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Iran should not put all eggs in one basket: professor

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TEHRAN — Iran should not put all its eggs in one basket and it is necessary to establish "good ties" with all countries, says Davoud Hermidas Bavand, a politics professor at the University of Tehran.

For example, Bavand says, Iran "ought to have good relations with Russia" but it is not in interest of Iran to adopt a "strategic relationship with Russia".

The professor believes that Russia "utilizes Iran for the realization of its political objectives."

Below is the first part of the Tehran Times' interview with Bavand.

Iran has been hailing its ties with Russia as strategic. How strategic do you think these relations are?

A: We should have good relationship with all countries. There's no doubt about that. But I do not take the current relations with Russia as strategic. We are neighbors with Russia, so we should have good relationship with Russia. But at the same time we have to bear in mind that Russia uses and utilizes Iran, primarily as a means for realization of its political objectives. **→2**

Iran stresses 'updating' nuclear medicine centers



Iran's nuclear chief Ali Akbar Salehi visits a nuclear technology exhibition on February 13 in Tehran.

See page 2

Shamkhani: Silence on Saudi atrocities in Yemen 'complicity in genocide'

POLITICS TEHRAN — A top desk Iranian security official chided on Monday the international community for turning its eyes to atrocities committed by Saudi Arabia in Yemen, emphasizing that it is no different from "complicity" in those acts of violence.

"Silence on crimes committed by Saudi Arabia against defenseless Yemeni women and children amounts to complicity in their genocide and destruction of the country's resources and infrastructures," said Supreme National Security Council Ali Shamkhani in an appearance with visiting Luxembourgish Foreign Minister Jean Asselborn in Tehran.

Iran has been critical of a Saudi-led invasion on Yemen, on for more than 20 months now.

Indiscriminate airstrikes by the coalition have left thousands of people killed and injured, and millions displaced.

At least more than 6,000 people have been killed since the coalition campaign, according to one account.

Multiple international hospitals run by the charity Médecins Sans Frontières, food factories and infrastructures have been damaged seriously, as well. **→2**

Iraq forces foil ISIL attempt to flee to Syria

Iraqi forces have thwarted an attempt by around 200 extremist fighters to flee their bastion of Tal Afar toward Syria, west of the city of Mosul, a security spokesman said Monday.

Forces from the Hashed al-Shaabi (Popular Mobilization) said ISIL terrorist group used tanks in their bid to break out of Tal Afar.

"The attack by the Daesh (ISIL) terrorist gangs started at around 7 p.m., the fighting lasted around six hours," their spokesman Ahmed al-Assadi told AFP.

Hashed forces have been deployed in desert areas west of Mosul since federal forces launched a massive operation to retake the city from ISIL on Oct. 17.

Their main goals are to retake Tal Afar, a Turkmen-majority city which is still held by ISIL, and to prevent the extremists from being able to move men and equipment between Mosul and their strongholds in Syria.

"This was an attempt by Daesh to open a breach, flee to the Syria border and exfiltrate some leaders and fighters," Assadi said.

He said that Hashed forces received support from army aviation helicopters when ISIL attacked them. He added that the fighting left around 50 ISIL members killed and 17 of their vehicles destroyed.

Assadi did not provide a casualty figure for the Hashed al-Shaabi following the attack, which took place around 20 kilometers (12 miles) southwest of Tal Afar.

ISIL are confined to a corridor between Tal Afar and Mosul by tens of thousands of forces deployed on several fronts.

After retaking the eastern side of Mosul last month, Iraqi forces are preparing to launch an assault on the west bank of the city.

The early stages of the Mosul offensive saw ISIL move fighters between Mosul and the Syrian city of Raqqa, its other major urban stronghold, but their supply lines have now been cut off.

(Source: AFP)

Kuala Lumpur event explores Iran, Malay world cultural heritage bonds

TOURISM TEHRAN — The University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus in collaboration with the Iranian Embassy in Kuala Lumpur hosted a conference, which addressed widespread interaction between Iran, Central Asia, the Indian subcontinent and East Asia from China to Malaysia and Indonesia.

Titled "Civilization and Cultural Heritage of Iran and the Malay World; A Cultural Discourse", the talks convened officials, cultural figures, academics and researchers from Iran, Singapore, Indonesia and Malaysia on Feb. 11 and 12.

It touched upon variety of themes including anthropology, sociology, religious and cultural studies, literature, history, philosophy, linguistics, and geography amongst others.

Addressing the opening ceremony, Syed Farid al-Attas, the associate professor in the Department of Sociology at the National University of Singapore, attached great importance to

understanding cultural commonalities between Iran and the Malay world, IRNA reported.

Iranian Ambassador to Kuala Lumpur Marzieh Afkham, for her part, referred to Iran as a country with a rich culture and civilization in West Asia region which has maintained long-standing historical and trade relations with the Malay world.

Amongst the invited lecturers were Muhammad Bukhari Lubis from the National University of Malaysia, Amir Hossein Zekr-

Participants also laid great stress on promoting social and moral values among various cultures as a step forward to help establish peace and prosperity in the world.

guo from the International Islamic University Malaysia, Bastian Zulyeno from University of Indonesia, and Hamideh Molaei from University of Tehran.

According to the event's organizers, Iran has played a significant role in the spread of Islam in Central Asia, the Indian subcontinent and East Asia from China to Malaysia and Indonesia while Arab and Iranian traders, Indian Sufis introduced Islam to the Southeast Asia in the 13th century.

"Iranian influence is noticeable through the Malay language, as well as Thai language (from 16th century and Ayutthaya time)."

In a final statement, the attendees called for promotion of friendship and cooperation between Iranians and Southeast Asian states with regard to cultural heritage they have in common.

Participants also laid great stress on promoting social and moral values among various cultures as a step forward to help establish peace and prosperity in the world.

Hand-cut lead glass vessels on show at CHTHO

HERITAGE TEHRAN — Sets of hand-cut lead glass and crystal vessels created by a senior Iranian artisan are on display at the Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization (CHTHO) in Tehran.

Veteran glassblower Ebrahim Nabati has selected eighty works for the exhibit, the majority of them are in the forms of flower pots,

cups, fruit bowls and tea sets, CHTN reported on Sunday.

Nabati who is a native of Tabriz has held several solo and group exhibits inside and outside the country over the past two decades. In 2015, the World Crafts Council announced his hometown as world city of handicrafts.

Organized under the auspices of the

CHTHO Exports Department, the showcase comes to an end on Feb. 15.

From the historical point of view, it is not certain in which of the civilizations of the ancient Near East glass was first made. However, according to Encyclopedia Britannica, the earliest wholly glass objects from Egypt are beads dating from some time after c. 2500 BC.



Asia's first snow volleyball tournament kicks off in Iran

Asia's first snow volleyball tournament got under way in Iran on Sunday.

In great conditions at the Dizin International Ski Resort at 2,650 meters above sea level, 10 teams competed to secure a final spot for Monday's second tournament day.

After the group games were finished, teams from Poland and Austria secured their spots from Group A, while the Czech Republic and Russia made it in Group B.

ARTICLE

By Christian H. Cooper

We've created a monster for four full years

Maybe for you it was the first time you held your first-born child. Perhaps it was the first time you fell in love. For me, it was the first time I approached the customs booth Khomeini airport at 2 in the morning and handed over my American passport; that was how my fast my heart was racing.

After all, I was entering the Iranian "evil empire" that "hated" Americans. I wanted to visit Iran to learn Farsi and try and understand the economy but, more importantly, understand why so much mistrust and miscommunication... but a people who seemingly like each other so much. Nothing could be further from the truth.

What Iranians, and the world, see and hear from the United States right now, from President Trump, is not American. It doesn't represent our values as people or as a country, and it certainly doesn't represent our attitudes toward Islam and Muslims. Trump is temporary, people aren't.

Let's start this story from the beginning. The United States supported the Pahlavi dynasty and overthrew a democratically elected government.

The United States gave chemical weapons to Saddam Hussein and used them against your children who were forced to defend your borders against an existential threat. I saw your martyrs' pictures everyday on buildings as I travelled by bus to my Farsi classes or drove around Tehran. It was sobering to see in person. **→13**



پترو امید آسیا
Petro Omid Asia

See Our Special Report about "Petro Omid Asia (POA)" on Pages 7, 8, 9 and 10

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Zarif felicitates Steinmeier on presidency

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iran's foreign minister **d e s k** has congratulated his former German counterpart Frank-Walter Steinmeier on his new post as president of the Western European country.

Hailing Steinmeier as a leading politician favoring peace and dialogue, Mohammad Javad Zarif in his letter on Sunday hoped that Tehran-Berlin strong ties would continue to thrive in future, IRNA reported.

Zarif pointed to the history of close cooperation and consultations with the German politician as foreign minister, and expressed the hope that his presidency would also constructively serve the German nation.



Navy repulses pirate attack on Iranian vessel in Bab-el-Mandeb

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iran's naval forces **d e s k** saved one of the country's trade vessels from a massive pirate attack in the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait on Sunday.

The Navy's 44th flotilla of warships, which patrols the Gulf of Aden waters in an overseas mission, saved the trade vessel when Somali pirates tried to hijack it, Tasnim reported.

The pirates, equipped with modern and expensive vessels such as refueling ships, had launched the attack on the Iranian trade vessel on board 11 speed boats.



Araqchi to discuss JCPOA implementation with parliamentary committee

POLITICS TEHRAN — On Wednesday, the **d e s k** Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee is going to put on agenda the Foreign Ministry's fourth report on the implementation of the JCPOA.

The session will be attended by Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi for legal and international affairs, the committee spokesman Hossein Naqavi Hosseini said, IRIB reported.

The Foreign Ministry is required to make such a report to the committee every three months. The committee itself will present a report to the Majlis floor every six months.



'I am not against national reconciliation, but it is out of the question'

POLITICS TEHRAN — "I am not against **d e s k** national reconciliation, but there is no schism between people to necessitate talking about it and it is out of the question," the Judiciary chief said on Monday, the IRIB reported.

Addressing a high-profile Judiciary meeting in Tehran, Ayatollah Sadeq Amoli Larjani said, "National reconciliation can be talked about where it is relevant, where fundamental schism and disagreement exist, but I do not see such a thing.

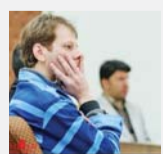


Principlists surely will name a rival for Rouhani: politician

POLITICS TEHRAN — The head of the Front **d e s k** of the Followers of the Line of Imam and Leadership said on Monday that principlists are sure to introduce a rival for Hassan Rouhani in the upcoming elections.

Mohammad Reza Bahonar also said that the national reconciliation initiative proposed by reformists is not understandable, Mehr reported.

"If it means reconciling people with people, they are not unfriendly to each other. If it means between people and the establishment, people have proven they are faithful to it," he said.



No plan to execute fraudulent tycoon in short notice

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iran's Judiciary **d e s k** spokesman on Monday denied reports that a plan is underway to execute fraudulent billionaire businessman Babak Zanjani over the coming few weeks.

Gholam Hossein Mohseni Ejei told reporters during a press conference that whoever made statements about implementing Zangani's death sentence in a few weeks was "mistaken or biased".

Ejei said Zangani is needed alive in order for the Judiciary to complete the process of investigating his case. Ejei emphasized execution is only one part of Zanjani's sentence.

Saudi Arabia is 'delusional', Tehran says

"Saudi stance shows lack of information about Iran and the larger Middle East"

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iranian **d e s k** Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi has said that Saudi Arabia's stance on Tehran shows that Riyadh does not have information about the Middle East region and Iran.

"Assuming that Saudi Arabia and Emirates have adopted harsher position on Iran under the influence of Trump's slogans, I think we should advise them avoid making such historic mistake," he said in a televised interview with al-Alam aired on Sunday.

Given the status of Iran in the region, it is better for Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates to adopt policies based on the regional "realities", he added.

He noted that establishing "balanced" and "fair" relations with the neighboring and regional countries is Iran's principled policy.

"We are willing to settle the issues with our neighboring countries and we have never initiated efforts to undermine relations with any country," the Foreign Ministry official remarked.

Qassemi added that Iran is ready to enter negotiations with Saudi Arabia if kingdom seeks friendly relations with Iran



Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi

Given Trump's rhetoric and position, it seems that he has not yet started his job seriously, Foreign Ministry spokesman notes.

and make up for previous mistakes.

"Saudi Arabia is delusional and is making a mistake. The mistake caused some problems for Saudi Arabia in the past," he pointed out.

He added, "Saudi Arabia cannot continue following this path..."

■ 'Trump has not ended his campaign yet'

Qassemi also said U.S. President Donald Trump is still continuing his electoral campaigns. Given Trump's rhetoric and position, it seems that he has not yet started his job seriously, he said.

It is too soon to see what path Trump will take, he added.

Pointing to the fact that the U.S. has adopted hostile policies towards Iran, Qassemi said Trump's comments are something repetitive.

Elsewhere, he said that Iran has always relied on the people in countering the enemies.

"Iran is a peace-seeking country and has always been interested in establishing good relations with the other countries under the condition of mutual respect and non-interference in others' affairs," the diplomat stated.

Iran stresses 'updating' nuclear medicine centers

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iran's nuclear chief, Ali **d e s k** Akbar Salehi, on Monday defended the country's peaceful nuclear program, underscoring that Tehran has to keep "updating" its nuclear medicine centers.

Salehi made the comments while visiting a nuclear medicine center in Tehran where children receive nuclear-related treatment.

"The Atomic Agency Organization of Iran has the responsibility to help those centers that deal with nuclear technologies," he was quoted as saying.

Using its nuclear expertise, Iran has grown less dependent on imports of nuclear-based medicines and introduced a number of radiopharmaceutical products.

In 2009, Iranian scientists performed a successful bone marrow surgery on a girl with cancer, using Iranian-

produced radiopharmaceutical MIBG in combination with stem cell techniques.

Iran has taken initial steps to establish nuclear hospital, the first of its kind in the Middle East.

"Preliminary work to start construction of the largest nuclear hospital in the Middle East has already been done," Salehi stated.

In a relevant development, Iran, in collaboration with Russia, is building an underground infrastructure

Nuclear chief says Iran has to keep updating its nuclear facilities, particularly nuclear-based medicine.

to produce stable isotopes for civilian uses in industry, agriculture and medicine at the Frodo facility. Iran is the fourth country in the world with such a technology.

Iran and the Russian ROSATOM signed on Jan. 20 a roadmap for cooperation in peaceful uses of nuclear energy, including stable isotope production.

The collaboration is framed within a 2015 international nuclear deal between Iran and six world powers that removed sanctions against Tehran in return for it rolling back its nuclear program.

Under the deal, Iran has committed to convert the Frodo facility into a nuclear, physics and technology center.

Two of the six cascades in the facility will spin without uranium and will be transitioned, including through appropriate infrastructure modification, for stable isotope production.

Nuclear deal beneficial for Trump: former diplomat

POLITICS TEHRAN — Sadeq **d e s k** Kharrazi, a former Iranian diplomat, has said that it is beneficial for the U.S. President Donald Trump to protect the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, the official name for the nuclear deal.

