

NEW YORK (Reuters) -- A U.S. judge dismissed an indictment against Meng Wanzhou, the chief financial officer of Huawei Technologies Co, formally ending a criminal sanctions case that strained U.S.-China relations.

Meng, whose father Ren Zhengfei founded Huawei and is the telecommunications company's chief executive, entered an agreement with U.S. prosecutors last year for the case to be dismissed four years after her December 2018 arrest. Prosecutors accused Meng of bank fraud and other crimes for misleading HSBC Holdings Plc and other banks about Huawei's relationship with a company that operated in Iran.

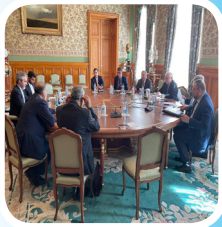
TEHRAN -- The death toll from the coronavirus pandemic in Iran increased to 144,637 with three more patients killed by the deadly disease over the past 24 hours, Iran's Health Ministry announced on Saturday.

Thirty-nine new cases of infection with COVID-19 were found over the past 24 hours, 25 of whom were hospitalized, it added. The World Health Organization (WHO) has also estimated that as much as 90% of the world's population now has some resistance to COVID-19, while at the same time warning that diminishing vigilance could leave the door open for new variants to evolve.

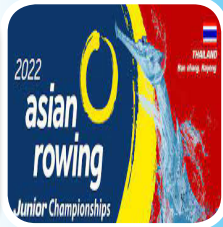
Viewpoint

Malley's Military Threats Confession of Failure of US-Triggered Riots

Russia, Iran Discuss Countering Unilateralism



Iran Win 4 Medals in 2022 Asian Rowing Championships



Palestinians, EU Condemn Killing of Young Man by Zionist Officer



Bahrainis Protest Visit by Head of Zionist Entity

MANAMA (Dispatches) -- Protesters in Bahrain chanted "death to Israel" at rallies against Zionist president Isaac Herzog's upcoming visit to the Persian Gulf state.

They gathered in several areas of the tiny country to denounce Herzog's arrival on Sunday. He will be the first president of the occupying regime of Israel to visit Bahrain.

The protesters were affiliated with opposition groups. Some carried signs with Herzog's image that said "criminal" and "you are not welcome in Bahrain."

The demonstrators reiterated that the Palestinian cause will remain their primary matter of concern, and that they reject all forms of normalization with the Tel Aviv regime.

A Bahraini opposition outlet said the demonstrators burned an Israeli flag and squared off with riot police.

Peaceful demonstrations were reported in numerous Bahraini towns and villages, including Karana, Diraz, Sanabis and Sitra.

Bahrain's top cleric Sheikh Isa Qassim said, "Our proud people should say no to the desecration of the land of faith and dignity by the head of the Zionist entity."

A Thursday report from the occupying regime of Israel's Channel 12 said the Shin Bet had decided to boost Herzog's security detail for the trip following an online social media campaign from Bahraini opposition activists.

One of the activist posts against Herzog said, "All normalization is an act of treason. Do not come."

Herzog is slated to take off for the state visit on Sunday at the invitation of King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa.

While there, he will meet with members of the local Jewish community and senior government officials and will lead a group of Zionist businesspeople to meet with the Bahrain Economic Development Board.

The next day, Herzog will head to the United Arab Emirates to meet with his Emirati counterpart Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the Abu Dhabi ruler known colloquially as MBZ. Herzog will also attend the Abu Dhabi Space Debate.

The Zionist regime normalized ties with the UAE and Bahrain in 2020 as part of the U.S.-brokered Abraham Accords. The agreement paved the way for normalization with Morocco months later.

In January, Herzog visited the UAE's Abu Dhabi and Dubai in a two-day trip.

Last month, presumptive incoming prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu held a phone call with Bahrain's Crown Prince and Prime Minister Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa.

The pair shared their desire to continue to deepen relations and Netanyahu invited Al Khalifa to visit Occupied Palestine.

In October, a delegation of Israeli paratroopers held a joint jump over Bahrain, alongside soldiers from the Persian Gulf nation, the UAE, and the United States to mark two years since the signing of the Abraham Accords.

Construction Begins on New Nuclear Power Plant



This photo shows head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) Muhammad Eslami (R) inaugurating construction on a nuclear power plant in Darkhovin.

TEHRAN -- Iran on Saturday began construction on a new nuclear power plant in the country's southwest, national TV announced, a day after the international nuclear agency said Tehran had tripled its capacity to enrich uranium to 60 percent purity.

The new 300-megawatt plant, known as Karun, will take eight years to build and cost around \$2 billion, the national television and radio agency reported.

The plant will be located in Iran's oil-rich Khuzestan province, near its western border

with Iraq, it said.

The construction site's inauguration ceremony in Darkhovin was attended by Muhammad Eslami, head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI), who first unveiled construction plans for Karun in April.

"The government is moving towards the production of low-cost energy and fuel; therefore the development of nuclear power plants is on the agenda of this organization," he said on Saturday.

According to reports, the power

plant is of a pressurized water reactor (PWR) type and is to be built on a land of approximately 50 hectares near the Karun River.

During the inauguration ceremony, Eslami said the high-speed movement towards the development of nuclear power plants has begun across the country.

