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Number 6107 • Thursday January 10, 2019 • Dey 20, 1397 • Jamadi al-Awwal 3, 1440 • Price 5,000 Rials • 12 Pages • www.iran-daily.com • newspaper.iran-daily.com



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Leader: US will face unprecedented defeat

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei warned the United States of an "unprecedented defeat" in its campaign of sanctions and pressure against the Iranian nation.

Addressing a group of people from the holy city of Qom on Wednesday, Ayatollah Khamenei said the Americans speak gleefully of "strongest sanctions in history" against Iran, "but the Iranian nation will, God willing, make them suffer an unprecedented defeat in history."

"The nation and authorities should attentively work to turn the American sanctions into an unprecedented defeat for the Great Satan (the US), as was done during the era of Sacred Defense (the eight-year Iran-Iraq war)," said the Leader.

The United States first brought Iran under sanctions in the wake of the Islamic Revolution in 1979. It slapped new bans against the country in 1987 at the height of Iraq's Western-backed war against Iran.

The eight-year war is known in Iran as the Era of Sacred Defense due to the sacrifice and resistance

exercised by the Iranian nation in the face of the invader and its Western patrons.

Washington lifted some of its sanctions after the implementation of a 2015 multilateral nuclear deal with the Islamic Republic and other world countries.

However, US President Donald Trump left the deal unilaterally last year – even though the accord has been ratified in the form of a United Nations Security Council resolution – and reimposed the sanctions.

The Leader further urged steadfastness in the face of the US and Europe's "militarism, bluster, and idle talk," saying, "Neither their threats, nor their words and promises, and not even their signatures is credit-worthy."

Ayatollah Khamenei also referred to predictions of a "regime change" in Iran by certain US officials by the end of 2018. "A while ago, a US politician had said, among a gathering of terrorists and thugs, that he hopes to celebrate this Christmas in Tehran," Ayatollah Khamenei said.

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Iran's total exports to Iraq exceed \$11B

In the first nine months of the current Iranian year (started March 21, 2018), Iran exported various goods and electricity worth \$11.5 billion to Iraq, Hasan Danayif, the secretary of Iran's Committee for Economic Relations with Iraq and Syria, said on Wednesday.

Danayif noted that \$6.5 billion of the exports accounted for goods and added that in the same period of the previous year Iran's goods exports to Iraq amounted to \$6.4 billion, according to IRNA.

Despite US sanctions, Danayif said Iran's total exports to Iraq have increased by 40 per-



ISNA

cent compared to the previous year.

It is expected that Iran's goods exports to Iraq will reach \$8.1 billion by the end of the current year, he added.

Commenting on the US pres-

sure on Iraq aimed at ceasing the economic relations with Iran, Danayif noted that about 40 percent of Iraq's demand for electricity is supplied by Iran and it is impossible to stop the supplies.

Zarif: Taliban must have Afghan role, but can't dominate

The Taliban must have a role in Afghanistan in future, Iran's foreign minister said on Wednesday, but added that the militant group should not have a dominant role.

"I think it would be impossible to have a future Afghanistan without any role for the Taliban," Mohammad Javad Zarif, who is in New Delhi for talks with Indian officials, told NDTV in an interview.

"But we also believe that the Taliban should not have a dominant role in Afghanistan."

He said Iran has had intelligence contacts with the Taliban because it needed to secure border areas controlled by the Taliban on the Afghan side.

The Taliban have been fighting to oust all foreign forces and defeat the government after their 2001 ouster by US-led troops.

Zarif said it was up to Afghans to decide what role the Taliban should have but Afghanistan's neighbors would not want them to be in overall control.

"Nobody in the region believes that a Taliban dominated Afghanistan is in the security interests of the region. I believe that is almost a consensus."

Efforts for a negotiated settlement of the 18-year war in Afghan-



NDTV

istan have gathered pace in recent weeks, even as reports that US President Donald Trump plans to withdraw thousands of US troops have triggered uncertainty in Kabul.

US Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation Zalmay Khalilzad has held three rounds of talks with the Taliban, but on Tuesday, the militants canceled a fourth round, which had been due in Qatar this week.

The militants said they called off the talks because of an "agenda disagreement", especially over the involvement of officials from the Western-backed Afghan government as well as a possible ceasefire.

A Taliban source speaking about

the canceled talks told Reuters that US officials had insisted that the Taliban should meet Afghan officials in Qatar and said "both sides were in disagreement over declaring a cease-fire in 2019".

The Taliban have rejected repeated requests from regional powers to allow Afghan officials to take part in the talks, insisting that the United States is their main adversary.

Zarif also hailed Pakistan for trying to play a "positive role".

"We believe that Pakistani position on Afghanistan is evolving and we believe that Pakistan now is trying to play a positive role in getting a peace process underway in Afghanistan."

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World Bank warns brewing trade storm jeopardizes global economy



GETTY IMAGES

Trade conflict between the world's two largest economic powers already is inflicting collateral damage and threatens to do yet more harm to the global economy, the World Bank warned.

And the global slowdown is beginning as government and corporate debt rise, especially among the poorest countries, while mounting interest rates increase borrowing costs, the bank said in its semi-annual Global Economic Prospects report, AFP reported.

The report was markedly more pessimistic than a year ago – when the outlook was for synchronized global growth – and peppered with exhortations to take "urgent," "imperative" or "critical" action.

"Risks are rising," senior World Bank economist Ayhan Kose said. "The global economy is going through a difficult period. Risks are darkening and we see the global economy slowing."

Growth of the world economy is expected to slow to 2.9 percent this year, and 2.8 percent in 2020, slightly below the previous forecast, and the estimates for nearly all regions and countries were downgraded.

At the center of the turmoil, US economic growth is expected to slow this year by four tenths of a point, falling to 2.5 percent down from 2.9 percent in 2018, and to slow even further next year to 1.7 percent.

China's economy also is slowing amid the trade dispute, and growth should slip to 6.2 percent this year and next.

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Trump pleads on TV for wall money; Dems say he stokes 'fear'



AP

presidential campaign.

He addressed the nation as the shutdown stretched through its third week, with hundreds of thousands of federal workers going without pay and some congressional Republicans growing increasingly jittery

about the spreading impact of the impasse. Trump claimed the standoff could be resolved in "45 minutes" if Democrats would just negotiate, but previous meetings have led to no agreement.

TV networks had been reticent

about providing Trump airtime to make what some feared would be a purely political speech.

In their own televised remarks, Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer accused Trump of misrepresenting the situation on the border as they urged him to reopen closed government departments and turn loose paychecks for hundreds of thousands of workers.

Negotiations on wall funding could proceed in the meantime, they said.

Schumer said Trump "just used the backdrop of the Oval Office to manufacture a crisis, stoke fear and divert attention from the turmoil in his administration."

In his dire address, Trump ticked off a string of statistics and claims to make his case that there is a crisis at the border, but a number of his statements were misleading, such as saying the new trade deal with Mexico would pay for the wall, or suggesting through gruesome examples that immigrants are more likely to commit crime.

Trump, who has long railed against illegal immigration at the

border, has recently seized on humanitarian concerns to argue there is a broader crisis that can only be solved with a wall. But critics say the security risks are overblown and the administration is at least partly to blame for the humanitarian situation.

Trump used emotional language, referring to Americans who were killed by people in the country illegally, saying: "I've met with dozens of families whose loved ones were stolen by illegal immigration. I've held the hands of the weeping mothers and embraced the grief-stricken fathers. So sad. So terrible."

Trump has been discussing the idea of declaring a national emergency to allow him to move forward with the wall without getting congressional approval for the billions he's requested. But he did not mention that Tuesday night.

The partial government shutdown reached its 18th day, making the closure the second-longest in history. Hundreds of thousands of federal workers are going without pay, and government disruptions are hitting home with everyday Americans.