the past few days has led to water pressure in some areas in Tehran and other provinces of the country as some of the cities faced cuts.

Kerman province's Water and Wastewater Company announced that the outbreak of coronavirus has increased water consumption in Kerman city by 40 percent.

A 15 percent increase in water consumption in Ahvaz city is another report published by the news agencies in recent days.

## Panic not the way to survive

Given the climate change pressures, if the condition continues, environmental damages are likely to add insult to injury; and there can be a post-coronavirus crisis globally.

Governments needs to be more vigilant on waste disposal and defining strict rules on discarded medical equipment in the urban areas, fining the violators would come efficient in some cases.

Make people more aware of the time when they have to use face masks and other self-protection equipment.

People must also be more cautious in emergency situations, not to be easily effected by fear but to broad their vision to the future and act more sensible.

## Eskandar Firouz, father of Iran's environment protection, dies at 93



## ENVIRONMENT

d e s k

TEHRAN — Eskandar Firouz, founder and first head of Department of Environment (DOE) in Iran, passed away at the age of 93.

Today's DOE was first set up as a fishing and hunting regulatory agency by Firouz who was called the father of Iran's environment protection, headed the department for 10 years and was the first person who actually introduced the concept of environment to the Iranian within a legal framework, Mehr reported on Wednesday.

Firouz was the first ever Iranian appointed as the vice-president for United Nations Conference on the Hu-

man Environment, held in Stockholm in 1972. He was a member of the presiding board of International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in 1973-75.

With his efforts, four protected areas of Iran were designated as national parks, wildlife refuges, protected areas, and natural national monuments.

In an interview with Zistboom, an environmental website, published on March 5 2015, Firouz regretted that not so many countries in the world has ever harmed its environment as Iran. So, managers must understand that environment should be a priority in all decision making processes.

## Armenia supports Iran in fighting coronavirus outbreak



## SOCIETY

d e s k

TEHRAN — Armenian Health Minister Arsen Torosyan in a phone conversation with his Iranian counterpart Saeed Namaki on Tuesday voiced support for Iran against COVID-19 outbreak.

Torosyan also appreciated Iran's efforts against coronavirus outbreak, highlighting the role of health system, ISNA reported.

He also expressed his solidarity with the Iranian nation in the fight against the infectious disease and expressed hope that the country would soon overcome the problem.

The Iranian official, for his part, assured that Iran's measures in containing the virus spread are in line with international approaches, saying that sufficient laboratory and therapeutic capacities have

been developed in Iran.

The two ministers agreed to communicate in an organized manner in order to exchange information and experience.

Torosyan also held a meeting with Abbas Badakhshan-Zohouri, the ambassador of Iran to Armenia. During the meeting, the two officials emphasized the need for bilateral cooperation in the fight against the disease, and the need to pay attention to credible information on the outbreak.

The exchange of information and experiences between the two countries in the field of health, and the cooperation between the Pasteur Institute of Iran and the Armenian research centers were other issues that have been discussed.

## ENGLISH IN USE

### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ↔ E

## Tehran to host INOTEX 2020 in June

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

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

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

Established in 2012, INOTEX is a platform for innovation and technology, which seeks to introduce latest technologies to large and medium-sized industries in addition to connecting customers of technology products to their manufacturers, and also introduces investors to the opportunity to invest in technological projects or start-ups.

## تهران میزبان نمایشگاه اینوتکس ۲۰۲۰ در خرداد

نهمین نمایشگاه بین المللی نوآوری و فناوری (اینوتکس ۲۰۲۰) با شعار «اکوسیستم نوآوری و فناوری زیر یک سقف» ۱۸ تا ۲۱ خرداد ماه سال ۹۹ در محل دائمی نمایشگاه‌های بین‌المللی تهران برگزار می‌شود.

به گزارش ایرنا، نمایشگاه اینوتکس با هدف اصلی «جذب سرمایه برای استارت‌آپ‌ها و شرکت‌ها و نیز معرفی فرصت‌های نوین سرمایه‌گذاری» برگزار می‌شود.

این نمایشگاه بر سه حوزه «هوشمندسازی»، «دیجیتال» و «توسعه پایدار» تمرکز می‌کند. اطلاع از آخرین تغییرات نوآوری منطقه، آموزش آخرین استراتژی‌های کارآفرینی با حضور فعال کارشناسان و صاحب‌نظران ملی و بین‌المللی، یافتن بازار جدید برای محصولات و خدمات، و نیز جذب سرمایه برای استارت‌آپ‌ها و شرکت‌ها، از دیگر فرصت‌هایی است که برای شرکت‌کنندگان در نمایشگاه اینوتکس وجود دارد.

پیش‌بینی می‌شود بیش از ۱۸ هزار نفر از این نمایشگاه بازدید خواهند کرد. بیش از ۵۰۰ شرکت، استارت‌آپ، و سرمایه‌گذار در این نمایشگاه غرفه خواهند داشت و بیش از ۶۰۰ جلسه «۲» و بیش از ۲۰ رویداد جانبی برگزار خواهد شد.

## PREFIX/SUFFIX

### “bi-, bin-, bis-”

■ **Meaning:** two or twice

■ **For example:** *Biscuit* comes from the French meaning twice-cooked.

## PHRASAL VERB

### Opt in

■ **Explanation:** to decide to join a group or system

■ **For example:** Employees have the choice to opt in to the scheme.

## IDIOM

### Cross your mind

■ **Explanation:** If an idea or thought crosses your mind, you suddenly think of it

■ **For example:** It just crossed my mind that the shops are closed today.

## Hundreds of natural resource projects to come on stream

## ENVIRONMENT

d e s k

TEHRAN — Some 863 natural resource conservation projects will be inaugurated during National Week of Natural Resources on March 6-13, Khosro Shahbazi, head of the Forests, Range, and Watershed Management Organization (FRWMO), has said.