"The start of the construction operation of the Karun nuclear power plant has taken place in this regard to scale up the share of nuclear energy in the coun-

try's electricity basket to about 20 percent," which is considered a "big step in the 20-year horizon" of the AEOI, he added.

Iran has one nuclear power plant at its southern port of Bushehr that went online in 2011 with help from Russia, but also several underground nuclear facilities.

"We hope to build the Karun power plant as a first step of building small power plants in order to create a new chapter in the country's industrial and technological capacity, and also to expand this technology at a general level as well," Eslami said.

The announcement of Karun's construction came less than two weeks after Iran announced it had begun producing enriched uranium at 60% purity at the country's underground Fordo nuclear facility. The move is seen as a significant addition to the country's nuclear energy program.

"Iran informed us they were tripling, not doubling, tripling their capacity to enrich uranium at 60%," the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency Rafael Grossi said at a press conference in Rome on Friday.

Iran said last month that the enrichment was being carried out at its underground Fordo plant using advanced IR-6 centrifuges.

Anti-Muslim Truck Sparks Outrage in U.S.

NEWARK, New Jersey (Middle East Eye) -- A mobile billboard truck emblazoned with anti-Muslim images that drove around the state of New Jersey and parked outside at least three Islamic centers last weekend was a deliberate attempt to intimidate and demonize the community, Muslim activists and community leaders have said.

According to the Council for American Islamic Relations, New Jersey (Cair-NJ), a mobile billboard truck entered the parking lot of the Muslim Center of Middlesex County in Piscataway and the New Brunswick Islamic Center last Saturday, broadcasting video and photos from the horrific Mumbai attacks in India that killed at least 175 people in late November 2008.

According to footage reviewed by MEE, the truck also stopped outside the Muslim Community of New Jersey Masjid in Fords, where it parked outside the entrance of the mosque and flashed scenes of

explosions, names and faces of suspects responsible for the attacks and other messages of hate for 45 minutes, activists say.

One of the signs on the rotating billboard read: "Mumbai 26/11: We won't forgive. We won't forget." Another read: "Men, women and children or elderly, no one was spared by LeT terrorists who entered India via sea on a boat."

The Mumbai attacks took place over four days in late November 2008. Saturday marked the first day of the attack, 14 years ago, which India blamed on the Pakistan-based group Lashkar-e-Taiba.

Dina Sayedahmed, Cair-NJ's communication manager, condemned the incidents, describing them as "deliberate and well coordinated" and "with intent".

"The perpetrator of this designed several anti-Muslim posters, rented a truck with an electronic billboard to display them, and then drove to at least two Islamic centers, dis-

playing these vile and anti-Muslim messages both at the Islamic center as well as on the road," she told Middle East Eye.

This week, several politicians, including a U.S. senator and two assemblywomen, issued statements of condemnation and called for an investigation.

On Tuesday, U.S. Senator Bob Menendez said he was "disgusted by this act of bigotry".

"Let me be clear: New Jersey stands with our Muslim community and will always defend your right to worship freely and without fear of harassment and intimidation," Menendez said in a tweet.

Likewise, Assemblywomen Shama Haider and Sadaf Jaffer called the incident "a stunt" and said "this sort of hate had no place in New Jersey".

The incidents in New Jersey on Saturday were followed by a similar act of intimidation directed at

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President Raisi:

Islamic Republic Guarantees Fundamental Rights

TEHRAN -- President Ebrahim Raisi on Saturday hailed Iran's Islamic Republic as a guarantor of rights and freedoms, defending the establishment that weathered weeks of foreign-stoked riots and vandalism.

A top state security body said that 200 people, including members of the security forces, had lost their lives in the riots.

The protests were ignited by the death of 22-year-old woman Mahsa Amini in hospital after attending a class at a police station in Tehran, but rapidly manipulated by rioters and terrorists to wreak havoc across the country through attacking medical teams, security forces and public property.

Officials have said foreign enemies, including the United States, Saudi Arabia and the occupying regime of Israel, are behind the riots.

"Iran has the most progres-

sive constitution in the world" because it marries "ideals with democracy," President Raisi said in a speech to parliamentarians, quoting an unidentified African lawyer he said he met several years ago.

"The constitution guarantees the (existence) of the Islamic system," he said, adding that it also "guarantees fundamental rights and legitimate freedoms."

The judiciary's Mizan news agency quoted the interior ministry's state security council as saying 200 people lost their lives in the recent riots.

It said the deceased include security forces, those killed in "terrorist acts", those killed by foreign-affiliated groups and framed as killed by the state, rioters and armed anti-revolutionary elements who were members of secessionist groups.

The security body also cited innocent people who have died in

conditions of security disarray.

It emphasized the role of foreign intervention in the protests, saying the country has been dealing with a "hybrid war" waged by adversary states and terrorist media groups.

"What is being witnessed today by the people is not civil protest but destruction, violence and insecurity by a minority of rioters," it said.

The security body touched on the accumulation of a large number of economic demands, saying the main effort of the administration has been to solve them.

"The administration has pursued multilateral diplomacy, promoting relations with its neighbors, joining economic alliances with emerging powers, and negotiating with the West" with the aim of securing national interests and removing oppressive sanctions, it said.