"It is in the full interest of the Trump administration to keep the deal alive and working. Iran's options in the face of a collapse of the deal are multiple and will go beyond lobbying through its allies," he told Al Jazeera in an interview published on Monday.

Kharrazi, who was Iran's ambassador to France from 2002 to 2006, believes that scrapping the nuclear deal is not going to happen given the current consensus among Europeans to uphold it.

"Renegotiating the deal is neither possible nor doable under current circumstances. Europeans won't support it no matter how adamant the Trump administration



would be on that," Kharrazi said.

"I am confident that Trump will begin to realize this

fact very soon and will take into consideration the reality of Iran in his setting of Middle East policies."

Commenting on the new U.S. secretary of state's lack of experience in foreign policy issues, he said, "I don't think that his lack of political experience is going to be a serious problem. I think [U.S. Secretary of State] Tillerson's long managerial experience on top of the ExxonMobil will play an important role in setting pragmatic Middle East policies. This non-political experience is a plus in my viewpoint."

The former Iranian diplomat believes that Trump's presidency offers both threats and opportunities to Iran's foreign policy and national security.

"Trump's long business record has potentially made him a deal broker which is essential in international relations. I believe this war of words and harsh rhetoric will be ebbed to considerable extent," Kharrazi said.

Shamkhani: Silence on Saudi atrocities in Yemen 'complicity in genocide'

1 -> In June 2016 the United Nations blacklisted the coalition for killing children in Yemen though it was delisted one week later as Riyadh threatened to cut Palestinian aid and funds to other UN programs, according to diplomatic

sources.

Tehran has also been lambasting the U.S. and European countries for generous arm sales to Riyadh.

Last week a U.S. official let slip that Donald Trump's administration was

reportedly preparing to approve major arms sales to Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, previously blocked by former President Barack Obama over human rights concerns.

Also, according to an Independent

report in September 2016, Britain was, after the U.S., the second biggest arms dealer in the world, with most of the weapons fuelling deadly conflicts in the Middle East, including the Yemeni war.

Iran should not put all eggs in one basket: professor

'Iran paying dearly for opposing Israel'

1 -> For instance, with regard to nuclear technology, we adopted a sort of Ost-Politics Cooperation with Russia, China and India, but we all witnessed in the International Atomic Energy Agency that Russia and China supported the resolution of the Council and supported wholeheartedly the resolution of the Security Council. And even if you do remember, the last two resolutions, the resolutions of the Security Council were unconfined to the nuclear deal.

It was expanded to the missile situation and even defensive situation. And also declaration of the activities of Iran in Air Force and some other areas in the high seas. With regard to North Korea, China opposed any investigation and observation in the high seas. But contrarily, neither Russia nor China supported the concentration.

So, I do not believe that we genuinely have strategic relationship. Russia most often utilizes Iran as a means to its ends. With regard to the Caspian Sea situation, Russia adopted a totally different approach vis-a-vis Iran and I do not believe we have to put all of our eggs in one basket. We ought to have good relations with Russia, but I do not believe it is in interest of Iran to adopt strategic relationship with Russia.

In regards to Russia, we do have, inevitably, certain relations, because Russia is a neighboring state, at least



"Approaching the EU is a good choice for Iran. We are doing that and we ought to do that."

through the Caspian Sea. After the Islamic Revolution our defense necessities turned toward Russia, so in that sense we do have some relations with Russia. Russia is very selective. We do have certain amount of economic relations with Russia. Russia might make certain statements in favor of Iran, but beyond statements, in the area of action, it adopts a very conservative position.

■ Iran has been trying to approach the EU. But last year the German minister of economy while visiting Iran said his country, and maybe Europe in general, would establish stronger ties with Iran if Iran softens its stance on Israel. How large do you think Israel looms in Iran's foreign relations?

A: Approaching the EU is a good choice for Iran. We are doing that and we ought to do that. We ought to believe that there is matter of certainty and matter of degree. The EU have extensive relations with the U.S. So they ought to observe the views of the U.S. I do believe we ought to support the Palestinian issue in all international forums and international conventions wherever and whenever it is. We used to support it even before the Islamic revolution... we have suffered a very strong damage to our foreign policy (for supporting Palestinians). We have paid and continue to pay. We ought to support the Palestinian question at every international forum... bearing in mind at the same time (some countries within) the Arab union never appreciate Iran's approach. As far as Hamas is concerned, at the beginning of the Arab Spring it shifted toward Saudi Arabia and Turkey, but then when it could not get anywhere, it shifted back to Iran. So it is trying to move toward the realization of its own objectives and interests and is not subject to Iran's will and wish.

Myanmar police to probe allegations of abuse against Muslim Rohingyas

Myanmar's police are to conduct a "departmental enquiry" to determine whether law enforcement officers have committed human rights violations against the Muslim Rohingyas in the Buddhist-majority country.

"The departmental enquiry will be conducted ... to find out whether the police forces have committed illegal actions, including violations of human rights, during their area clearance operations," the Ministry of Home Affairs said in a press release published on Saturday.

The ministry instructed police to conduct the investigation following a damning report by the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) accusing Myanmar's security forces in northern Rakhine of violating Rohingyas' human rights.

"The UN report includes very serious human rights abuses allegations against police in Myanmar including rape," Police Colonel Myo Thu Soe said on Monday, adding, "and that's why an investigation committee was set up to respond to the report with evidence."

The February 3 report, entitled "Interviews with Rohingyas fleeing from Myanmar since 9 October 2016," said that Myanmar's security forces had committed mass killings and gang rapes of Rohingya Muslims and burned their villages since October last year in a campaign that "very likely" amounted to crimes against humanity and possibly ethnic cleansing.

The military had said last week that it was setting up a team of investigators to conduct a similar probe about the military atrocities in Rakhine.

Myanmar has so far denied almost all human rights violations in northern Rakhine State despite UN reports providing many documented accounts of the crimes and global condemnation of the crackdown.

The military crackdown was launched in October 2016 after nine policemen were killed in attacks by unidentified gunmen along the border. Authorities blamed the attack on the Rohingya.

Myanmar has previously conducted a govern-



ment probe into the accusations of abuse and murder against the Rohingya in Rakhine, but final reports have astonishingly claimed that no such violations had taken place.

The UN's special rapporteur on Myanmar, Yanghee Lee, has repeatedly slammed the country for its violation of the Rohingyas' rights. Lee has said the estimated 1.1 million Rohingya Muslims in Rakhine are victims of "decades of systematic and institutionalized discrimination."

"The government's response to all of these problems seems to currently be to defend, dismiss and

deny," she said in January at the end of a probe of her own into the human rights situation in Myanmar.

More than 1,000 Rohingya Muslims may have been killed and almost 69,000 Rohingyas have fled across border to Bangladesh since the crackdown has started, according to UN sources.

The Rohingyas have faced discrimination in Myanmar for generations. They live in apartheid-like conditions and are not classified as a distinct group under citizenship laws and are regarded instead as illegal immigrants from Bangladesh.

(Source: AFP)

N. Korea declares ballistic missile test 'success'

North Korea said it had successfully tested a new ballistic missile, triggering a U.S.-led call for an urgent UN Security Council meeting after a launch seen as a challenge to U.S. President Donald Trump.

The North's leader Kim Jong-un "expressed great satisfaction over the possession of another powerful nuclear attack means which adds to the tremendous might of the country," state news agency KCNA said on Monday.

The missile was launched on Sunday, near the western city of Kusong, and flew east about 500km before falling into the Sea of Japan (East Sea), South Korea's defence ministry said.

Photos released by KCNA showed the missile blasting into the sky with a smiling Kim watching from the command centre, and standing on the launch field surrounded by dozens of cheering soldiers and scientists.

It said Kim "personally guided" preparations for Sunday's test, which it described as a surface-to-surface medium long-range Pukguksong-2, a "Korean-style new type strategic weapon system".

KCNA said the missile was powered by a solid-fuel engine, which requires a far shorter fuelling time than conventional liquid fuel-powered missiles, according to Yun Duk-min of the state-run Institute for Foreign Affairs and Security in Seoul.

"They leave little warning time and, therefore, pose greater threat to opponents," he said, adding that such missiles are harder to detect before launch by satellite surveillance.

Pyongyang's latest announcement was the first time a Pukguksong-2 has

been mentioned, although last August it test-fired what it said was a submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) marked as a Pukguksong-1, a name which translates as "North Star".

Kim said at the time that the missile, which was launched towards Japan, put the U.S. mainland and the Pacific within striking range.

North Korea claims it has developed an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) capable of hitting the U.S. mainland, but it has not tested one as yet.

The longest-range missile it has tested is the intermediate Musudan, which is theoretically capable of reaching U.S. bases on Guam, but most have ended in failure including one last October, which exploded shortly after launch.

■ Designed for Trump

The South has said that Sunday's launch was designed as a test for Trump, who responded to the provocation by pledging "100 percent" support for Washington's key regional ally Japan.

"Today's missile launch ... is aimed at drawing global attention to the North by boasting its nuclear and missile capabilities," Seoul's defence ministry said Sunday.

"It is also believed that it was an armed provocation to test the response from the new U.S. administration under President Trump," it added.

The U.S., Japan and South Korea responded to the North's confirmation by requesting an urgent UN Security Council meeting to discuss the launch.

The council is expected to hold consultations on Monday.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

Mexico: Massive anti-Trump rallies staged across nation

Mexicans have held massive protests against U.S. President Donald Trump, hitting back at his anti-Mexican rhetoric and vows to make Mexico pay for a "big, beautiful" border wall between the two countries.

Marches got under way on Sunday in some 20 cities across the country, including the capital, Mexico City, where thousands of people flooded a central avenue dressed in white and waving the red, white and green of the Mexican flag.

Al Jazeera's John Holman, reporting from Mexico City, said this was the first mass protest against Trump in the country.

"It really marks the point in which the promises of his campaign - building a border wall that he expects Mexico to pay for, import tariffs of Mexican goods heading to the U.S. and mass deportation of Mexican migrants - are starting to look like they could be a reality under President Donald Trump," he said.

"That's really what the people here have gathered to denounce," Holman said.

When asked why she had decided to take part in the march, a protester told Al Jazeera: "Putting it in words, there's this hate that he seems to have for us, when we've never done anything to the United States."

Dozens of universities, business associations and civic organizations backed the protest.

"It is time we citizens combine forces and unite our voices to show our indignation and rejection of President Trump, while contributing to the search

for concrete solutions," said the coalition behind the marches.

U.S.-Mexican relations have plunged to their lowest point in decades since Trump took office on January 20.

Trump, who launched his presidential campaign calling Mexican immigrants "criminals" and "rapists", has infuriated the U.S.' southern neighbor.

He also announced plans to stop illegal immigration by building a wall on the border and make Mexico pay for it. Mexican President Enrique Pena Nieto cancelled a January 31 trip to Washington over Trump's insistence that Mexico pay for the wall.

Trump has also wrought havoc on the Mexican economy with his threats to terminate the country's trade relationship with the U.S., blaming Mexico for the loss of jobs in the country.

The Mexican peso has taken a beating nearly every time Trump insisted on renegotiating the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), attacked carmakers and other companies that manufacture in Mexico, or vowed to slap steep tariffs on Mexican-made goods.

Mexico sends 80 percent of its exports to the U.S., nearly \$300bn in goods in 2015.

The confrontation has stoked patriotic pride in Mexico, where US companies like Starbucks, Coca-Cola and McDonald's are the targets of boycott campaigns and many people have taken to putting the Mexican flag in their profile pictures on social media.

(Source: AFP)

200,000 people evacuated in California as dam might collapse

Evacuation orders for nearly 200,000 people living below the tallest dam in the United States remained in place early on Monday after residents were abruptly told to flee when a spillway appeared in danger of collapse.

Authorities issued the evacuation order on Sunday, saying that a crumbling emergency spillway on Lake Oroville Dam in north California could give way and unleash floodwaters onto rural communities along the Feather River.

"Immediate evacuation from the low levels of Oroville and areas downstream is ordered," the Butte County sheriff said in a statement posted on social media.

The California Department of Water Resources said on Twitter at about 4:30 p.m. PST (0030 GMT Monday) that the spillway next to the dam was "predicted to fail within the next hour."

Several hours later the situation appeared less dire, as the damaged spillway remained standing.

The state water resources department said crews using helicopters would drop rocks to fill a huge gouge, and authorities were releasing water to lower the lake's level after weeks of heavy rains in the drought-plagued state.

By 10 p.m., state and local officials said the imme-



diated danger had passed with water no longer flowing over the eroded spillway. But they cautioned that the situation remained unpredictable.

"Once you have damage to a structure like that it's catastrophic," acting Water Resources director Bill Croyle told reporters. But he stressed "the integrity of the dam is not impacted" by the damaged spillway.

Asked about the evacuation order, Croyle said "It was a tough call to make." He added: "It was the right call to make."

■ 'Do not travel north'

Butte County Sheriff Corey Honea told an earlier news briefing he was told by experts that the hole forming in the spillway could compromise the structure. Rather than risk thousands of lives, the decision was made to order evacuations.

Officials said they feared the damaged spillway could unleash a 30-foot wall of water on Oroville, north of the state capital Sacramento.

They said evacuation orders remained in place for some 188,000 people in Oroville, Yuba County, Butte County, Marysville and nearby communities and would be re-evaluated at dawn.

The Yuba County Office of Emergency Services urged evacuees to travel only to the east, south or west. "DO NOT TRAVEL NORTH TOWARD OROVILLE," the department warned on Twitter.

Evacuation centers were set up at a fairgrounds in Chico, California, about 20 miles northwest of Oroville, but major highways leading south out of the area were jammed as residents fled the flood zone and hotels quickly filled up.

Javier Santiago, 42, fled with his wife, two children and several friends to the Oroville Dam Visitors Center in a public park above the dam and the danger zone.

(Source: AFP)

ISIL leadership targeted in airstrike, Baghdadi fate unclear

The Iraqi air force carried out a strike on a house where ISIL leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was thought to be meeting other commanders, Iraqi military said in a statement on Monday, without making clear whether he had been hit.

The statement said Iraqi F-16s had targeted the house in western Iraq on Saturday. It also published the names of 13 ISIL commanders it said had been killed in the airstrike but the list did not include Baghdadi. (Source: Reuters)

At least 10 people killed in blast in Pakistani city of Lahore

At least 10 people were killed when a blast hit a crowd of protesters in the Pakistani city of Lahore on Monday, local media reported.

The English-language Dawn newspaper and Urdu-language Dubya TV both said 10 people had died when an explosion rocked a protest organized by Pakistan's chemist and pharmaceuticals manufacturers.

Dawn said 30 people were wounded in the attack. (Source: Reuters)

Turkey, Bahrain agree on cooperation in arms industry

Turkey and Bahrain have reached an agreement on bilateral cooperation in arms industry in Manama, the first destination in Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's tour of Persian Gulf states.

On Sunday, Turkish Defense Minister Fikri Isik and his Bahraini counterpart, Mohammed bin Abdullah Al Khalifah, inked the memorandum of understanding in the presence of Erdogan and Bahrain's monarch Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifah, according to the official Bahrain News Agency.