National Week of Natural Resources is marked annually in Iran, starting on March 6 as National Tree Planting Day.

Iran has remarkable climatic and topographic diversity, enjoying 11 climates out of 15 world-known climates.

According to botanists and researchers, the number of plant species in Iran is 8,425 species that are scattered over 85 million hectares of the country.

Tarohom Behzad, deputy head of the FRWMO, stated that some 1,632 tons of medicinal herbs worth €15 million have been exported from the country since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2019).

## Outdoor air pollution cuts three years from human lifespan – study

Humans are missing out on almost three years of life expectancy on average because of outdoor air pollution, researchers have found.

However, the study reveals more than a year of life expectancy could be clawed back if fossil fuel emissions are cut to zero, while if all controllable air pollution is cut – a category that does not include particles from natural wildfires or wind-born dust – global life expectancy could rise by more than 20 months.

“This corroborates that fossil fuel-generated air pollution qualifies as a major global health risk factor by itself,” the authors write.

The study builds on the team's previous research that confirmed about 8.8m early deaths a year worldwide, twice the figure from prior estimates, are caused by outdoor air pollution, with the new work examining the issue both for the world as a whole, and in detail for particular regions and countries.

“The loss of life expectancy from air pollution is much higher than many other risk factors, and even higher than smoking,” said co-author Prof Jos Lelieveld of the Max Planck Institute for Chemistry. “That was quite unexpected, I must say.”

As with the team's previous work, the new study draws on a recently developed model of the impact of fine particulate matter known as PM2.5 on the body, as well as a model for the impact of ozone, levels of exposure to these pollutants, and population and mortality figures for 2015.

From this data, the team calculated the proportion of early deaths that could be attributed to outdoor air pollution across six categories, including unspecified non-communicable diseases – a category that encompasses conditions such as high blood pressure and diabetes.

The results reveal that, globally, 2.9 years of life expectancy on average are lost because of outdoor air pollution – a bigger toll than tobacco smoking (2.2 years lost), violence (0.3 years lost), HIV/Aids (0.7 years lost) and diseases spread by parasites and other vectors (0.6 years lost).

(Source: The Guardian)

## WORDS IN THE NEWS

### People of Hungary vote ‘Yes’

(April 14, 2003)

The people of Hungary have voted «yes» to EU membership in a legally binding referendum. But the percentage of voters was low, suggesting that many Hungarians expressed their disapproval or fears about membership by not voting. This report by Nick Thorpe: Fireworks lit up the night sky over the River Danube in Budapest to the tune of Beethoven's 9th Symphony after the results were announced. According to preliminary, unofficial figures, a large majority, some eighty-four per cent, voted **in favor**. But **turnout** was extremely disappointing, only around forty-five per cent of **eligible voters**. This was much less than the **resounding** «yes» the government had been hoping for and somewhat embarrassing for Hungary.

The Prime Minister, Peter Medgyessy, **put a brave face** on the result nevertheless. The citizens of Hungary, he said, in a speech in front of the Academy of Sciences, like good parents, had provided a future for their children. **Rival** explanations have been **advanced** for the poor turnout. The **campaign** was **one-sided** with no state funds at all provided for the small civil groups campaigning for a «no» vote.

Many Hungarians expressed their worries about **accession** by staying away. But the result was valid, so the Prime Minister is now authorized to sign the accession treaty next week in Athens, and Hungary will join the union in May next year.

## Words

**in favor:** in support

**turnout:** the turnout in an election or referendum is the number of people who vote in it

**eligible voters:** people allowed to vote

**resounding:** very great, definite

**put a brave face on:** if you put a brave face on a difficult situation, you pretend that the situation is better than it really is

**rival:** alternative, competing

**advanced:** If you advance an explanation for something you give reasons for it

**campaign:** a set of activities planned to achieve something such as social or political change

**one-sided:** In a one-sided activity, one of the sides involved does much more or is much stronger than the other, and not all the facts are made clear

**accession:** membership

(Source: BBC)



## U.S. deploys Patriots at Ain al-Assad

➔ **1** Questioned about the delay in deploying the system, Esper told reporters the Iraqi government, which apparently is divided over the U.S. military presence in the country, has yet to give it the go-ahead. “We need the permission of the Iraqis,” he said. “That’s one issue. There may be others with regard to placement and things like that,” AFP reported.

General Mark Milley, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, noted that a Patriot battalion is a relatively large organization, and the mechanics of deploying one to Iraq “will have to be worked out. And that is, in fact, ongoing.”

On January 5, the Iraqi parliament voted in favor of the withdrawal of U.S. forces from the country. Coalition operations have been suspended since then.

U.S. President Donald Trump has refused to discuss the withdrawal and instead threatened to seize about \$35 billion of Iraqi oil revenues held in a bank account in New York.

Iran launched 11 missiles at a U.S. air base at Ain al-Assad on January 8 in retaliation for the killing days earlier of Iranian General Qassem Soleimani in a U.S. drone strike in Baghdad.

No U.S. troops were killed but dozens suffered traumatic brain injuries from the explosions, and Washington wants to deploy Patriot missiles to better protect the bases, which house some of the 5,200 U.S. military personnel deployed in Iraq.

Iraq denounced Soleimani’s killing as an assault on its sovereignty, and charged that the international coalition in Iraq had overstepped its mandate.

## U.S. conducts first air strike against Taliban since peace deal

➔ **1** He said, however, the U.S. was committed to peace but called on the Taliban to stop “needless attacks” and uphold their commitments.

The agreement, which was finalized after more than a year and a half of negotiations, paves the way for the withdrawal of all U.S. and NATO troops from Afghanistan and a commitment by the Taliban that Afghan territory will not be used to launch attacks on other countries.