Reports said Ankara and Manama also signed a number of other agreements concerning visa fee exemptions and education.

Erdogan and his delegation will next travel to Saudi Arabia and Qatar. The tour's much-expected focus rests on regional, political, security and economic issues.

Bahrain has been heavily muffled popular anti-regime protests across the kingdom since 2011.

The suppression campaign has been heavily supported with arms flow from neighboring Arab allies, including Saudi Arabia.

Saudi and Emirati troops have been helping Bahraini regime forces in their crackdown on political opposition. Scores of people have lost their lives and many others been arrested as a result of the crackdown.

During his visit to Manama, Erdogan expressed his wish for Turkey and Bahrain to work together for the "stability, peace, and future of the region," Turkish paper Daily Sabah reported.

The king awarded the Turkish head of state with the medal of Sheikh Isa bin Salman Al Khalifah, Bahrain's first emir.

The official Qatar News Agency said the regional issues on the tour's agenda include the situation in Syria and Iraq.

Riyadh, Doha and Ankara have been on the side of the militant groups fighting the Syrian government, lending them generous arms and political support as well as other types of assistance. (Source: Daily Sabah)

Turkmen president re-elected with 98 percent of vote

Turkmenistan's ruling leader Gurbanguly Berdimukhamedov bagged a fresh seven-year term with nearly 98 percent of a weakly contested vote, electoral officials following a preliminary count.

The election commission claimed at a press conference on Monday, in the capital Ashgabat, a turnout of over 97 percent for the poll, in which eight other candidates, viewed as token opponents for Berdimukhamedov, also competed.

Casting his vote at a school in Ashgabat on Sunday, the president said the vote would decide "the fate of the people for the coming seven years".

"If I am elected, then our policies aimed at improving the welfare of the people will continue," Berdimukhamedov said.

The former dentist and health minister took power in 2006 after the death of Turkmenistan's first president, Saparmurat Niyazov.

Last year, Berdimukhamedov signed off on constitutional changes that paved the way for his lifelong rule by removing upper age limits for presidential candidates.

Another change lengthened presidential terms from five to seven years.

Voters in Ashgabat overwhelmingly said they were backing Berdimukhamedov on Sunday.

One-sided votes are typical in Central Asia, a Muslim-majority ex-Soviet region politically close to Russia and China, where reigning presidents are usually expected to die in power.

Although Turkmenistan sits on the world's fourth-largest natural gas reserves, it has failed to diversify export routes and its hydrocarbon-based economy as a whole.

In recent years, the country of over five million people has traded its traditional economic reliance on Russia for dependence on China, which buys the vast majority of its gas. (Source: Al Jazeera)



SNIPPETS



11% rise in copper concentrate output in 10 months

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Companies under desk the National Iranian Copper Industries Company could produce 895.5 thousand tons of copper concentrate in the first 10 months of the current Iranian year (March 20, 2016- January 19, 2017), which shows 11 percent increase compared to the same period in the preceding year, IRIB news reported.

The figure stood at 804.73 thousand tons in last year, the report said.

Copper concentrate is the result of a flotation process after the copper ore has been mined and milled. Copper concentrate is an intermediate product used as raw material in the production of copper metal.



\$450b of foreign investments should be attracted in 9 years

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iran needs to attract desk \$450 billion of foreign investments by 2026, the head of the investment panel at the Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) announced.

As ISNA quoted Ferial Mostofi, financing problems in addition to the engineering and technical problems of some projects in Iran stand among the major obstacles on the way of attracting foreign investors to the country.



Russians invite Iranian industry min. to attend INNOPROM 2017

ECONOMY TEHRAN — The Russian Ministry of Industry and Trade invited Iranian Industry Minister Mohammadreza Nematzadeh to attend the International Industrial Trade Fair INNOPROM 2017.

The trade fair will take place at International Exhibition Center Ekaterinburg-EXPO from July 10 to 13.

INNOPROM is a unique communication platform showcasing latest developments of industrial technologies and facilitating discussions of relevant issues on development of the sector in Russia.



S. Korea to dispatch trade delegation to Iran in late-Feb.

ECONOMY TEHRAN — According to a report by Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA), a South Korean trade delegation is due to visit Iran on February 22 to explore areas for development of trade relations.

The delegation includes representatives of companies active in areas such as construction machinery, agricultural machinery and hydraulic machinery parts, air conditioning, heavy machinery, agricultural products and textiles.

China's top developers plan to invest more in land this year

Chinese real estate developers surveyed by Reuters mostly plan to increase their land investments in 2017 as they shrug off record prices and government tightening measures while seeking to expand their market share.

The 10 companies contacted by phone and messaging represent half of the top 20 Chinese developers and together have close to \$300 billion in annual sales, mainly of apartments.

Eight of them said they were increasing their budgets, by between 10-50 percent, and the other two said they would sustain their spending at 2016 levels. Company officials responding to the survey asked for anonymity, many citing corporate quiet periods ahead of quarterly results.

The developers are buying land in Tier 1 cities, which are Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Shenzhen, or in Tier 2 cities, such as Suzhou, Wuhan and Hefei, but most are shunning smaller Tier 3 and Tier 4 cities. That could increase the price differential between the major cities, where demand is robust and land is in short supply, and the rest.

A sharp run-up in prices in major cities last year raised official alarm in Beijing about the potential for a boom and bust cycle, and led to a series of measures at local level to reduce property speculation.

"Because of the tightening, home sales will not be as crazy as in 2016, but it's a good time for us to buy more land because we sold most of the inventory last year," said a company official at one developer based in the southern city of Shenzhen, where home prices are among the most expensive in China. "Developers need to keep the growth momentum and so we need to keep buying aggressively ... The theme for this year is land investment."

Increasing market share helps the big players to gain more economies of scale, putting them in a better position to control labor, materials and marketing costs.

(Source: Reuters)

New platforms to start production in South Pars

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Production will begin in six new platforms of Iran's South Pars gas field (in the Persian Gulf) during the next Iranian calendar year (which begins on March 22, 2017), Shana quoted Mohammad Meshkinfam, the managing director of Pars Oil and Gas company (POGC), as saying.

The official said that by putting these

six platforms into operation South Pars daily gas output will reach 600 million cubic meters.

POGC is in charge of implementing South Pars phases development projects.

The huge offshore field, shared with Qatar, covers an area of 9,700 square kilometers, 3,700 square kilometers of which, called South Pars, are in Iran's territorial waters in the Persian Gulf. The



remaining 6,000 square kilometers, called North Dome, are situated in Qatar's territorial waters.

The field is estimated to contain a sig-

nificant amount of natural gas, accounting for about eight percent of the world's reserves, and approximately 18 billion barrels of condensate.

Tehran to host 4th Intl. drilling congress, exhibit next week

ECONOMY TEHRAN — The desk fourth edition of International Iranian Drilling Congress and Exhibition is due to be held in Tehran on February 18 and 19, Shana reported.

According to the report, the congress will be hosting Iranian and foreign executives and experts active in oil industry's upstream sector.

The exhibition, which will be held on the sidelines of the congress, is to showcase the latest achieve-



ments and technologies in this area and also to provide an opportunity for companies to share information and talk business.

Oil stable as OPEC's cuts bite, although bloated market still weighs

Oil prices were stable on Monday on signs that OPEC-led production cuts were reducing global overproduction, although bloated inventories and rising output elsewhere were weighing on markets.

Brent crude futures were trading at \$56.72 per barrel at 0752 GMT, up 2 cents from their previous close.

West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures were down 2 cents at \$53.84 a barrel.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and other producers including Russia have agreed to cut output by almost 1.8 million barrels per day (bpd) during the first half of 2017 in order to rein in a global glut.

There was initial skepticism that producers would make the promised cuts, but compliance with the announced reductions is now estimated 80 to 90 percent.

Kuwaiti Oil Minister Essam al-Marzouq said on Monday that the OPEC compliance was 92 percent while that of non-OPEC producers was 50 percent.

"Traders will be keenly awaiting the release today of OPEC's monthly report. If production cuts are coming through as suggested, we should see oil prices push higher," ANZ bank said.

While traders said that crude was well supported in the lower to mid-\$50s per barrel due to the curbs, they pointed to a host of reasons that prevented prices from rising further.

In the United States, oil drilling is pushing up production and undermining OPEC's efforts to reduce output.

Drillers added eight oil rigs in the week to Feb. 10, bringing the total U.S. count to 591, the most since October 2015, Baker Hughes said on Friday.

During the same week last year, when prices were around \$30 per barrel, there were just 439 active rigs.

Underscoring a fuel glut, traders are preparing to export gasoline from the U.S. East Coast after months of heavy importing and local production swamped the region.

In Russia, there are signs that output may be falling but that exports remain high, as its producers shield their core export markets at the cost of lower do-

mestic supplies or by cutting into inventories.

Given these trends, analysts say that OPEC might have to extend its cuts for a longer period than the currently planned first half of 2017.

But since global oil demand is expected to rise by between 1.3 million bpd and 1.5 million bpd in 2017, OPEC's conundrum is that the longer and deeper it cuts, the more it cedes market share to competitors, as seen in the two world's biggest oil consuming markets.

In the United States, OPEC is facing the rising flood of shale driven production. In China, OPEC's de-facto leader Saudi Arabia has already been overtaken by Russia as the biggest oil supplier.

(Source: Reuters)

Investor honeymoon with OPEC falters as shale drilling booms

After unprecedented optimism that the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries will manage to ease a global supply glut, money managers reduced their bets on rising West Texas Intermediate prices for the first time in a month. While the group and other major exporters are pumping less crude, U.S. inventories and production are on the rise, and shale drillers keep adding rigs. The U.S. benchmark has traded mostly between \$50 and \$55 a barrel for the last two months.

"There's starting to be fatigue about the range we've been trading in," John Kilduff, a partner at Again Capital LLC, a New York-based hedge fund that focuses on energy, said by telephone. "It won't be summer until we break out to the upside."

OPEC achieved the best compliance rate in its history at the outset of its accord to cut production, a plan that's being supported by strong demand, the International Energy Agency said in a Feb. 10 report. In the past, OPEC had often struggled to fully deliver promised cuts due to a reluctance to lose income and market share. Former Saudi Arabian Oil Minister Ali al-Naimi said on Dec. 2 that, in the history of OPEC deals, "The unfortunate part is we tend to cheat."

Meanwhile, U.S. producers last week extended the biggest surge in oil drilling in more than four years as the prolific shale plays of Texas and Oklahoma lure investment from Exxon Mobil Corp. and Continental Resources Inc.

U.S. crude output climbed to 8.98 million barrels



a day in the week ended Feb. 3, according to the Energy Information Administration. That's an increase of about half a million barrels a day from last year's low, and the agency expects production to keep climbing to reach 9.53 million a day next year, the most since 1970.

Tight range

Hedge funds cut their net-long position, or the difference between bets on a price increase and wagers on a decline, by 5.4 percent in the week ended Feb. 7, U.S. Commodity Futures Trading Commission data show. WTI slipped 1.2 percent to \$52.17 a barrel in the report week, and closed at \$53.86 on Feb. 10. It was trading at \$53.80 a barrel, down 6 cents, on Monday at 1:04 p.m. in Hong Kong.

Money managers' net-long position in WTI decreased by 20,540 futures and options to 359,387. Longs fell 1.8 percent, while shorts climbed 26 percent,

the biggest gain in three months.

Willing investors

"The shorts increased, which shows that there are investors willing to bet that the OPEC production cuts are fully priced into the market and that the oil bulls are vulnerable to bearish news," Tim Evans, an energy analyst at Citi Futures Perspective in New York, said by telephone.

As they boost output, U.S. oil producers are hedging their price risk for this year and 2018. Producers' short positions, protecting against a drop in prices, increased to 707,498 futures and options, the most since August 2007, according to the CFTC.

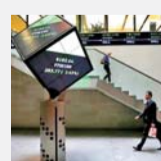
Pioneer Natural Resources Co. plans to continue being a "heavy hedger," Chief Operating Officer Tim Dove said last week. The company raised its drilling budget more than expected and is expanding its fleet of rigs in the Permian Basin. Pioneer's hedges provide upside to about \$62 a barrel, Dove said.

OPEC implemented 90 percent of promised output cuts in January, the first month of its agreement, according to the IEA. Eleven non-OPEC members who joined the agreement have made about half their pledged reductions, the agency said.

"I think that we will be looking at the reverse of this report in a week," Michael Lynch, president of Strategic Energy & Economic Research in Winchester, Massachusetts, said by telephone. "The IEA report on compliance has dispelled doubts about OPEC's adherence."

(Source: Bloomberg)

NEWS IN BRIEF



European shares up as mining sector hits 2-year high

European shares rose for a fifth consecutive session on Monday with mining stocks rallying to their highest in two years and a half on stronger copper prices and takeover offers sending German drugmaker Stada to a record high.

The STOXX 600 rose 0.3 percent, getting very close to its January peak when the pan-European index hit its highest level since end-2015. UK's FTSE .FTSE was up 0.1 percent.

Europe's Basic Resources index .SXPP rose as much as 2.4 percent to hit its highest level since August 2014 after London copper extended gains to hit its highest in 20 months in heavy trade on Monday, driven up by supply worries.



Fidessa says global revenue spread provides stability

British trading software provider Fidessa Group Plc (FDSA.L) said its international revenue spread provided stability amid uncertainty following Britain's vote to leave the European Union and the U.S. election.

Fidessa, which provides trading and investment technology, reported a 25 percent rise in its full-year profit to 48.8 million pounds (\$61.0 million) for the year ended Dec. 31.

The company said 64 percent of its total revenue was generated outside Europe, while 73 percent of the revenue was denominated in foreign currencies, with the majority being the U.S. dollar. (\$1 = 0.7995 pounds)



China's Sinochem in early talks to buy stake in Noble Group

China's state-owned Sinochem is in early talks with Noble Group (NOBG.SI) to buy an equity stake in the embattled trader, three sources familiar with the matter said, in a move that would help it gain access to the commodity trader's global supply chain.

Taking a stake in an internationally active trading house like Noble would help Sinochem, a big oil, gas and petrochemical company, in its ambitions to become a more globally active energy trader, and also develop China's gas industry.

The discussions are taking place as Noble looks to rejoin its business units, cut debt and boost liquidity to fight a long-term downturn in commodity prices.

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Dr. Pardakhty, Vice Chancellor for Research and Technology, Kerman University of Medical Sciences:

Kerman Province to host 13th Asian Societies of Cosmetic Scientists Conference in May 2017



The Vice Chancellor for Research and Technology of Kerman University of Medical Sciences (KMU) said the 13th Asian Societies of Cosmetic Scientists Conference (ASCSC 2017) will be hosted by Middle Eastern Countries Society of Cosmetic Chemists (MECSCC) and KMU during May 15-17. According to the website of KMU, Dr. Abbas Pardakhty talked about the ASCSC in a press conference in the University's Research and Technology Department. "This conference is one of the most important international conferences in recent years which will be held by Kerman Province."

He said the conference theme is "Cosmetic Science, Look Good, Live Better", adding that, "This conference will be held through cooperation of the MECSCC and KMU."

Dr. Pardakhty also made comments about ASCSC 2017 topics. "Innovation cosmetics, clinical cosmetics, green or natural cosmetics and the application of nano-science in cosmetics have been considered for this conference."

He also described the event as a scientific and cultural conference. "Since senior scientists and many foreign companies will take part in the conference, it can have many advantages for Iran and also Kerman Province."

Dr. Pardakhty added that, "The ASCSC will be held in Graduate University of Advanced Technology (KGUT), Kerman, Iran. The consumption of cosmetics in Iran is very high. Hence, high quality products and those based on international standards must be produced and supplied."

He said retraining topics for physicians, pharmacists and dermatologists will be discussed in lectures and workshops.

100 foreign guests to attend ASCSC

Chairman of the Middle Eastern Countries Society of Cosmetic Chemists (MECSCC) said, "This conference is one of the biggest regional scientific conferences which will be held in Kerman Province."

Dr. Mohammad Baghaei added, "The science of cosmetics is, in fact, the science of chemistry and its related sciences which deals with the production of products used for taking care of body, skin and hair. Preparations for setting up the International Federation of Societies of Cosmetic Chemists (IFSCC) were made in France in 1956. Three years later, it was established by eight European nations."

He said, "The federation and its related associations are non-profit and scientific societies which disseminate and transfer the knowledge of cosmetics. These international associations are being developed well."

Dr. Baghaei said there are 47 international cosmetic associations which are IFSCC members and are situated in 57 countries.

He recalled that, "We set up the MECSCC in 2009, and in the same year, registered it in the conference of Australia and Board of Directors."

He said, in the beginning, the society was supposed to be registered under the title of 'The Cosmetic Society of the Persian Gulf Countries', adding, nevertheless, to avoid future consequences, it was registered under the title of 'Middle Eastern Countries Society of Cosmetic Chemists', the secretariat of which is located in Iran.

Dr. Baghaei listed the countries affiliated to the MECSCC as Iran, Iraq, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Jordan, Qatar, Lebanon, Syria, Bahrain, Oman, Armenia, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

He said during May 15-17, 2017, the 13th Asian Societies of Cosmetic Scientists Conference 2017 (ASCSC 2017) as well as the first workshop and exhibition of "Home and Personal Care Ingredients' Exhibition, HPCI" will be held in Kerman.

The conference and expo will bring Kerman into spotlight in the region with regard to skin and hair care products and cosmetics in general.

"Iran ranks among the top 10 in the world in all sciences pertaining to the science of cosmetics. Yet, the science has not been academically developed in Iran. According to our estimations, at least, 100 foreign guests will attend the 13th edition of the conference in Kerman."

He added definitely, different workshops will be held on the sidelines of the conference, most of which will be organized by domestic and international producers of cosmetics' raw materials.

Dr. Baghaei stressed that holding the conference and expo-



sition will lead to an improvement in the level of the science of cosmetics in Iran, adding the conference will be a unique opportunity for the officials and experts of the Iranian Ministry of Health and Medical Education to gain more knowledge about the latest cosmetic products and formulations.

"Iran enjoys a favorable status in the world in terms of science. Iranian brands rank amongst the world's top 50 and are on a par with them in terms of quality. Currently, we produce products containing plant stem cells, the raw materials of which, however, are imported from Switzerland."

He recalled that, "We can extract a stem cell from a plant, cultivate it in the lab environment and use it in the industry. Such stem cells are found in saffron which is a plant indigenous to Iran. Saffron has anti-inflammatory and moisturizing properties."

Dr. Baghaei said Iran has a large number of plant products, adding the country is home to a large number of native plant species each of which has a large number of properties and can be used in the production of new products by using nanotechnology and cultivating its stem cell in the lab environment.

Comparing the quality of domestic and foreign products, he said due to a number of reasons, the quality of Iranian products is absolutely higher than their foreign counterparts.

Commenting on the relationship between a product and its price, MECSCC's president said he believes there is no relationship between the two, for, basically, most of the foreign products that are sold at more than \$28.5 in Iran, has a much lower price outside the country.



"This is due to an absent of adequate and effective supervision by the related organizations over the price of the products in the span between importing them to the country and selling them to customers in pharmacies and stores."

Iran in a high UV radiation region

Stressing the importance of promoting the use of sunscreens, Dr. Baghaei said Iran is located in a zone with a high and, sometimes, damaging ultraviolet radiation.

"In most of the Iranian provinces in summer, should people exit their houses during the day and while the sun is still up, they have to wear hats or caps and gloves, carry umbrella and use sunscreen."

Keratin hair straightening treatments carcinogenic

Dr. Baghaei stressed that people should only use standard products that are approved by the Ministry of Health and Medical Education.

He added it has become quite common that hairdressers use keratin to straighten customers' hair.

"This is while keratin contains a solvent which is highly carcinogenic. The permissible amount of this solvent is 1 parts per million (PPM). This is while, a larger amount of the solvent (6 percent) is used in keratin hair straightening treatments."

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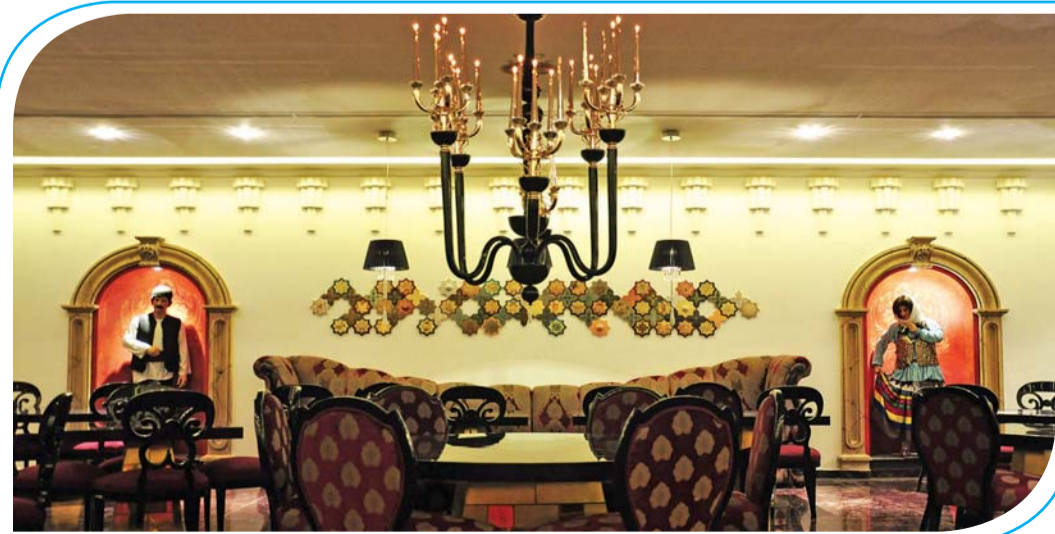
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A New and Different Experience of Cooperating between Private Sector and Oil Ministry Kicks Off to Promote Security in Country

A Glance at Salient Achievements of PETRO OMID ASIA Company

Oil storage tanks, with the storing capacity of 10 million oil barrels, is a giant step taken in chain of crude oil output and export of this strategic product.



The inaugural ceremony of the largest crude oil storage tanks was held on Wednesday morning in southern Iran, Genaveh and Deylam port areas, Bushehr Province.

To learn more about the details, our reporter has conducted an interview with Dr. Ali Askari Managing Director of OMID Investment Company which comes as follows:

To begin with his interview, he first congratulated the glorious victory anniversary of the Islamic Revolution to the noble nation of the Islamic Iran and said: "This giant project was launched by the private sector at the time when the country was put under severe sanctions."

Despite tough conditions experienced by the company for launching this giant project, all financial problems were resolved in the company relying upon the assistance of the Almighty God.

In this tough situation, "We managed to complete construction operations of this giant project."

Contd. on This Page



POA Board Member and Development Deputy:
Creative Financing a Mega Project

8



We Have Managed to Increase Power of Competition and Bargaining in World

9

Success in Construction of 1st Crude Oil Storage Tanks in Country

As a holding company in the field of oil sector, Petro Omid Asia (POA) is affiliated to the Group Company of Omid which has three and four companies in its subsidiary. In turn, POA is affiliated to DARYAN Energy Management Company and is an ASMARI Company which owns oil rig which is tasked with the construction of oil tanks along with Petro Omid Kish Company. As a holding company, Omid Investment Company is active in various fields, the most important of which is mines and mineral. About 38 percent stocks of the companies like Chadormalu Mining & Industrial Company and Gol-e Gohar Mining & Industrial Company belongs to Omid Investment Company.

Contd. on P. 8

Giant Oil Tank Construction Industry Has Been Indigenized in Country

Storage tank industry has been known as one of profitable and safe industries in world since decades ago. However, construction of storage tank is not delegated to the private sector as a strategic industry. It should be noted that storage tank industry is considered as one of the most profitable industry in the countries including Malaysia, Singapore, Egypt and South Africa.

Contd. on P. 9

A Glance at POA

Petro Omid Asia Company (POA) is powerful arm of oil and gas sector which is subsidiary company of Omid Investment Management Group. It should be noted that the company was established in 2009 in the name of Ma'dankaran Goharan Omid Company (Private Joint Stock) with the initial capital of 500 million rials and was registered in the same year.

The company was renamed into Petro Omid Asia Company in 2009, so that the capital of the company increased at two stages, amounting to 1,000 and 2,000 billion rials.

Contd. on P. 10

1st Privately-Funded Oil Storage Complex Goes on Stream

After a landmark nuclear deal inked between Iran and P5+1 (the five permanent members of UN Security Council plus Germany), the trend of privatization in the country has been accelerated in a way that many organizations and ministries have taken giant strides for the implementation of this important effect.

With due observance to the said issue, the National Iranian Oil Company (NOIC) has made its utmost efforts to take advantage of capacities and capabilities of the private sector in the best form possible.

Contd. on P. 10

Managing Director of OTC:

Crude Oil Storing Capacity Increases 10m Barrels in Country



Giant installations for storing oil with the capacity of 10 million barrels were put into operation in Bushehr Province.

It should be noted that this giant oil project has been put into operation by Omid Investment Group and Petro Omid Asia (POA), so that 35% was added to the nominal capacity of producing and exporting crude oil in export terminals of the country.

To learn more about the details, our reporter has conducted an interview with Eng. Seyyed Pirouz Mousavi the Managing Director of Iranian Oil Terminals Company (OTC) which comes as follows:

To begin with his interview, he said: "With the construction of oil tanks with the storage capacity of 10 million oil barrels, 35 percent has been added to the storage capacity of crude oil in Iranian oil terminals."

This issue is of paramount importance to the country, so that it will approach capacity of oil storage to the world oil standards, he maintained.

In its operational programs, the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) attaches great importance for storing oil, he said, adding: "OTC is responsible for storing and exporting crude oil in the country and is considered as the last cycle of oil and gas production cycle."

Generally speaking, OTC is re-

sponsible for storing more than 90 percent of crude oil and also obtaining 70 percent of currency incomes of the country, he highlighted.

He pointed to Kharg Oil Terminal as one of the largest oil terminals in the region and said: "Benefited from the most experienced, competent and skilled manpower, OTC was considered as one of the first Iranian companies that expressed its readiness to increase Iranian oil exports after the implementation of Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the official title of the nuclear deal."

With its accurate and precise planning and at the unsparing effort of its committed and expert manpower, OTC managed to register the record of loading and unloading and exporting 7.2 million oil barrels per day (BPD) with activating nine quays after the implementation of JCPOA, the managing director said, adding: "This issue was unique and unprecedented in all-time history of the country in at least recent 20 years."

The senior official of oil industry of the country termed the crude oil storage capacity as one of the important criteria of an oil terminal and said: "Considering the restrictions of land area in Kharg Island, OTC managed to materialize its operational objectives in line with the developmental programs of the country and

taking advantage of high capability of the private sector to the international standard of the nominal oil storage capacity of 15 days in terminal coupled with increasing oil exports volume in the country."

Elsewhere in his remarks, the managing director of the company pointed to the way of investment in this giant project and said: "For the first time in the country and in tandem with the objectives of the Oil Ministry, Omid Investment Group, affiliated to Bank Sepah, managed to undertake the responsibility of compensating 35 percent of shortage of crude oil storage reservoir in the country at Kharg Oil Terminal."

As a financier, Petro Omid Asia Company managed to undertake the responsibility of compensating 35 percent of shortage of crude oil storage tanks at Kharg Oil Terminal, he reiterated.

However, the company managed to own a large oil storage tank in Genaveh and Deylam regions in Bushehr Province on a land area as large as 100 ha, he said, adding: "Presently, the mentioned oil storage tanks are ready for operational."

Elsewhere in his remarks, he pointed to the existence of some challenges in Kharg Island such as bad weather and stormy conditions, risk of overflow of oil tanks, etc. and said: "Benefitted from the most experienced manpower and engineers, this oil terminal can reduce the available risks of operations."

With the implementation of these oil storage tanks, some delays with relation to the repair and maintenance of oil storage tanks in Kharg Island have been redressed, he emphasized.

In the end, Seyyed Pirouz Mousavi the Managing Director of Iranian Oil Terminals Company (OTC) pointed to Jask project as the next program of Iranian Oil Terminals Company (OTC) and expressed hope that experience of this company for investment in construction of strategic oil tanks will bear fruition.

A Glance at Salient Achievements of PETRO OMID ASIA Company

Contd. From This Page

He expressed his special thanks to the officials at the Oil Ministry, South Oilfields Company, Project Technical Committee, responsible managers and directors as well as law enforcement forces who cooperated and collaborated with us in order to materialize most objectives of this giant project.

With the construction operation of these tanks, capacity and capability of export of crude oil in the country, observing requirements of international standards, has increased to a great extent, he said, adding: "Giant step has been taken in this regard, so that economic power and factor of Iran's national security has also increased."

In the end, Dr. Ali Askari Managing Director of Omid Investment Company said: "Launching this project will save considerable currency for the country in various aspects."

Eng. Bitaraf Deputy Oil Minister was the next speaker in the inaugural ceremony of this giant project who congratulated the Ten-Day Dawn ceremonies to the noble nation of Islamic Iran and said: "Under the wise management of the late Imam Khomeini (RA), the country managed to get rid of political dependency rapidly and practiced self-sufficiency during 38 years considerably."

In tandem with the policies of production and operation of oil, has and downstream industries, the oil industry follows up two other important pivots as well, he said, adding: "Benefitted from the most experienced and competent manpower and engineers, almost all relevant projects are launched by these efficient manpower in the country, equipped with most modern and advanced technology."

Today, the issue of development of oil and gas fields within the framework of new contracts are the two very important requirements that should be followed up strictly, he said, adding: "With the coordination made in this regard, factor of recycling oil reservoirs should be increased."

Elsewhere in his remarks, he pointed to the transfer of technology in domestic centers as the other strategies that has been taken into serious consideration by the Oil Ministry and said: "Accordingly, effective steps have been taken in this regard in order to indigenize manufacturing oil parts and equipment in the country independently."