The Taliban had, earlier on Wednesday, killed at least 16 Afghan soldiers and policemen in a string of overnight attacks, government officials told AFP news agency.

“Taliban fighters attacked at least three army outposts in Imam Sahib district of Kunduz last night, killing at least 10 soldiers and four police,” a member of the provincial council, Safiullah Amiri, said.

The Taliban also attacked police in central Uruzgan province on Tuesday night.

The violence has cast a pall on the nascent Afghan peace process, with the armed group clashing with Kabul over a prisoner exchange dispute before talks that are due to begin on March 10.

■ **‘Very good talk’**  
President Trump on Tuesday said he held a “very good talk” with a Taliban leader in what may be the first direct discussion between a U.S. leader and a senior Taliban official.

Taliban’s chief negotiator, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, and Trump held a 35-minute telephone call, a Taliban spokesman said, with Trump later confirming the call to reporters at the White House.

In an emailed statement later, Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said Trump told Baradar that U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo would soon speak to Afghan President Ashraf Ghani “so that the barriers against the inter-Afghan talks get removed”.

At least three people were killed on Monday in a football stadium blast in Khost province after President Ghani rejected prisoner swap deal that would see the release of 5,000 Taliban prisoners.

The Taliban has said it will not begin talks with the Afghan government as envisaged in the agreement until the prisoner release takes place.

The Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission expressed concern about the prisoner release in a letter to U.S. officials, the Taliban and the Afghan government.

*(Source: agencies)*

## Turkey failed to honor Idlib deal, allowed outposts to merge with terrorist fortifications: Russia

Moscow says Ankara has failed to live up to its commitments under a deal to enforce a demilitarized zone in Idlib, complaining that the Turkish military has allowed its observation posts to merge with terrorist fortifications in the northwestern Syrian province.

In a statement released on Wednesday, Russian Defense Ministry Spokesman Major General Igor Konashenkov blasted Turkey for amassing troops in Idlib and the Western countries for turning a blind eye to the unlawful military build-up.

“No one in the West notices the actions of the Turkish side, which, in violation of international law, has deployed a strike force the size of a mechanized division to Syria’s Idlib,” he said.

Terrorist fortifications have merged with Turkish outposts in Idlib, said the official, adding that “attacks and mass artillery fire on neighboring civilian settlements and the Russian airbase at Khmeimim turned from sporadic to daily.”

“Amid the total cynicism and the West’s fake concerns over the humanitarian situation in the Idlib de-escalation zone, only the Russian center for reconciliation of the opposing sides and the legitimate Syrian government deliver to the liberated areas all the needed assistance for local residents daily,” he said.

“All of Russia’s official requests to the UN and Western countries — who delivered humanitarian aid across the Turkish border and all of it went not to refugees, but to terrorists — remained unanswered. All we heard were the lamentations about the need to ‘preserve the Sochi agreements at all costs,’” he added.

■ **Kremlin hopes Putin, Erdogan can reach ‘common understanding’**

Meanwhile, the Kremlin expressed hope on Wednesday that Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Turkish counterpart, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, would agree on a set of joint measures regarding Idlib during their meeting on Thursday.

“We plan to discuss the Idlib crisis... We expect to reach a common understanding on the crisis, the cause of the crisis, the harmful effects of the crisis and arrive at a set of necessary joint measures,” he told reporters.

eanwhile, Erdogan said that he expects his talks with Putin to result in the rapid achievement of a ceasefire in Idlib.

He further called on European states to comply with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in dealing with the Syria refugee issue.

“If European countries want to solve the migration crisis, they should support Turkey’s political and humanitarian solutions in Syria,” the Turkish president said.

He also claimed that since the beginning of the Idlib operation, Turkey has “neutralized” 3,138 Syrian troops and destroyed “151 tanks, 100 artillery units, three warplanes, eight helicopters, eight air defense systems, 10 ammunition dumps, 60 armored vehicles and 47 howitzers.”

*(Source: agencies)*

# Widespread outbreak of coronavirus in Saudi Arabia and WHO responsibility

**INTERNATIONAL DESK** **TEHRAN** — With the spread of coronavirus known as COVID-19 in many countries, some states have attempted to block any information about the outbreak of the virus.

One of these states is Saudi Arabia, which has long been trying to spread fake news and launch a psychological warfare against other countries, especially its neighbors.

In this attempt, Riyadh has established a highly-equipped cyber center called “Etidal” and bought shares of several international media outlets, such as the BBC Persian and Twitter.

Now, Saudi Arabia has made every effort to introduce the Islamic Republic of Iran as the epicenter of the coronavirus outbreak in the wake of the havoc caused by the virus, and thus complete the puzzle of Western maximum pressure campaign against the Iranian nation.

The Saudi regime has not released any news about the outbreak of the disease in the kingdom in recent days or weeks. It is just trying to cover up the issue.

However, the Saudi daily Al Watan has challenged this secrecy through a report.

The newspaper reported that scientific studies have shown that bats of Jazan, a port city in Saudi Arabia, are one of the sources that transmit many viruses to animals and humans. In 2012, the MERS-coronavirus was transmitted from bats to camels and then to humans in Saudi Arabia.

The paper added that based on published information, the bats greatly breed at the right temperature and have recently been seen in residential areas and even in the King Fahad Hospital.



The report, along with news that released two days ago about the preparation of 25 hospitals to handle the coronavirus cases, reveals that Saudi Arabia has resorted to secrecy, just as what it did in the case of the MERS-CoV in 2012.

Now, there is a speculation that a similar situation is happening about the outbreak of COVID-19.

MERS-CoV, with about 30% of mortal-

ity rate, is a very dangerous virus related to SARS-CoV. The virus was first reported in Saudi Arabia and led to large casualties due to the inadequacy of the country’s health-care system, but Riyadh did not allow the facts about the virus fatalities to be revealed through a grave secrecy.

This widespread secrecy can be noted in at least two aspects: first, the lives of the Saudi citizens are in serious danger. Sec-

ond, the lack of transparent information can make Saudi Arabia the epicenter of the coronavirus outbreak in the Middle East and then the world.

The World Health Organization (WHO) needs to send its experts to Saudi Arabia to reveal the facts about the coronavirus spread, assess the country’s readiness to handle and treat the patients and to present the results to the public.

## Super Tuesday: Biden wins 9 states, Sanders takes California

A resurgent Joe Biden has scored sweeping victories across the United States with the backing of a diverse coalition and progressive rival Bernie Sanders seized Super Tuesday’s biggest prize with a win in California as the Democratic Party’s once-crowded presidential field became a two-man contest.

The two Democrats, lifelong politicians with starkly different visions for the U.S.’s future, were battling for delegates as 14 states and one U.S. territory held a series of high-stakes elections that marked the most significant day of voting in the party’s 2020 presidential nomination fight. The winner of the primary season will take on President Donald Trump in the November general election.

The other two high-profile candidates still in the shrinking Democratic field, New York billionaire Mike Bloomberg and Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren, were teetering on the edge of viability. Warren finished in a disappointing third place in her home state and Bloomberg planned to reassess his candidacy on Wednesday after spending more than half-a-billion dollars to score a single victory - in American Samoa.

The contours of a nomination fight pitting Biden against Sanders, each leading coalitions of disparate demographics and political beliefs, were crystallizing by day’s end as the former vice president and the three-term senator spoke of and to each other through dueling victory speeches 4,000 kilometers (2,500 miles) apart on Tuesday night, even if they avoided using each other’s name.

“People are talking about a revolution. We started a movement,” Biden charged in Los Angeles, knocking one of Sanders’ signature calls for a “political revolution”.

Without citing his surging rival by name, Sanders swiped



at Biden from Burlington, Vermont.

“You cannot beat Trump with the same-old, same-old kind of politics,” Sanders declared, ticking down a list of past policy differences with Biden on Social Security, trade and military force.

“This will become a contrast in ideas,” he added. “We’re going to win the Democratic nomination and we are going to defeat the most dangerous president in the history of this country.”

■ **Stark choice**

The balance of Super Tuesday’s battlefield - with Biden winning at least nine states and Sanders four - raised questions about whether the Democratic primary contest will stretch all the way to the July convention or be decided much sooner.

Biden’s strong finish punctuated a dramatic turnaround in the span of just three days when he leveraged a blowout victory in South Carolina to score sweeping victories on

## Severe storms remain a danger for U.S. south after deadly tornadoes

Residents in the southern United States are bracing for more severe thunderstorms following tornadoes on Tuesday that killed dozens of people in Tennessee.

A slow-moving system is likely to bring more heavy rain along with the threat of major storms to a region that was plagued by heavy rain and flooding last month.

The peak of the latest rain event is expected late on Wednesday into Thursday and locals are on alert for dangerous flash floods.

The region from Texas to South Carolina

is expected to see the worst of the rain, with anywhere from 50mm to 150mm accumulating in the coming days.

The National Weather Service (NWS) has issued flash flood watches from eastern Louisiana into central and southern Mississippi, much of Alabama, Georgia and the western Florida panhandle.

As well as the threat of tornadoes, the storms are forecast to bring damaging winds and large hail.

More than 80 river gauges across the south are still reporting levels above flood stage,

with this additional heavy rain threatening to prolong existing river flooding and trigger new dangerously high levels elsewhere.

Meanwhile, on Tuesday, the NWS-Nashville began surveying the damage from tornadoes that hit the city of Nashville and surrounding areas in Tennessee, killing at least 25 people.

The actual number of tornadoes remains unknown, but the NWS in Nashville confirmed that at least one EF3 tornado, with winds of 220 kilometers (137 miles) per hour to 265km/h (165m/h), hitting the Nashville

metro area.

“Looks like it’s quite possible we had one or maybe two, long-track tornadoes across Davidson, Wilson and Smith counties,” NWS-Nashville said on Twitter on Tuesday evening.

“In the coming days, we will determine if these tornado paths are actually one or two tornadoes.”

With a further survey of Putnam County still to take place, the actual number of tornadoes might not be confirmed until the end of the week.

*(Source: al Jazeera)*

## India & Pakistan officially becoming nuclear powers would spell ‘disaster’ for non-proliferation treaty: Moscow

Extending the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty on the entire world is generally a good idea, but an official recognition of India and Pakistan as nuclear powers is not – their accession to the pact would ruin it, Moscow warned.

“The fact that Pakistan, India and Israel – according to some estimates – possess nuclear weapons does not indeed help strengthen the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty [NPT],” Vladimir Yermakov, head of the Russian foreign ministry’s arms control and non-proliferation department, told media on Wednesday.

At any rate, pushing India and Pakistan – two nuclear-armed neighbors and foes – towards joining the 1968 pact “would be disastrous for the treaty itself,” the diplomat warned, without delving into details.

Arch-rivals for several decades, both Pakistan and India embarked on a race to build nuclear weapons in a bid to secure wartime superiority over one another. Almost a year ago, Islamabad and New Delhi reportedly put their nuclear arsenals on high alert when a series of cross-border airstrikes pushed them to the brink of an all-out war – until mutual diplomatic effort and good will defused that crisis.

Russia is willing to see the NPT cover the whole world, “but



this is not always easy here,” Yermakov pointed out. At least, he said, “both India and Pakistan have a generally positive attitude towards the NPT, while not being parties to this agreement.”

Opened for signature in 1968, the treaty actually came into force in 1970 and was extended for an indefinite period of time in 1995. It specifically defines five nuclear-weapon states – the United States, Russia, the UK, France, and China – that have either built or tested a nuclear explosive

device before January 1, 1967.