Then, the deputy oil minister also re-



ferred to the unsparing efforts and supports of the oil minister in growth and dynamism of Iranian oil industry and said: "With the coordination made in this regard, the oil minister Eng. Zanganeh has thrown his heavyweight on implementation of oil and gas projects in the country."

He also seized this opportunity to express his special thanks to the four Iranian banks including Bank Sepah, Bank Mellat, Sina Bank and Ansar Bank as financiers of this giant project.

Major portion of installations and facilities of oil industry had been dilapidated during sanctions period, he said, adding: "It is logical that both private sector and the Oil Ministry should join their hands together in order to boom economic sector in the country."

In the end, Eng. Bitaraf Deputy Oil Minister pointed to the depravity of coastal provinces in the country such as Bushehr Province and said: "It is hoped that the Oil Ministry in cooperation with other sectors will take giant strides in line with uprooting the depravity in underprivileged and disadvantaged areas of the country."

Esmaili Governor of Deylam sub-province was the next speaker who congratulated the functionaries for the implementation of this giant project and said: "Undoubtedly, unflinching cooperation of private sector with the provincial officials will have positive impacts in launching giant projects in the country."

Hojjatolislam Khedri representative of people of Genaveh and Deylam in the Islamic Consultative Assembly and Secretary of Majlis Energy Commission was the other speaker in this ceremony who

said: "Both Majlis and Energy Commission established more cooperation and collaboration with the government and the Oil Ministry, so that oil diplomacy of the country has brought about dignity and pride for the Islamic Iran." He called on responsible officials to take effective steps in line with uprooting the dust of poverty and depravity from this province.

In the end, Hojjatolislam Khedri representative of people of Genaveh and Deylam in the Islamic Consultative Assembly also called for the Oil Ministry to live up to its commitments in the field of construction of sports and cultural centers coupled with generating more job opportunities for native job-seeking people.

Mousavi the Managing Director of Iranian Oil Terminals Company (OTC) was the other speaker in this prestigious ceremony who said: "Storing oil is of the last chains in the trend of producing and selling oil and also is one of the strategic programs of the Oil Ministry."

However, the Oil Ministry made its utmost effort to observe capacity of storing oil according to the international standards.

He called on the private sector to throw its heavyweight on the programs of the Oil Ministry in line with attaining sustainable development.

Zakeri the managing Director of PETRO OMID ASIA (POA) was the last speaker who expressed his special thanks to those officials, managers and directors who backed the objectives of this project. He also urged the Deputy Oil Minister Eng. Bitaraf to establish fair cooperation and collaboration with the private sector in line with materializing most objectives of the Oil Ministry.

Success in Construction of 1st Crude Oil Storage Tanks in Country

In general, Omid Investment Company holds more than 50% of stocks of these companies along with its subsidiary companies. Also, Omid Group of Companies is busy active in different fields within the framework of various companies. Salient activity of the company is in the field of cement which holds stocks of five cement production companies. The company owns 99

percent share in Hormozgan Cement Production Company and less than 50 percent stocks in the rest companies. Oil and gas sector is the other activities of this company, the most important of which can be referred to the construction of oil storage tanks in Genaveh. It should be noted that construction operation of which has been completed and is ready to use.

Omid Investment Company is also busy active in oil wells and also is active at the Capital Market. The companies such as Ta'min Sarmayeh, Omid Brokerage Company, Omid Leading Company, Sepah Investment Company, etc. are of the companies which are active in developing market and supplying resources for the companies subsidiary to Omid Group of Companies and other companies in the country which need financing for the construction of their projects.

"Building" is the other sector of activities of Omid Group of Companies. In this field, more than four companies are busy active which are affiliated to Omid Group of Companies and are tasked with construction activities in Tehran and other provinces in the country such as Sepah Construction Company. There are other companies, as affiliated to Omid Group of Companies, which are busy active in other fields of activity particularly in the field of construction of brick and construction materials, manufacturing tire (KAVIR TIRE), etc. as an employer, Petro Omid Asia (POA) is tasked with constructing crude oil storage tanks while DARYAN Energy Management Company is considered as manager of MC project. In addition, Tehran Jonoob Technical and Engineering Company and SETIRAN Company are considered as consulting engineers for the project.

To learn more about the details, our correspondent has conducted an interview with Dr. Ali Askari the Managing Director of Omid Investment Management Company who was appointed to this position in last year. Earlier, he was the head of Iranian National Tax Administration (INTA). Of his other position, it can be referred to: Deputy Ministry of Energy, Economic and Coordinating Deputy Head of Management and Planning Organization (MPO), etc.

Let's review the interview in questions and answers:

■ It seems that the one of the approaches of Omid Investment Company is

to focus on gaps available in the country. Investing for the construction of oil storage tank is one of the distinctive and completely different fields of activity of your company. Would you mind explaining more on this?

A: Since Iran is rich in oil reserves and plays as a leading role in economic transactions in world market and also OPEC member, lack of coordination in main pillars of this field has created critical problem in the country. This grave situation continued until international sanctions were imposed against the country and the situation became worsened. When international sanctions were imposed on Iran, we decided to make up for our deficiencies and weaknesses. Under such circumstances, we had to store our oil resources. But the country lacked sufficient capacity for storage this huge amount of oil. However, the country decided to store its surplus oil reserves in countries like China, India, Far East, Europe and Africa.

In general, sanctions caused us to take a giant stride inside the country instead of storing huge amount of oil reserves in other countries. For this purpose, a bilateral contract was inked between Omid Investment Company and Oil Ministry in early 1990s. Under the contract, it was decided to construct a storage tank for storing 20 million barrels of oil in the country, so that Omid Investment Management Company was introduced as responsible body for storing light- and heavy oil. Presently, pipeline route of our oil materials has been constructed in Kharg which carries the oil to these tanks based in Kharg. In other words, we can store oil in Genaveh and Deylam regions. If needed, we pump the oil in Kharg Quay as well.

Broadly speaking, these tanks can store a huge amount of oil in order to export to overseas.

■ Project for the construction of oil tanks has significant features. In your opinion, what is the most salient feature?

A: In response to your question, I should say that 650 billion tomans has been invested for the construction of oil tanks, so that these projects are considered as mega project. When a giant project is constructed for storing a huge amount of oil, it should be constructed in accordance with the international standards, and also should be equipped with firefighting network, water storage tanks and pumping station for tanks, a system for measuring oil input and output, etc. However, construction of an oil storage tank is a very complex and complicated task. It should be noted that construction of oil storage tank was the first experience of Omid Investment Company which managed to construct this giant project successfully. In the same direction, private sector took a giant stride in this field. We implemented all standards needed for the construction of these tanks and its offsite installations. In any case, Omid Investment Company showed that private sector can play a leading role in large oil projects in the country; otherwise, the country had to store its huge amount of oil in other countries as mentioned in above.

■ Do you know how much oil production volume and hoe many oil storage tanks are required in the country?

A: I do not have exact information in this field but according to the oil production and export capacities, I can say that there is growing demand for oil, so that the country can take logical step to meet its requirements in world market. At any rate, oil wells should be managed logically in order to prevent oil wells from incurring severe damage.

■ You mentioned that your company has observed all requirements of international standards in the construction of oil storage tanks. In general, does the technology needed for the construction of oil storage tank is based on both domestic and foreign technology?

A: In response to your question, I should say that construction of oil storage tank is composed of two parts, i.e. executive issue and construction. In Iran, there is a technol-



ogy and technical knowhow for the construction of oil storage tank. The other part is related to the engineering and technical affairs that a company should observe requirements of international standard for constructing oil storage tank. Undoubtedly, some of equipment and machinery used for the construction of oil storage tank is imported into the country from other countries as manufacturer of the pertinent parts and equipment. The company has observed all requirements in engineering terms. Once again, I emphasize that all standards needed for the construction of an oil storage tank should be observed meticulously.

■ What is the impact of implementation of Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) or BARJAM in acceleration of this project?

A: Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the official title of nuclear deal, was inked between Iran and P5+1 at the time that almost all construction activities of the project had been finalized. Despite sanctions, we had purchased a large portion of equipment and parts needed for the construction oil storage tank.

Despite sanctions, the project was launched without any financial problem.

I should say that implementation of such a giant project will be much easier with the implementation of BARJAM.

■ What is the relationship of implementation of such projects with the resistance economy?

A: Resistance economy means to focus on domestic economy and its internal capacities. Generally speaking, the main concept of resistance economy is defined to meet domestic demands ourselves and also to rely on the most experienced and expert manpower. The projects like this are

in line with the resistance economy. Instead of storing a huge amount of oil in overseas, we should be able to store this volume inside our country. With due observance to the said issue, we should be able to design technical and engineering capacities in the country. Any investment in this field should be in line with the resistance economy. For example, we should increase the export of technical and engineering services, so that new interests will be created for the national economy.

■ If you want to think the construction of oil storage tank during your management portfolio, what different strategy will be taken into consideration?

A: Certainly, the first issue that will hit in my mind is related to holding direct talks with domestic parts manufacturing companies in order to provide relevant parts and equipment. It is believed that major portion of equipment can be manufactured inside the country. At any rate, some part of sheets needed for the construction of these oil tanks have been imported into the country from abroad. In the same direction, effective steps should be taken in order to manufacture these sheets inside the country. Although major part of equipment for the construction of oil tanks have been manufactured inside the country, the domestic share can be increased as well.

Fortunately, the country has been equipped with quality technical and engineering knowhow and there is no need to import the relevant knowledge from outside the country. It should be noted that Iran has been equipped with the most experienced and expert manpower which are able to make giant projects without foreign assistance in line with materializing objectives of resistance economy.

POA Board Member and Development Deputy:

Creative Financing a Mega Project

Nasrollah Jaan-Afzaei Member of Board of Directors and Development Deputy of PETRO OMID ASIA (POA) revealed the above statement.

He holds Ph.D. degree in Accounting and presently, he is an active member of Board of Directors of this prestigious company. he was the economic deputy of the company by 2015 and early 2016, tasked with developing activities of the company. It is for some years that he is busy active in construction of oil tanks and reservoirs in Bandar Genaveh and considers it as a precious experience for Iranian oil industry.

After the completion of construction operation of the said project, the company intends to initiative news investment. It should be noted that POA was established in 2010 with the initial capital of 200 billion rials. The most important project that has thus far been completed by the company is in the field of construction of crude oil storage tank with the capacity of 10 million barrels of oil in Genaveh and Deylam port areas. It should be noted that this project is the first project of the Oil Ministry which is able to store 10 million barrels of oil.

To learn more about the details, our reporter has conducted an interview with Nasrollah Jaan-Afzaei Member of Board of Directors and Development Deputy of PETRO OMID ASIA (POA) which comes as follows:

Let's review the interview in questions and answers.

■ How come the Iranian Oil Ministry delegated the construction operation of this giant project to Petro Omid Investment Management Company?

A: With the agreements made in this regard and dire need of the Oil Ministry to these oil storage tanks, construction operation of these oil storage tanks were assigned to the Petro Omid Investment Company thanks to its experience in the field of construction of such project. As you know, the Oil Ministry rents oil storage tanks consecutively in order to sell its oil. Of course, the Oil Ministry owns oil storage tank inside and outside the country.

■ Would you mind explaining the way of financing this project?

A: The Company faced difficulty in financing this giant project. However, we managed to finance the project at the unsparing cooperation and collaboration of responsible of-



ficials. Finally, financing this giant project was realized.

Since this project has been financed by banking financial resources, it was unique of its kind. In general, we obtained loans from Bank Mellat, Sina Bank and Ansar Bank. In addition, 52 billion tomans worth of participation bonds were offered.

■ Would you please talk about the cost price and the rate of loan received for construction of this giant project?

A: With the studies made in this regard, total cost up to August 2016 stood at 650 billion tomans. With regard to obtaining loan, 156 billion tomans worth of loan with day-count interest was received from Ansar Bank. It should be noted that the interest rates for the received loans stood at between 26 and 27 percent.

■ Did you face any problem for financing the project?

A: In response to your question, I should say that we faced many problem for financing the project. In general,

this was a certain and special project since its contract was inked with 10,000 rials worth of foreign exchange rate (USD) but unfortunately, this project was implemented with 15,000 rials currency rate. The said issue created many problems ahead of company. Changing the currency rate increased cost of project to a great extent.

In our estimation, it was decided that this project will be put into operation at 200 billion tomans but the said rate turned threefold due to the changes of currency as mentioned in above.

■ So, it can said that this project has been fully implemented by the private sector. This is right?

A: Yes. This giant project has been fully constructed and funded by the private sector, because, the respected government did not support us financially. For this purpose, partnership companies guaranteed construction operation of project and we received loans from the operating banks. Generally speaking, all stages of this project, from the earliest stage up to the final stage, have been carried out and funded by the private sector with Bank Sepah as operating bank.

■ Except financial problems, did you face any other challenges in the construction and implementation trend?

A: Except financial problem, the company managed to overcome many other problems at the unsparing effort of wise and logical management of the company. Here, I seize this opportunity to express my special thanks to the former and current chief executives of the company including Mr. Khodabakhsh, Mr. Taheri and Mr. Seyyed Pendar Tofghi who took giant strides in line with materializing most objectives of the company.

■ Have sanctions imposed on the country affected the construction operation of this giant project?

A: As mentioned in above, sanctions increased the cost of projects to a great extent. After the lifting of sanctions, foreign purchase department of the company faced critical problem in the field of transferring currency. In sanctions period, we had to work and cooperate with UAE and China. Since the company has been equipped with the most experienced and expert manpower, the company managed to overcome most of its problems.

After the implementation of BARJAM (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action), we negotiated with the foreign companies for financing projects. Undoubtedly, the companies which are in tandem with international financing system will be successful and can help boost economic situation of the country to a great extent. Finalization of contract according to new version of Iran Petroleum Contract (IPC) will help these types of project experience a boost in financing. In general, the contracts which are concluded in oil and gas sectors within the framework of new scheme can accelerate construction operation of projects appropriately.

■ In your opinion, what is the salient specification of this giant project?

A: To me, the way of financing this project is one of the salient parameters of this giant project. However, construction operation of this project was completed despite differences in the rate of foreign currency. However, methods of financing this project was considerable which was carried out by different banks. Considering the financial and economic crises such as currency rate, international challenges, and money transfer, etc., a certain type of financing was provided that was very creative and can be considered as a role model in implementation of other projects.

■ Can this project be considered as a role model in terms of resistance economy?

A: Since all stages of this giant project have been launched without foreign financing scheme, it is considered as a kind of resistance economy. However, all financial resources for the construction of this project have been provided from domestic resources which is unique of its kind.

■ What are the future programs of the company?

A: With the completion of construction operation of this project, we are planning and devising new projects. Our first priority is in the field of construction of oil tank and development of oilfields such as Jask tanks and also development of these projects. However, there are many capacities in the Persian Gulf which are untapped. It is logical that the company should make its utmost efforts to take advantage of opportunity in the country in line with materializing most of its economic objectives.

Managing Director of PETRO OMID Asia Company: Giant Oil Tank Construction Industry Has Been Indigenized in Country

For the significance of this industry, Iranian Oil Ministry decided in 2012 to delegate construction of storage tank to the private sector. As represented by OMID Investment Company, Petro Omid Asia Company put this issue atop of its agenda despite widespread sanctions imposed on the country and embarked on construction of oil storage tank. This prestigious company received the license for the construction of oil storage tank from the Ministry of Oil with the capacity of storing over 10 million barrels of oil. Up to the present time, the company has spent approx. 800 billion tomans in this industry. To learn more about the details, our reporter has conducted an interview with Vahid Zakeri Managing Director of Petro Omid Asia Company which comes as follows:

■ How Petro Omid Asia Company managed to receive the first license for the construction of oil storage tank from the Oil Ministry? How much cost has the company invested in this project?

A: As represented by OMID Investment Company, PETRO OMID Asia Company is a subsidiary company of Bank Sepah, so that the company has implemented this giant project at the toughest condition of sanctions imposed on the country. It should be noted that the company received the first license for the construction of oil storage tank from the Oil Ministry for storing 10 million barrels of oil. So far, the company has invested 800 billion tomans in this field. As a matter of fact, Bank Sepah embarked on financing the project at the toughest conditions of sanctions.

However, making investment in toughest situation of sanctions was a difficult task for any company. Due to their strategic mission, Bank Sepah and Omid Investment Company made huge investment in this industry and managed to add approx. 36 percent to the storage capacity of oil in the country.

■ How much oil storage capacity will increase in the country upon the construction operation of this project?

A: Presently, there are approx. 30 million barrels for storing oil in Kharg region,

so that more 10 million barrels have added to the previous capacity. Totally, oil storage capacity will increase up to 40 million barrels. This important issue was materialized when the supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution named the current year after "Resistance Economy, Action and Implementation". Of total 30 million barrels of oil storage in Kharg area, almost 4 to 5 million barrels of oil are under rehabilitation services due to the longevity of tanks and adding this oil storage capacity to the strategic capacity of the country will be influential strategic and valuable work.

■ How much domestic and foreign equipment and machinery used and imported in this giant project?

A: All stages ranging from designing, manufacturing to supervision operation have been conducted by the most experienced and skilled and competent engineers of the country. With due observance to the said issue, it can be concluded that construction of oil storage tank has been indigenized in the country.

■ What change and development has been created in the underprivileged and deprived area of the country by the selection of Genaveh and Deylam regions as main hub for the construction of oil storage tank?

A: Investing in underprivileged and disad-

vantaged class of society is one of the major concerns of OMID Investment Company. For this purpose, the underprivileged areas of Genaveh and Deylam have been selected as the main regions for the construction of oil storage tank. When we started construction operation of oil storage tanks in this region, many native people were employed in the construction operation of this project, so that employing native workers for the construction operation of this project has developed these region as well. The second issue that should be taken into consideration here is the use of domestic resources. It should be noted that this project has been financed by domestic banks such as Bank Sepah, SINA Bank and Bank Ansar.

This project proved that domestic projects can be implemented via domestic financing instead of foreign financing appropriately.

■ How can implementation of such project be influential in boosting experience of domestic engineers of the country?

A: Construction of this project proved that the country can materialize objectives of the motto on "We can" into practice. Employing expert manpower and native human resources was the other salient achievements of this project. In addition, one of the largest measuring system (metering) available in oil industry of the coun-



try installed in this project.

■ Will implementation of this project help the Oil Ministry to preserve and safeguard energy?

A: As I mentioned in above, this project is one of the largest oil storage project in the private sector.

With the construction of oil storage capacity, the country will save considerable currency. The oil produced has to be stored and preserved on ship in sanctions period, so that many countries did not ready to purchase Iranian oil. After a landmark deal inked between Iran and P5+1, a bright horizon was opened in Iranian oil industry. However, considerable amount of currency has been saved as a result of implementation of this giant project, the issue of which is valuable.

■ Would you mind explaining about the generation of employment in this giant project?

A: When the construction operation of this oil storage tank started, approx. 700 new employment opportunities were generated to the job-seeking people. This issue is considered as one of the positive steps in the field of generation of employment in the region.

It should be noted that generation of em-

ployment to youth and young people was highlighted by the supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution.

■ Any concluding remarks.

A: In the end, I would like to express my special thanks to the senior management of the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC), past and present managers of Bank Sepah, Omid Investment Company, Petro Omid Asia (POA) Company, all managers and citizens of the region, industrious laborers, directors of Tehran Jonoob Company as project commissioner and also SETIRAN Company as consulting engineer appointed for this giant project.

Also, I seize this opportunity to express my special thanks to the respected city and provincial officials, governor and governor general, district governors and noble people of Genaveh and Deylam areas who threw their heavyweights on us for materializing most objectives of this project.

"Employing and hiring native manpower for the construction of oil storage tank is one of the salient specifications of this project."

An Interview with PETRO OMID ASIA Co. Project Manager:

We Have Managed to Increase Power of Competition and Bargaining in World

■ Would you mind explaining the construction trend of oil storage tank from the earliest stage?

A: As mentioned in above, oil terminal for storing 10million barrels of light- and heavy oil in Genaveh / Deylam areas is currently considered as the largest offshore oil storage in the country. This tank with the capacity of storing 10 million barrels of oil for storing crude oil is the strategic project of the country which is of paramount importance in increasing competitive advantage of Iran in turbulent market of oil price.

The more country is able to store oil in oilfields after production, the more power of country will be strengthened for exporting oil to world market.

Considering the sublime recommendations of supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution with regard to resistance economy and following the developmental activities of the respected government, OMID Investment Group was introduced as project commissioner, so that PETRO OMID Asia (POA) Company concluded a contract with Iranian contractor in July 2012 within the framework of BOO (Build – Own and Operate) basis. Under such circumstances, the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) announced its agreement according to the good experience of Omid Investment Company within the framework of contract and a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) concluded in 2012.

Then, Omid Investment Company introduced one of its subsidiary companies named "Petro Mid Asia (POA): as project commissioner. With due observance to the said issue, POA concluded the contract in July 2012 with Iranian contractor named "Tehran Jonoob Company" within the framework of Engineering, Procurement and construction (EPC). With over 57 years of executive experience, Tehran Jonoob Company is tasked with construction of oil,

gas and petrochemical projects. It should be noted that SETIRAN Company has been introduced as consulting engineers for this giant project.

■ How many oil storage tanks have been constructed by the company?

A: Construction operation of oil storage tanks started in 2012 in Genaveh and Deylam areas, Bushehr Province. Strategic location of this area as a bridge for transferring crude oil from south oilfields in Khuzestan and Bushehr provinces to the main hub of Iranian Oil Terminal Company has been cited as the main aim behind selection of Kharg area for the construction of oil storage tank.

Since crude oil marketing is affected by various political, economic, social and international factors, oil sale will experience considerable fluctuations off and on.

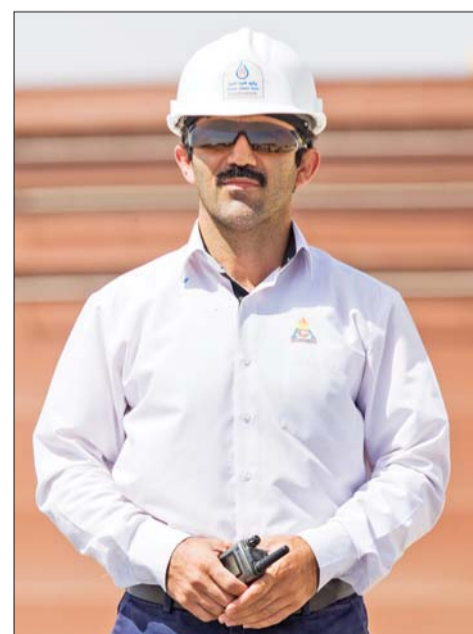
■ How much domestically-produced equipment applied in this project? How much foreign-made parts and equipment used in this project?

A: more than 80 percent of parts and equipment needed for this project in the field of electricity, instrumentation, piping, sanitary valves, etc. were provided from do-

estic market while the rest was supplied from foreign companies.

■ Since construction of this project was the first experience of the company, what are the challenges you faced them?

A: Yes. This project is the first experience of private sector in terms of vast-



ness of construction, supplying parts and equipment and integration of private sector. Since three angles of this project i.e. project commissioner, EPC contractor and consulting engineer of the company are related to the private sector, we faced serious problems in obtaining pertinent licenses.

■ Would you please talks about the technical knowhow of Iranian specialists in installation and construction of this project?

A: It should be noted that all construction operation stages of this project were conducted by the most experienced and skilled engineers and manpower of the country. However, we did not use the technical know-how of foreign experts in construction of this giant project.

■ How do you evaluate this project in terms of resistance economy?

A: In my opinion, this project can be considered as a role model for the materialization of objectives of resistance economy. The domestic investors in the country can take this project as a role model for construction of their project.

With the construction operation of oil storage tanks, the country can prevent the

oil from selling in the form of crude as a result of recession overshadowed oil sale market.

■ How much cost did you spend for the construction of this project? If this project had been commissioned by foreign company, how much money should have been spent for the construction of this project?

A: With regard to the construction cost, it should be noted that the discussion on the cost management in these projects is mainly based on rules and regulations of tender in the country and through holding tender between contracting company. Once construction operation of project is prolonged, cost of project will increase simultaneously. Intimacy, unity and amity between contractor and project commissioner are the salient specification of this project which made it distinctive with other similar projects.

In response to the second part of your question, I should say that if this project is commissioned by foreign company, it tries to manage costs simultaneously.

To me, if this project is constructed by foreign company, undoubtedly, it should grapple with serious problem, so that construction cost would have been increased.

■ What is the salient characteristic of this project?

A: In all-time history of Iranian oil industry, dating back to 150 years ago, not such a giant project has been carried out by the private sector.

In previous years, the Oil Ministry had to commission pertinent projects itself.

■ What do you expect from the government?

A: I expect the respected government and government officials to throw their heavyweight on this project in order to materialize its objectives in the best form possible.

1st Privately-Funded Oil Storage Tank Goes on Stream

After a landmark nuclear deal inked between Iran and P5+1 (the five permanent members of UN Security Council plus Germany), the trend of privatization was accelerated in the country. For this purpose, the Oil Ministry has tried to delegate most of its projects to the private sector (outsourcing). However, the Oil Ministry too giant stride in line with assigning most of its projects to the private sector in line with enforcement of Article 44 of the Constitution.

To learn more about the details, our correspondent has conducted an interview with Dr. Seyyed Mohsen Ghamsari the Former Member of the Board of Directors of the National Iranian Oil Company for International Affairs.

What was the main aim of the National Iranian Oil Company behind construction of oil storage tank?

A: In response to your question, I should say that this project has been launched by the private sector for the first time in the country. Construction of crude oil storage tank in Genaveh and Deylam regions, Bushehr Province, was launched by Petro Omid Asia Company (POA). However, the Ministry of Oil delegated the construction of crude oil storage tank to the private sector which can add proper capacity to the operational capacity of the National Iranian Oil Company. It can be said that this giant project will grant a very suitable operational ability of the company.

However, the private sector in the country managed to construct crude oil storage tank in the country successfully.

How much percentage can this company add to the oil export volume of the country?

A: These storage tanks have been connected to Kharg Island to some extent. Presently, the oil storage capacity in tanks available in the country stands at 30 million barrels of oil. This means that 30 million barrels of oil can be stored in oil storage tanks in the country. With adding 10 million barrels to the capacity of oil storage, it can be concluded that 40 million barrels of oil will be stored in oil storage tanks in the country.

In view of the NIOC, what is the upstream relationship of this project with the resistance economy?

A: In response to your question, I should say that construction of storage is one of the concepts of oil industry,



based on which, we can rely on the domestic industry comfortably. Of course, construction of oil storage is not a simple task. Construction of oil storage tank needs very powerful and complicated pumps. For this purpose, we decided to assign the construction of crude oil storage tank to the private sector. It is hoped that Iran will be considered as a role model for other countries in the field of construction of oil storage tank.

Would you mind explaining more on the possibility of saving foreign currency as a result of launching crude oil storage tank?

A: Installing and constructing these crude oil storage tanks will benefit the country in terms of saving currency. According to the available standards, oil producing country should own the crude oil storage tank for at least 15 days of its export capacity.

How come this giant project was delegated to Petro Omid Asia (POA) as a powerful and executive arm of Omid Investment Development Company?

A: Since Petro Omid Asia (POA) had been equipped with the basic and fundamental structures, construction operation of these oil storage tanks was assigned to this company. Benefited from the most experienced, expert, competent and skilled manpower, the Ministry of Oil decided to introduce POA as project commissioner for the construction of crude oil storage tank.

A National Project without Government's Financial Aid



Kamran Mo'tamedi
Deputy CEO of Petro Omid Asia (POA) for Financial and Economic Affairs

Introduction of Crude Oil Storage Tank of POA

The feasibility studies of a plan for the construction of crude oil storage tank project was put into operation in Genaveh / Deylam region in Bushehr Province with the aim of constructing an oil terminal with the total storing capacity of 10 million barrels of oil. It should be noted that this project has been executed with the aim of storing and exporting light and heavy oil in Genaveh / Deylam region for increasing storage capacity of crude oil, backing oil storage tanks in Kharg Oil Terminal, increasing productivity and helping boost sustainable development for the production of oil in the country. For this purpose, a land area as large as approx. 95.5 ha was considered for the construction on crude oil storage tank, around Goureh in Bushehr Province. The place for the delivery of various types of crude oil will be in the same region which will be transferred to the oil terminal using an exclusive pipeline.

Investment Volume and Source of Providing It

In line with enforcement of trilateral MOU inked in 2010 between the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC), Bank Sepah and Omid Investment Company, Ta'min Sarmayeh Omid Company made a huge investment, valued at 2,500 billion rials, in 2011 for the construction of Omid oil storage tanks. With the considerable change of equality of foreign currency equal to 10,700 rials, inability of EPC contractor

in providing purchase of foreign exchange and 2.9fold increase of project price, this company made it utmost effort for the materialization of strategic objectives in cooperation the Oil Ministry.

The project financing has been made as follows:

65% of capital of the company, valued at 2,000 billion rials,

Monetary market in cooperation with Bank Mellat and SINA Bank

Capital Market, with the publication of leasing participation bond out of assets of the company and portfolio management of Ta'min Sarmayeh Omid Company

Debt of Shareholder

A part of stocks of Omid Investment Management Group Company in Chadormalu Mining & Industrial Company and Gol-e Gohar Mining & Industrial Company was mortgaged by bank, so that the amount of 19.098 billion rials guaranteed check was deposited in order to guarantee financial affairs of the company as trust.

Of total amount of project, valued at approx. 7,300 billion rials, two packages, valued at \$80 million and the rest was taken into consideration in rials.