Since that time, the NPT remains the most universal strategic arms control treaty in history – and one of the most sustainable ones, given the fate of two milestone accords signed by the nuclear superpowers, the U.S. and Russia.

One of them, the 1987 Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF) was buried by the U.S. last year, when it quit the accord, citing vague allegations about Russia’s non-compliance with it. Moscow opposed the move, arguing that torpedoing the pact – which outright banned the entire classes of short- and medium-range missiles – would not make the world any safer.

Another one, the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (or New START), now hangs in the balance. Moscow and Washington signed the current edition of the accord back in 2010, agreeing to cut the number of warheads and their carriers following a series of tough negotiations.

The New START is due to expire in February 2021, but the U.S. isn’t inclined to keep the treaty going, it seems – although Moscow is openly signalling its readiness to prolong the pact without preliminary conditions.

*(Source: RT)*



# The U.S. sanctions forced Wilmots to quit Iran

**S P O R T S TEHRAN** — Belgian coach Marc Wilmots has said that he parted company with Iran national football team after the Iranian officials failed to pay his wages due to the U.S. sanctions.

He left his role as head coach of Team Melli, just seven months after replacing Carlos Queiroz at the helm of the three-time Asian champions.

"Two years after parting company with Ivory Coast, I received an offer from Iran last year. It was a great project for the next three years until the 2022 World Cup in Qatar. However, we parted ways at the end of the last year because we have not been paid for five months. Besides me, my assistants were not paid," Marc Wilmots said in an interview with RTV Slovenija.

"Iran national football team have players who are physically strong and skilled. Their Performance Elite Center (PEC) is one of the world's most advanced center. I didn't want to work in Team Melli but thinking about Carlos Queiroz, who worked there for eight years, I decided to accept their offer. I thought, that means you can work long term and set up the system," he went on to say.

"The Iranian national team play more defensively, and I started to introduce more offensive tactics. The start was great. We beat Syria 5-0, we drew 1-1 with South Korea and defeated Cambodia 14-0. After political disputes with the U.S., the atmosphere in the country was getting worse and worse, and above all, the federation was running out of funds," the Belgian coach added.

"Now I have time. There are offers but I have time to decide. I don't want to rush into a hasty decision. I want to change my mind and decide on the right offer. I don't care if I work at a club or a national team," Wilmots said.



## Iran confirms postponement of leagues till March 19



**S P O R T S TEHRAN** — Iran Football Organization released a statement announcing that all football competitions of every level in Iran have been postponed until the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 19, 2020).

"Following the order of Coronavirus Combat and Prevention Headquarters, all the Iran Professional League (IPL), First, Second and Third Divisions matches have been postponed till March 19, 2020," the statement reads.

"The tournament is scheduled to resume on April 2, 2020," it adds.

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

The escalating outbreak in Iran has killed 92 people and infected 2922, according to Iran's Health Ministry on Wednesday. Also, in some 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.

## Iranian volleyball team learn fate at Asian Club Volleyball C'ship



**S P O R T S TEHRAN** — Iran's Shahrdari Varamin have discovered their opponents at the 2020 Asian Men's Club Volleyball Championship.

A total of 14 teams plus one host side have already confirmed participation in this championship, which will be held simultaneously at The Mall Korat Shopping Mall's MCC Hall and Terminal 21 Shopping Mall's Terminal Hall from April 18 to 25.

Shahrdari of Iran have been pitted against Vietnam, Thailand B and Korea in Pool B.

Pool A consists of Thailand A, Australia

and Hong Kong.

Japan, Chinese Taipei, Kazakhstan and Philippines are in Pool C and Pool D included Qatar, Sri Lanka, China and Uzbekistan.

The Asian Men's Club Volleyball Championship is an international volleyball competition in Asia and Oceania contested by the men's clubs of the members of Asian Volleyball Confederation (AVC), the sport's continent governing body.

The current champions are Shahrdari Varamin, which won their second title at the 2019 tournament.

## Swimming: Le Clos had no doubt that Sun Yang was a 'dirty swimmer'

**CAPE TOWN (Reuters)** — South African Olympic champion Chad le Clos says he had no doubt that Chinese swimmer Sun Yang was cheating and believes he was robbed of his special gold medal moment at the 2016 Games in Rio de Janeiro.

Sun, a multiple world and Olympic champion, was banned for eight years last Friday for missing an out-of-competition test in 2018, and Le Clos, who lost to his rival in the 200-metres freestyle final in Rio de Janeiro four years ago, believes justice has been done.

"It's absolutely no surprise to me. He failed two drug tests in 2014. We've all known that he's a dirty swimmer," Le Clos told South Africa's Eye Witness News on Wednesday.

"It's not just me who knows this, it's the whole swimming community. Finally, he's being punished."

"I was ahead by a long way with 50 meters to go in that race, but Sun Yang came past me. He was the only man who did that, and that says it all really."

"I broke the (South African) national record, the African record and Sun passed me like I was standing still in the last 25 meters, which is unheard of."



Le Clos wants his silver medal to be upgraded, which would secure a second Olympic gold after he also collected a win in the 200-metres butterfly in London in 2012.

"I believe the guy who came in ninth should be awarded eighth. I believe the guy who finished seventeenth should be awarded sixteenth and, of course, I believe I deserve

that gold medal," he said.

Le Clos added he will forever regret having lost the chance to celebrate another Olympic win.

"I want it for my record. (But) I lost a moment. When Wayde (van Niekerk) and Caster (Semenya) won in 2016, it was huge. Everyone (in South Africa) was so happy."

"When the Springboks won the Rugby World Cup (in 2019), and when I won in London, those were huge moments. I didn't get that."

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

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

Sun, who is one of China's top athletes having won two gold medals at the 2012 London Olympic games and another in Rio, has denied wrong-doing and will appeal the CAS verdict.