Oil Storage Tanks Project in Terms of Resistance Economy

Oil storage tanks project is a multipurpose project. Here, the most important objectives of multipurpose project are as follows:

Increasing Potential Capacity of Oil Exports

To create a strategic buffer with high capacity to confront with fluctuations of oil market,

The possibility of storage of oil at the time of facing the probable sanctions such as lack of buying oil,

Reduce costs related to storage of oil in tankers temporarily,

To create a new oil export hub in the Persian Gulf

Strengthening oil export potential of the Islamic republic of Iran in the Persian Gulf

Pave suitable way for renting vacant capacities to the developing countries in the region

Two Important Points:

In this project, any government's financial aid has not been used although the Oil Ministry supported the implementation of project non-financially.

The most interesting point here is this that despite sanctions imposed on the country, private sector managed to launch a giant oil storage tank successfully.

Petro Omid Asia (POA) at a Glance



Petro Omid Asia (POA) is a one hundred percent (100%) powerful arm of oil and gas company (P.J.S) of Omid Investment Management Group which was established and registered in 2009 with the name of Ma'dankaran Goharan Omid Company (Private Joint Stock) with the initial capital of 500 million rials.

The company was renamed into Petro Omid Asia (POA) in 2009, so that capital of the company increased at two stages to the amount of 1,000 and 2,000 billion rials.

Approx. 57 percent of stocks of Omid Investment Management Group belong to the state-run Bank Sepah.

Subject of Activities of Company

Fulfilling all engineering, contracting and trading activities,

Constructing oil, gas and petrochemical projects,

Buying and selling (transacting), renting, leasing equipment and machinery related to the oil, gas and petrochemical industries,

Developing and constructing oil and gas fields in on-shore and offshore,

Utilizing pertinent equipment and also investing in the

field of construction of smart networks,

Participating with both domestic and foreign companies,

Obtaining the banking facilities for the construction of power, oil, gas and petrochemical projects inside and outside the country

Plan for Materializing Objectives of Company

To materialize its predefined objectives, the company has embarked on setting up a portfolio of oil companies as powerful arm for the construction of oil, gas and petrochemical project within the framework of articles of association as follows:

Petro Omid Kish Development and Trade Company (commerce), active

Daryan Energy Management Company (MC) – active

ASMARI Kish Energy Company (drilling), active

Zakhirehsazan Petro Omid company (construction of crude oil storage tank) – ongoing , activation

Petro Omid General Contracting Company (GC), inactive and fully 100%

Assets of Company

Main Building of Company: No. 64, Khoddami St., Vanak Sq., Tehran

Company's Executive Building: No. 3, Corner of Gharib Alley, Keynejad St., Yakhchal St., Shariati Ave., Tehran

Onshore drilling rig: 2000HP

Genaveh Crude Oil Storage Tank with the capacity of storage of 10 million barrels of oil

The investment made in Dar-Khoveyn Oilfield Development Plan No. 3, valued t \$21 million

Commitments and Obligations of Company

Money Market / obtaining facilities from banks with backing stock participation bonds of holding company for the construction of crude oil storage tank,

Capital Market / publication of leasing participation bonds with backing assets of the company for the construction of crude oil storage tank

Company's Finished Project

Title: Construction of crude oil storage tank with the capacity of storage of 10 million barrels of oil with the framework of Build – Own and Operation (BOO) basis, subject of Contract No. 405653/42 between Omid Investment Management Group Company, investor and owner of project of Petro Omid as project commissioner and the National

Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) as lessee of oil tanks

Location: Genaveh – Deylam cities, Bushehr Province

Start Date / Project Completion Date: EPC in 2012 (Contracting Company, Tehran Jonoob), second half of current year (Sept. 21 – March 19)

Employer: Petro Omid Asia Company (representative of Omid Investment Management Group Company)

Project Management: Daryan Energy Management Company, subsidiary company

Consulting Engineering Company: SETIRAN Consulting Engineers

Project Description

The installations for Genaveh crude oil storage tank is one of the largest stations for storage of crude oil, invested by the private sector. Genaveh Crude Oil Storage Tank has been equipped with 14 cylindrical metal tank of floating ceiling type that include a number of eight tanks with the storage capacity of 1,000,000 oil barrels, two tanks with the storage capacity of 500,000 barrels and also four tanks with the storage capacity of 250,000 oil barrels. It should be noted that Genaveh Crude Oil Storage Tank has the capacity of storing 10 million oil barrels.



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Women make up 10% of administration: VP

W O M E N TEHRAN — Women compose ten percent of the Iranian administration, the vice president in women and family affairs, Shahindokht Molaverdi, said here on Sunday.

The United Nations has affirmed the statistics about the number of women in the administration, Mehr news agency quoted her as saying.

The Department of Women and Family Affairs is responsible for regulating women's activities in the administration, Molaverdi added.

There existed a wrong imagination about women's role in Iran after the victory of the Islamic revolution, however, women changed the misconception proving their abilities, she explained.

Before the Islamic revolution in 1979, women composed 31 percent of university students, while today the number has increased by 14 times, the vice president noted.

Today 22 percent of Iranian women are active in the agriculture sector, and 25 percent of women are active in the industrial sector, she added.

Currently, a number of 100,000 cooperatives are active nationwide, of which 11 percent are women-only ones. Moreover, about 52 percent of women are active in the service sector, Molaverdi stated.

About 2.27 percent of women are working in state-run sectors and 72 percent of women are working in privately-owned sectors, she said. Women are also active in political fields and the number of female members of the parliament is now at the record high of 18, she concluded.

LEARN ENGLISH

Baseball

A: Hello baseball fans, and welcome back to today's game! My name is Rick Fields and of course, I am here, once again, with the man that seals the deal, Bob Copeland.

B: It's a beautiful day to see two **world class** teams face each other and fight for their right to be called champions.

A: Well, the **national anthem** has just been sung, and the **umpire** has started the game. It's time to play ball!

B: Roger Vargas is **up at bat**. The pitcher **winds up** and strike one!

A: A very nice **curve ball** by the **pitcher**. The **catcher** gives him the sign, he winds up and Vargas gets a **line drive**!

B: The players are **scrambling** to get the ball. Vargas gets to first base and he's still going! The **outfielder** throws it to second! Vargas slides! He's **safe**!

A: Great play!

B: We have a runner on third and up at bat is Brian Okami! There's the pitch, he hits it! It's going, going, that ball is gone!

A: **Home run** by Okami! That puts this team ahead by two as we are at the bottom of the fifth **inning** here at Richie Stadium!

Key vocabulary

world class: ranking with the best in the whole world
national anthem: the song that represents a country and is played in ceremonies

umpire: a person who controls and judges a baseball game
up at bat: get ready to hit the ball

wind up: get the energy to throw the ball
curve ball: a ball thrown on a curve (i.e. not straight) that is hard to hit

pitcher: the player who throws the ball to the batter
catcher: the player behind home plate who catches the ball without being hit

line drive: a hit that travels low along the baseline
scramble: do something quickly and in a disorganized way

outfielder: a player who plays in the area that is relatively far from the pitch

safe: successfully gets to the base
home run: a hit that strikes the ball out of the field

inning: a set of baseball containing a turn at bat and a turn in field for each side

Supplementary vocabulary

up to bat: the next in line to do something

ballpark figure: an approximate number
hit it out of the park: to do something very well, or very successfully

off the bat: immediately, without delay
screwball: an unusual, crazy, or eccentric person

(Source: irlanguage.com)

Lady Fatimah Zahra (SA): Let us walk in her footsteps

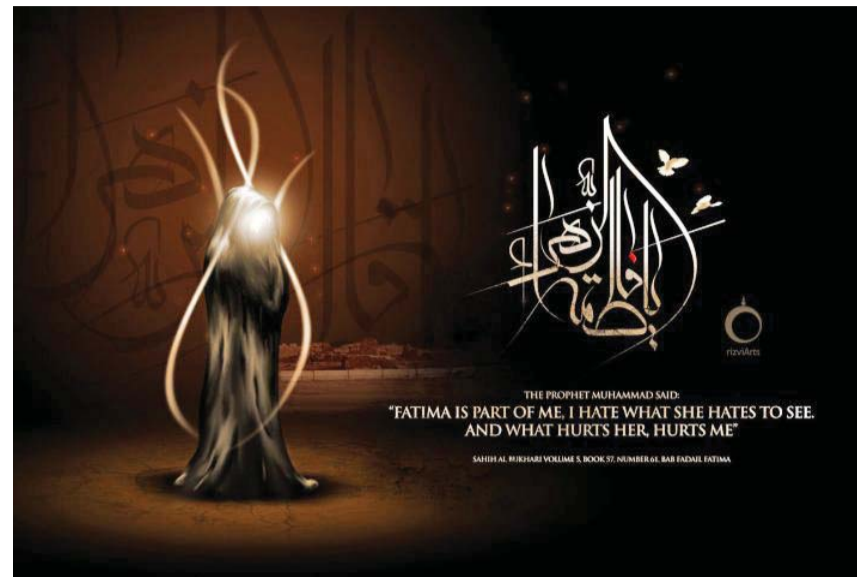
A role model can be defined as a guide, pattern, and as a leader. The term "role model" seeks to identify a person who possesses certain characteristics, which people admire and choose to follow. Different people choose different role models in their lives and try to live their life in accordance to what they see in that role model. A role model may have impact in a single aspect of one's life, or it may have impact on many or all aspects of a person's life. Naturally one's life, goal, and motive may then be shaped and constructed based on his/her role model.

One, who chooses Islam as his school of life, has actually chosen a way and goal that has been based on human nature. Thus such a person will search for a character that possesses all the special characteristics that the school of monotheism has offered in each aspect of life in order to reach his goal of perfection.

In the following verse, the Noble Qur'an introduces Prophet Muhammad (S), the prophet of Islam, as the best and perfect role model:

"Certainly there is in the Messenger of Allah an excellent example for him who hopes in Allah and the latter day and remembers Allah much." (Noble Qur'an, 33:21)

Through a deep study of the life of Lady Fatimah Zahra (SA), one can slightly understand her exalted human personality. She is similar to her father,



Prophet Muhammad (S) in terms of her divine and humane character. Her similarity to her father is a truth that can be easily understood through her father's sayings about her. As the narrator quotes, Holy Prophet Muhammad (S) came out while holding the hand of Lady Fatimah Zahra (SA) in his hand. He said:

"(For) him, who does not know her, she is Fatimah, the daughter of Muhammad, she is a part of me, she is my soul, which is (located) between my two sides. Certainly, him who harms her has harmed me; and him who harms me

has indeed harmed Allah."

Other than being similar to the Messenger of Allah, Prophet Muhammad (S), which in itself is a complete and perfect proof of her being a role model, there are many other examples that prove her as a perfect and excellent model.

For example, Aisha bint Abu Bakr and some others have narrated that the Messenger of Allah, Prophet Muhammad (S) has said:

"O Fatimah! Glad tidings be upon you, for the almighty Allah has selected you above the women of the worlds and

the women of Islam, which is the best religion."

Let it be noted that the Messenger of Allah, Prophet Muhammad (S) holds such an esteemed character that all of his sayings, behaviors, and manners are proof for us. He talks according to what is revealed to him and through his deep knowledge and insight. If he is silent about a person, or when he praises, or disgraces another, it is thoroughly true. As the Noble Qur'an notes:

"Nor does he speak out of desire. It is not naught but revelation that is revealed." (Noble Qur'an, 53:3-4)

The messenger of Allah, Prophet Muhammad (S) has honored his daughter and has greatly praised her. Prophet Muhammad's (S) praises of Lady Fatimah Zahra (SA) is not out of a fatherly love and affection. As a matter of fact the praises are due to the actual existence of such valuable moralities in Lady Fatimah al-Zahra (SA). She is really great and pure; by praising her, Prophet Muhammad (S) seeks to make her real personality clear for others.

Allah has selected Prophet of Islam and the Infallible Imams as perfect human beings, role models, and guides for all. Similarly, Lady Fatimah al-Zahra (SA) is a model for all people of the world, be it man or woman. Truly, following her footsteps is following the Messenger of Allah and the Infallible Imams.

(Source: ezsofttech.com)

Hijab wearing Muslim woman abused in New Zealand

A Muslim woman wearing a hijab, along with her friends, was attacked by a woman who hurled racist comments and threw beer cans at them, in New Zealand on Saturday.

Mehpara Khan, 28, and four of her friends stopped in Huntly while returning to Auckland, when a woman walking by began hurled expletives and racist comments at them. Khan uploaded a video of the incident on Twitter.

"All of a sudden this woman comes out of the bathroom and starts swearing at us and telling us that we don't belong there and that we are Muslim ***** that need to *****, basically," Nea Zealand Herald quoted Khan as saying. "She then threw a beer can at me and two at my two

friends. I'm covered in beer - I feel disgusting," Khan wrote.

"We weren't doing anything, we didn't actually even initially realize she was talking to us," she added. "Once she threw in the line of Muslim *-words that's when we realized she was yelling at us."

"At this point I decided to start filming her." The 27-year-old attacker can be seen in the video ordering Khan and her friends to come back.

According to a police spokesperson, authorities were 'aware' of the video, and a formal complaint had been lodged. "Police are assessing the information," the spokesperson said. Woman's hijab ripped off by two

men in busy London street

Following the incident, Khan received support from people across the world.

Anjum Rahman, the spokeswoman at the Islamic Women's Council in New Zealand, said it was "very disappointing but not surprising" for such an attack to have taken place.

With a population of approximately 4.7 million people in New Zealand, 25 percent were born overseas, 32 percent are foreign-born residents from Asia and 27 percent from Britain and Ireland.

(Source: The Express Tribune)

IN FOCUS



Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Lofven (R) meets Iranian vice president for women and family affairs Shahindokht Molaverdi in Tehran on Sunday.



Swedish Minister for EU Affairs and Trade Ann Linde (L) sign a memorandum of understanding with Molaverdi at a separate meeting the same day.

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UN chief says Fayyad right man for Libya envoy despite U.S. objection

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said on Monday he believed former Palestinian Authority prime minister Salam Fayyad was the right person to be the world body's envoy to Libya after the United States raised objections to the choice.

U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley has expressed disappointment over Guterres's choice, saying the United Nations had for too long been "unfairly biased in favor of the Palestinian Authority to the detriment of our allies in Israel".

"It is a loss for the Libyan peace process and for the Libyan people that I am not able to appoint him," Guterres said at a summit in Dubai.

"I do not think there is any valid reason to avoid someone who is very competent to do a job that is extremely important," he said, adding ending the Libyan conflict was in "everybody's interest".

It is unclear whether the U.S. objection has ended Fayyad's candidacy. Guterres declined to answer questions when approached by Reuters immediately after



Salam Fayyad

his comments.

Guterres dismissed the accusation that the United Nations is biased on Israeli-Palestinian issues and said the body's only loyalty was to its charter.

"The UN needs to be able to act with impartiality in all circumstances and cannot be biased in favor of anybody," he

said.

Guterres said the United Nations would have to engage with the administration of U.S. President Donald Trump as it would "with any other administration".

Trump, while president-elect, criticized the United Nations as "just a club for people to get together, talk and have

a good time" while a spokeswoman said the new administration would "demand some reform and change."

"Let's do everything possible to make this relationship a constructive relationship. Having said so, we need to respect our values and we need to make sure a multilateral approach to global problems is valued," Guterres said.