## Teams in Abu Dhabi hotel instructed to remain in quarantine until March 14

**DUBAI (Reuters)** — Cycling teams confined to a luxury Abu Dhabi hotel have been instructed by the state's health authorities to remain in quarantine until March 14 due to coronavirus concerns, several team members said on Wednesday.

Emirati authorities ordered the lockdown of the Crown Plaza in Yas Island and the nearby W hotel after two Italian participants involved in last week's UAE Tour were suspected of contracting coronavirus.

Members of the French teams Cofidis and Groupama-FDJ as well as Russian outfit Gazprom — including 18 riders — have been confined to the fourth floor of the Crowne Plaza since Thursday.

The health ministry said on Tuesday that six new cases relating to the cycling event

had been discovered. They were identified as Russian, Italian, German and Colombian nationals but it was not clear if they had been confined to either of the hotels.

"All of our riders and staff in the UAE have been tested negative for Covid-19. Still several positive results - not involving our team - have been reported inside our hotel," FDJ said in a statement.

"As a consequence, we got informed by the president of the UCI (International Cycling Union) that our 12 employees are required to observe a quarantine period until March 14, 2020."

FDJ still have four riders — Frenchmen Arnaud Demare and David Gaudu, Dutchman Ramon Sinkeldam and Lithuanian Ignatas Konovalovas — two sports directors, three

team assistants, two mechanics and one doctor locked in at the hotel.

A manager of the French Cofidis team threatened to go on hunger strike on Tuesday if authorities did not allow his team to leave the country.

The W hotel was housing media and other guests attending last week's tour.

It was unclear if the quarantine decision applies to all the guests confined to the two hotels.

The Emirati government and hotel representatives did not immediately respond to Reuters' requests for comment.

The UAE, a regional business hub and major transit point for passengers traveling to China and other destinations in Asia, said the number of coronavirus infected cases in the country had risen to 27.



## Iran karate star Hamideh Abbasali to undergo surgery in Germany

**MNA** — Hamideh Abbasali, who has won two Karate 1-Premier League titles this season and booked a place in 2020 Olympics, will undergo surgery in Germany's Hannover on Thursday.

She was injured in the final bout of -68kg category against Italy's Clio Ferracuti. She was rushed to a hospital after the game ended with a 2-1 win for her. The injury sparked fears that Abbasali might miss the upcoming 2020 Olympics.

Initial reports indicated that she had suffered a sprained MCL and can be sidelined for six weeks. Iran karate federation intended at first to treat the injured star in Iran but the decision has changed and she will receive required treatment in Germany's Hannover.

Dr. Babak Zargar Amini will perform the surgery. He has already performed surgery on Iran's Olympic gold medalist Sohrab Moradi.

"After required coordination with the federation, Abbasali was transferred to Hannover from Salzburg yesterday," Dr. Amini said on Tuesday. He went on to say that the MRI scan indicated that Abbasali has torn PCL but fortunately there is no problem with the meniscus.

"This is a severe injury and there is a limited time till the Olympics, so it was decided that she would stay in here and go under surgery on Thursday by my team," said the doctor, adding that she will be sent to Tehran after gaining a partial recovery.

He said that the most modern methods will be used in the surgery, hoping that the athlete would reach the 2020 Olympics.

## Iranian-born Saeid Mollaei free to compete for Mongolia

**S P O R T S TEHRAN** — Iranian-born former world champion judoka Saeid Mollaei is free to compete for Mongolia, the International Olympic Committee confirmed.

Mollaei's switch did not need permission from Iranian Olympic officials, IOC spokesman Mark Adams said.

In October, the International Judo Federation said it had banned Iran from international competition over the country's refusal to face Israeli opponents.

Iran said the ban was based on «false claims» and has an April 8 appeal hearing against the IJF at the Court of Arbitration for Sport.

Mollaei, the 2018 world champion in the under-81 kilograms category, made his debut for Mongolia at the IJF World Judo Masters in Qingdao in December.

Since its Islamic Revolution in 1979, Iran has refused to recognize Israel.

Mollaei's change was one of 11 approved by the IOC's ruling body.

Mollaei, who has been living in Germany, may now qualify for the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo.

## Iran still 22nd in FIBA World Ranking

Iran national basketball team remained in 22nd place at the FIBA World Ranking after an exciting first window of the FIBA Continental Cup 2021 Qualifiers.

USA maintained their number one status (781.6) in the ranking and Iran is the best Asian team (428.7).

The most recent ranking update is the final one ahead of the Tokyo Olympics and will be used to determine the seeding for the Tokyo 2020 Men's Olympic Basketball Tournament Draw.

The biggest risers were South Sudan, Kenya, Burundi and Luxembourg.

Following FIBA AfroBasket 2021 Pre-Qualifiers action in January, South Sudan (86.4) moved up 16 spots into 107th place, Kenya (72.7) rose by 11 and are now ranked 122nd, while Burundi (67.9) gained nine positions and are 126th and Luxembourg (110.9) also climbed nine spots to 77th.

(Source: FIBA.com)

## Iran Boxing Captain Rouzbahani Out of 2020 Olympics

**TASNIM** — Ehsan Rouzbahani, Iran national boxing team's captain, was knocked out of the Asia-Oceania Olympic boxing qualifier for Tokyo 2020.

In the competition underway in Amman, Jordan, Rouzbahani lost to his Chinese rival Daxiang Chen at the light-heavyweight in his first match.

The event was initially due to take place in the Chinese city of Wuhan, but was relocated due to the coronavirus outbreak.

Thirty-five countries and 221 boxers are competing at the event, with 41 men's and 22 women's berths up for grabs at the Olympics.

Iran has sent eight boxers to the event.

## Tokyo 2020 Olympics committee steps up health measures for torch relay

**TOKYO (Reuters)** — Tokyo 2020 Olympics organizing committee said on Wednesday it had stepped up its measures to protect the health of runners and spectators for the torch relay as the coronavirus spreads nationwide.

The measures will include limiting the number of visitors to venues and monitoring the health of runners, the committee said in a statement.

Details of specific relay events will be reviewed based on the infection status of each prefecture, the committee said.



INTERNATIONAL DAILY  
www.tehrantimes.com

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

» Editorial Dept.: Fax: (+98 21) 88808214 — 88808895  
editor@tehrantimes.com  
» Switchboard Operator: Tel: (+98 21) 43051000  
» Advertisements Dept.: Telefax: (+98 21) 43051450  
» Public Relations Office: Tel: (+98 21) 88805807  
» Subscription & Distribution Dept.: Tel: (+98 21) 43051603  
» www.eshtarak.ir Distributor: Padideh Novin Co.  
Tel: 88911433  
» Webmaster: webmaster@tehrantimes.com  
» Printed at: Jame Jam Bartar Borna - 44197737



Tehrantimes79



Tehrantimesdaily

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



GUIDE TO  
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

There are two types of knowledge, a knowledge that is registered in the mind, and one which goes from a tongue to an ear. The second one is of no use by itself without the first one.

Imam Ali (AS)

## Coronavirus deals big blow to Iran's private theaters

1 → "In my view, the Tehran Municipality, Ministry of Culture and other organizations concerned with this issue should support the private theaters; if not, they will all be eliminated," he warned.

Mehregan Theater manager Mehdi Alinejad also said, "The managers of the private theaters cover all their operational costs by themselves and are job creators. Therefore we expect the government to help us keep the doors of the theaters open."

The director of the Board of Trustees at the Iran Theaters Association lamented the lack of force majeure clauses in the contracts signed between theater groups and theaters.

"The present condition in the country is an example of force majeure, based on which all contacts are naturally canceled. However, it has not been clearly defined by organizations such as the Culture Ministry – as the main body of art policymaking in the country. Therefore, organizations do not know how to deal with emergencies," Shaahin Chegini told ISNA.

After the Culture Ministry ordered the cancelation of all cultural events, film screenings and theatrical performances after the outbreak of the new coronavirus, the director of the ministry's Dramatic Arts Center, Shahram Karami, announced that the center plans to indemnify all public and private theaters and troupes for their loss caused by the shutdown of the theaters.

However, he did not mention a practical way of supporting the theaters and troupes that suffered serious losses in light of the new virus outbreak.

Meanwhile, financial support is the main appeal the managers of private theaters and troupes have made to the government.

Hamidreza Naimi, one of those directors whose performances have been canceled as a result of the epidemic of the new virus, warned about a post-coronavirus Iran and said that the damage goes far beyond what it seems to be.

Addressing the government in an interview with MNA, he said, "We cannot say that all programs will go as well as they had in the past after a victory over coronavirus. Performing a single play doesn't matter here, but the tongue and pulse of society are ill. When it is finally announced that the risk of coronavirus has reached zero, can anyone guarantee that people will simply return to theaters and cinemas? Will the society be able to recover its spirit quickly?"

Naimi was scheduled to stage Franco-Belgian playwright Eric-Emmanuel Schmitt's "Frederick or the Crime Boulevard" at the main hall of the City Theater Complex on March 27.

## Iranian doc explores Syrian women's resistance in war against Daesh

1 → The documentary tells the story of a group of Syrian women in Salhab whose children or husbands are martyred in the war. They decide to launch a campaign by establishing kitchens in the town a few kilometers behind the frontline to provide food for the soldiers fighting with Daesh.

Filming took about one month under the very difficult circumstances existing in the town, and the process of editing also took one year.

## Say nothing at all: Ronan Keating chided for Singapore coronavirus post

SINGAPORE (Reuters) — Irish singer Ronan Keating removed a social media post about ships near Singapore not being allowed to dock because of the coronavirus after several online users said it was misleading.

"You say it best when you say nothing at all," Instagram user Gweezilla commented on Keating's post, referring to his hit song made famous by the romantic comedy film "Notting Hill".

Keating, who shot to prominence in the 1990s as a member of boyband Boyzone, posted a photograph of about two dozen ships anchored off the city on Instagram and Twitter, with a caption that said the traffic was related to the coronavirus.

But ships at sea off the world's second-busiest port are a common sight and many social media users were quick to tell him so.

The city-state's Maritime and Port Authority (MPA) also responded to Keating's post on Monday, saying a ship arrives or leaves Singapore every 2-3 minutes and that there can be about 1,000 ships there at any one time.

"#WeCouldntSayNothingAtAll," the MPA added.

Keating's posts were not available on Tuesday. Keating on Saturday performed at an event in Jakarta, Indonesia, but it was not immediately clear if he was in Singapore.

Singapore has had just over 100 cases of the coronavirus.

# Iraqi voice actors dubbing Iranian series "The Lover" for Al-Kawthar TV

A R T TEHRAN — A group of Iraqi voice actors, including Reza Mansur Jassem Azizi, is dubbing the popular Iranian TV series "The Lovers" to be aired by Al-Kawthar TV, the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting's Arabic-language channel.

Directed by Manuchehr Hadi, the series was broadcast over three seasons by IRIB Channel 3 in 2018.

Starring Pantea Bahram, Masud Rayegan and Mehraneh Mahin-Torabi, the series tells the stories of two families with their own love stories, betrayals, hopes and fates.

Farzaneh, who is in love with Malek, turns her back on him when he gets arrested by the SAVAK intelligence services.

Later Farzaneh marries Nader, one of the secret agents of the SAVAK, and Malek marries Farzaneh's best friend Marzieh.

Now, after over 30 years, Farzaneh, who thinks Malek is responsible for the death of her husband and child, returns to take revenge from Malek's family.



A scene from "The Lovers" by Iranian director Manuchehr Hadi.



Veteran Iranian documentary filmmaker Ahmad Zabeti Jahromi in an undated photo.

## Documentarians need to raise awareness of coronavirus: filmmaker

A R T TEHRAN — Veteran Iranian documentary filmmaker and researcher Ahmad Zabeti Jahromi said on Wednesday that the most important duty of the Iranian documentary filmmakers is to raise public awareness of the new virus, which has become an epidemic in the country.

"Concern over a virus epidemic has long been a major topic in the history of filmmaking, mostly the realm of science fiction, however, documentary cinema should focus on the issue, which I call a futuristic documentary cinema," Zabeti Jahromi told the Persian service of MNA on Tuesday.

"The outbreak of the new coronavirus is also an

issue, which has drawn world attention and has been on top of the news of what is threatening the world," he said.

"That is why it is facing a wide reaction in the world and our country is no exception. Therefore, many documentarians should record this issue, which will be of great significance in history in the future," he added.

"In the current days, the disease has been the major concern in the country, and all the organizations and institutes have considered it a national crisis, and therefore the documentarians need to take action and record the realities about this problem," he suggested.

## Beirut women's film festival picks Iranian films

A R T TEHRAN — Iranian films "Dressage", "Beloved" and "Finding Farideh" will go on screen in various sections of the Beirut International Women's Film Festival (BWFF), which will be held in the Lebanese capital from March 8 to 13.

Directed by Puya Badkubeh, "Dressage" is about Golsa and her friends who rob a corner shop, but while evaluating the booty, they are dismayed to realize that they forgot to take the security camera footage. One of them must return to the crime scene and retrieve it. The vote falls on Golsa, who bravely completes the mission. Her friends' behavior makes her think, and she hides the hard drive somewhere in secret. But her accomplices and their well-to-do families,



A scene from "Dressage" by Puya Badkubeh.

worried about their social standing, put more and more pressure on Golsa.

Yasser Talebi is the director of the acclaimed documentary "Beloved". The film is about an 82-year-old woman who prefers a hard, solitary herder's existence with her cows to a more comfortable life among people.

Co-directed by Azadeh Musavi and Kurosh Atai, "Finding Farideh" is about a Netherlands-based Iranian woman who was adopted by a Dutch couple forty years ago, and returns to Iran to search for her family.

The festival will also screen Iranian shorts "Tattoo" by Farhad Delaram, "Driving Lessons" by Marzieh Riahi and "Passage", a co-production between Iran and Australia by Iranian director Kimia Hendi.

## Iranian shorts line up for Trenton film festival



A scene from "I'm Not an Actress" by Ali Jalali.

A R T TEHRAN — A lineup of nine Iranian shorts will go on screen at the 13th Trenton Film Festival, which will be held in the capital city of the U.S. state of New Jersey.

"I'm Not an Actress" by Ali Jalali, "Driving Lesson" by Marzieh Riahi, "Hermit" by Omid Mirzai and "Azadeh" by Mir-Abbas

Khosravinejad are among the films.

The lineup also includes "Tangle" by Maliheh Gholamzadeh, "Braceball" by Reihaneh Mortezaia, "I Killed a Person" by Nima Aqakhani, "Fishnet and the Fish" by Ali Nikfar and "Better than Neil Armstrong" by Alireza Qasemi.

The Trenton Film Festival will be held from March 26 to 29.

## Coronavirus forces delay of Fajr Intl. Film Festival



A poster for the 38th Fajr International Film Festival.

A R T TEHRAN — Amid the growing concern over the coronavirus outbreak in the world and also in Iran, the 38th edition of the Fajr International Film Festival has been postponed to a later time in June, the organizers announced on Wednesday.

The decision to hold the festival at a later time was made by the Cinema Organization of Iran in collaboration with the FIAPF – International Federation of Film Producers Associations.

The organizers hope to hold the festival at a better time when the new virus is gone. The festival was due to be held in April.

## Father-son story gets magical twist in animated "Onward"

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — Pixar has made movies about toys, fish, robots in space and cars. Now the hit animation studio is venturing into the world of fathers and sons with "Onward."

Although the film is set in a fantasy world populated by elves, unicorns, pixies and centaurs, the story is deeply personal for writer and director Dan Scanlon.

"Onward", which began its worldwide roll-out on Wednesday, is the story of elf brothers Ian and Barley Lightfoot, who on Ian's 16th birthday are given a magic wand to bring their long dead father back to life for a day.

However, the spell goes wrong and their dad returns only from the waist down, leaving the brothers with a pair of animated trousers without the ability to speak or see, unless they can find another magical object to summon up the remainder of their father.

Scanlon said he based the film on his and his brother's desire to get to know their father, who died in a car crash when he was only 1 and his brother was 3 years old.

"It's totally therapy that I can't believe Pixar paid for,"



Director of the movie Dan Scanlon poses at the premiere for the film "Onward" in Los Angeles, California, U.S. February 18, 2020. (Reuters/Mario Anzuoni)

Scanlon said with a laugh.

"It's so indicative of Pixar to want to do something so small and real and true. I can't think of anywhere else where we could have done something like this and been as supported as we were the whole time," he added.

Scanlon took his brother to see a preview of the film, and emotions ran high afterwards.

"He gave me the longest hug of his life, and my life. We're Midwestern guys, so there weren't a lot of tears shed right away, but in our own weird punch-on-the-shoulder way, it was pretty special and wonderful," Scanlon said.

Voicing the brothers are "Spider-Man" actor Tom Holland and "Guardians of the Galaxy" star Chris Pratt, who plays Scanlon's older brother.

"I've kind of always wanted to be a bit of a bigger brother. I never had an opportunity. I was always the youngest," said Pratt.

Holland, who is the oldest son in his family, said it was "actually really nice to be the younger one for a change."