The UN chief, on a tour of the Middle East, also praised Syria's main opposition body for approving a delegation to take part in peace talks on Feb. 20 in Geneva.

The talks "are a first step for serious progress in finding a transition that allows for a political solution in which all Syrians feel represented," he said.

The High Negotiation Committee's (HNC, the main umbrella group) decision to send a delegation follows indirect talks last month in Kazakhstan where Russia, Turkey and Iran agreed to monitor a fragile truce in Syria.

(Source: Reuters)

Syrian govt is ready for prisoner swap with rebels

The Syrian government said on Monday it was ready to agree prisoner swaps with rebel groups, a potential confidence-building measure as the United Nations prepares to convene new peace talks.

The Syrian opposition has long demanded a release of detainees held by the government as one of several humanitarian actions they say must take place ahead of any negotiations over Syria's political future.

The government was "always ready" to exchange prisoners in its jails for people "kidnapped by terrorist groups," Syrian state media cited an official source as saying.

A rebel official told Reuters the demand had been raised during indirect talks with the government in the Kazakh capital of Astana. A second rebel official however dismissed the official statement as a ruse, saying the number of detainees held by Damascus vastly outnumbered the few held by rebels.

(Source: Reuters)

UN: Coalition air raids kill 18 civilians in Helmand

Civilians, mostly women and children, were killed last week in air raids by coalition forces in Afghanistan's Helmand province, an initial United Nations inquiry suggested on Monday.

On Thursday and Friday, as many as 18 civilians died in air strikes in Helmand's Sangin district, according to a statement released by the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan.

The UN said the strikes had been conducted by "international military forces", but only U.S. aircraft have been involved in recent coalition strikes, according to US military officials.

Afghan officials and local residents told Al Jazeera that the death toll was higher than 18.

"The jets arrived at around 3am (local time) on Friday and started bombing indiscriminately in a heavy residential area. I lost my aunt, two cousins and a nephew in the strikes," Mullah Fazal Ahmed told Al Jazeera.

"Six others in my family were wounded," said Ahmed, adding that the bombardment lasted for up to half an hour.

"Most of them who were pulled out of the rubble were bodies of women and children, as young as five-years-old."

U.S. military officials said their aircraft conducted around 30 air raids in Helmand in the past week. NATO's Resolute Support mission has initiated an inquiry into the incident.

"We are investigating the allegations, but let me tell you, no one has reached any final conclusion on this incident in Helmand," Brigadier General Charles Cleveland, a U.S. army spokesman in Afghanistan told Al Jazeera.

"We all know that there is a fight against the Taliban going on in Sangin for the past 10 days, there are mortars being fired by the Taliban and Afghan forces are fighting them, so its not at all clear at the moment how these civilians were killed."

The NATO-led military mission has deployed hundreds of troops to Helmand in a bid to help Afghan security forces in their war against Taliban fighters.

Civilian casualties from both American and Afghan air strikes increased dramatically last year, according to the UN's most recent report on threats to civilians.

At least 891 civilians were killed or injured in 2016, a figure highest in areas outside of Kabul.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

UN chief urges Yemeni warring sides to return to negotiations

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has called for the resumption of peace talks between the warring sides in Yemen, which has been under incessant attacks by the Saudi regime and its allies.

"Whatever we can do to make resurrection of the need for people to be able to negotiate, to be able to come to a solution for the Yemeni people, is something that we will always be available to contribute to," Guterres said at a joint press conference with Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir in Riyadh on Sunday.

The UN chief also urged the conflicting sides in Yemen to ensure the unhindered delivery of relief aid to civilians.

"Humanitarian aid is for those that really need it, and so we are very keen in always appealing to all parties to any conflict not to use humanitarian aid for purposes that are not humanitarian, and we will always condemn any form of intervention that will lead for that deviation to take place," he said.

UN peace envoy Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed also attended the press briefing. He has been pushing for a peace plan meant to pave the way for a political transition in the country.

Guterres is on his first Middle East tour since he was sworn in on January 1. He is due to visit the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Oman, Qatar and Egypt.

Saudi Arabia, backed by its allies including several Persian Gulf Arab states, has launched a military campaign since March 2015 in support of Yemen's former government, a close Riyadh ally, and against the Houthi Ansarullah movement.

The Houthi fighters, along with the Yemeni army and popular forces, have been defending the nation against the war, which has so far left over 11,400 people dead, according to the latest tallies.

Several rounds of peace talks between Ansarullah and the party loyal to ex-president Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi have failed to yield results amid deep divisions.

The Houthi movement has been running Yemen's affairs since late 2014, when Hadi resigned and fled to Riyadh. The former president is now based in Aden, but spends most of his time in the Saudi capital.

In January, the UN envoy told the UN Security Council that Hadi "continues to criticize" the peace proposals without agreeing to discuss them, adding that such an approach "will hinder and impede the path towards peace."

The Houthi Ansarullah movement is also critical of Cheikh Ahmed's role, saying the UN official fails to speak the truth about the situation on the ground in Yemen, and that he is siding with the invaders by keeping silent on Saudi crimes.

However, the UN chief on Sunday voiced his full support for Cheikh Ahmed during the news conference in Riyadh.

On the battlefield in Yemen

The developments come as Yemeni forces continue their retaliatory attacks against the Saudi military and its mercenaries.

On Sunday, Yemen's al-Masirah television reported that the Yemeni army and Ansarullah fighters purged



several areas and hills near Yam Mountains in Nihm district, northwest of the capital Sana'a, of Saudi-backed militants, leaving a number of them dead and injured.

Yemen's War Media released footage that shows Saudi mercenaries fleeing amid clashes with Yemeni forces.

Meanwhile, the Yemeni forces destroyed a weapons warehouse belonging to the Saudi military in the kingdom's Asir region by firing rocket-propelled grenades.

The Yemeni forces also fired artillery shells at a military position in the Saudi southwestern province of Najran, leaving an unspecified number of soldiers injured.

In another development, the Saudi military issued a statement late Sunday, declaring the southern city of Hudaydah a military zone from 10 a.m. (0700 GMT) on Monday until further notice.

It urged civilians in the port city to "remain in their homes and avoid clashes."

The statement came days after the UN reported a rise in Saudi airstrikes against Hudaydah, possibly trapping civilians and hampering humanitarian operations there.

(Source: Press TV)

UN offers Israel's Livni under-secretary-general post

United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres has reportedly offered Israeli lawmaker, Tzipi Livni, a senior post at the world body, shortly after Washington, in a controversial move, blocked the appointment of a former Palestinian premier as the UN special envoy to Libya.

According to a report published by the Israeli daily, Haaretz, on Sunday, Livni, who represents the center-left Zionist Union political alliance at the Knesset (Israeli parliament), has been offered the position of under-secretary-general in what has been seen as a measure to boost Tel Aviv's influence within the world body.

From 2001 to 2009, the 58-year-old legislator served in the cabinets of Israel's former prime ministers, Ariel Sharon and Ehud Olmert, most notably as the

regime's foreign minister in the latter's administration, during which she got acquainted with Guterres, who was Portugal's prime minister at the time.

Some two weeks ago, Livni made a one-day trip to New York aimed at having a personal meeting with the UN chief. Haaretz report further said that the pair, among other issues, had discussed the possibility of Livni's appointment. It added that during the tenure of former UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, she had also shown an interest in a top post at the UN.

If the Israeli lawmaker accepts the offer, she will become the first Israeli to serve as the UN under-secretary-general. The UN Security Council, however, will ultimately decide whether she gets the



position.

The new development comes after on Friday night, U.S. Ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley blocked the designation of former Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad to lead the UN mission in Libya, saying that the administration of U.S. President Donald Trump "was disappointed" to learn that Guterres had pro-

posed him for the job.

The Haaretz report, citing some unnamed UN officials, added that Guterres was allegedly trying to forge a deal with Washington, under which the U.S. would take back its fierce opposition to Fayyad, Guterres' favorite pick for the position, and in return, U.S.-backed Livni would attain the senior post at the world body.

The developments come as the Tel Aviv regime is under fire for its settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territories.

The international community, including Tel Aviv's own allies, views the Israeli settlements as illegal under the Geneva Conventions, which forbid construction on occupied territory.

(Source: agencies)

We've created a monster for four full years

→ The United States shot down Iran Air Flight 655 and never apologized for it. I will never understand this.

The United States accepted decisive and direct assistance from Iranian intelligence after 9/11 and then my President called Iran a member of the "axis of evil" 4 months later. I will never understand that either.

However, after this litany of horrific offenses to Iranian civilians, if an Iranian inflatable naval vessel carrying a single 50 caliber machine gun triggers our national security advisor to put another sovereign state "On Notice, this is a perfect example of the delusion and dysfunction currently occupying the Oval Office.

With the election of Trump, we are now beyond the point of simply saying Iranian and American people appreciate each other. What is urgently needed is a single, trusted channel of communication that can convey true interests of each side.

Also, the Iranian people need to know the clear majority of America voted against Trump. He was elected because the Democrats nominated an unelectable candidate when Americans in states secretary Clinton took for granted - the so-called "Blue Wall" - were begging for anyone - literally anyone - but Hillary Clinton to vote for. The "front row" kids thought they knew better though. (H/T Chris Arnade)

Millions of voters, myself included, worked very hard to prevent Secretary Clinton from being on the ballot. Not because she was unfit for office but because in America, we only get two choices. I am a progressive Democrat but also suspected she had no hope of election from day one and anyone from the opposite party would beat Secretary Clinton.

Most of us understood the divide in America and the severe economic and social pain of the country right now would hand that hand grenade of a nomination to Trump. I was not willing to play Russian Roulette with the Supreme Court and did not support Hillary Clinton in the primary.

The date of Hillary Clinton's nomination for president, may be the worst day in this tiny sliver of human history we call America the "leader" of the free world. By nominating Hillary we must own the monster we have created.

What Iranians need to understand is Trump is not a reflection of American values but is perfect reflection of American politics. He reflects how one side of American politics - the Democratic Party - has been bought and sold to the highest bidder.

As with many things, money matters above all and this time the big money bet wrong. But now that wrong bet has just given the largest nuclear arsenal in the world to a man who, by all indications, is insane.

During one of my visits to Iran, I declined an offer to pray at Khomeini's tomb with President Rouhani on the anniversary of Khomeini's passing. I am not Muslim and didn't know if that would be considered offensive.

If Americans are permanently banned from Iran and I never get to return to his tomb, that may be the regret of my life because it was a missed opportunity to record an image of respect, scholarship, and leadership that Khomeini represented to the Iranian people even though that reality is misunderstood by most Americans.

I am trying to explain why we have the very real po-

tential for WWII and the next time the Democrats have significant dissenting opinion, perhaps they should listen instead of gambling the human species on arrogance and entitlement.

As an American, if I am permanently banned from Iran, I want to thank Iranians for the warmth, hospitality, and generosity I experienced while I was there. I hope I can return to your country as soon as possible and I hope you are welcome in mine as soon as the Trump apocalypse is over.

But, should this not be possible in my lifetime, I have much to be thankful for. I thank you for the laughter when I got on the Women's side of the bus and you helped me back to the right side, I want to thank you for the free naan from the vendor when I thought I had enough money but didn't. I want and thank you for the free taxi rides to Valenjak when I thought I had enough Rial but didn't or the bank teller that remembered me from the previous week changing dollars and knew they owed me an extra 100 Rial. As I said, Trump is temporary, people are just people.

America's constitution has significant capacity to limit executive, President Trump's authority. As his policies become more insane, I hope the Republicans will begin to act and limit the enforcement of his policies. Iranians should know our representatives also have the capacity to remove a president from office. As President Trump exhibits more and more erratic behavior, I believe the world will hold its collective breath this happens as soon as possible but I am not optimistic this actually happens. We've created a monster we have to own for four full years.

Iran, Middle East's Largest Hub for After-Sales Service

In 2016, the value of Vehicle market and the value of relevant after-sales service in Iran stood respectively at \$20bn and \$14 bn. The figures put Iran at the top of the list of Middle East's largest after-sales service providers, says Iran Khodro President & CEO Hashem Yekehzare.

According to IKCO Press, in an address to the Fourth Iran Automotive Industry International Conference (IAIIC), Yekehzare added that the growing age of driving vehicles on the streets provide after-sales service providers with further opportunities to offer their services.

"In 2016, there were nearly 9 million vehicles driving on the Iran streets with an age of at least 10 years. This is a considerable potential for car manufacturers in the country to replace the current second hand vehicles with their products," he noted.

Yekehzare said 16% of the second handed vehicles with an age of at least 10 years are outdated and added the number of driving vehicles increased from 10 mn units in 2007 to about 19 mn units in 2016.

The CEO went further saying that IKCO has 14 affiliates in sales sector and 12 other affiliates in after-sales service.

"With 11 regional offices, 779 outlets, many repair shops on a 300,000 SKM land and 1122 car exhibitions across the country, IKCO has been ranked as the top service providers over the past years," he added.

Elsewhere in his address, Yekehzare said Iran's automotive industry is expected to reach fifth rank in Asia and 11th rank in the World by car manufacturing. To this end, the company has developed a plan to preserve its stance as Iran's leading car manufacturer and one of the main brands of the Middle East and North Africa.

According to Yekehzare, the value of Iran's market in 2016 amounted to over \$34mn "of which \$20bn fell on produced vehicles in Iran and \$14 bn on after-sales service." He estimated that in 2025, Iran's sales and after-sales service value will reach \$39bn with a 176% growth.

He cited as customers' satisfaction as one of the main strategies of IKCO and added: "In our company, we believe that the sale of the our first product is made based on marketing measures. Customers' satisfaction is usually handled by after-sales service sector.

Yekehzare reminded his audience of IAIC 2016 and said: "Along with four members of BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India and China) there are already 15 developing countries in the world (also known as 15 rising economies) which are getting closer to the developed countries in terms of car sales and production."

Wenger urges misfiring Ozil to become more ruthless

Mesut Ozil is in the midst of a confidence crisis, according to Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger, who also urged the misfiring German midfielder to be more ruthless in front of goal.

Ozil has been under the spotlight following anonymous performances in recent defeats to Watford and Chelsea and did little to deflect the criticism after missing a host of chances in Arsenal's 2-0 Premier League win over Hull City on Saturday.

"It's time for him (Ozil) to score again. Maybe he will find confidence back as well, because he misses chances. He has chances and he misses the chances that don't look not feasible for him," Wenger told British media.

The 28-year-old Ozil, who has often divided opinion among supporters since his club-record move from Real Madrid in 2013, has been on the periphery of games in recent weeks and has not scored in his last eight matches.

"I felt he did not feel confident (against Hull)," Wenger added. "It's always a problem because you think he can deliver something special, but it's true that technically he missed things that he is not used to."

Arsenal travel to face German champions Bayern Munich in the first leg of their last-16 Champions League clash on Wednesday.

(Source: Reuters)

Juventus, Paris Saint-Germain emerge as favourites to sign Alexis Sanchez

Juventus vs. PSG in Sanchez chase?

The battle to sign Alexis Sanchez is boiling down to two clubs -- Italian champions Juventus and their French counterparts Paris Saint-Germain, according to the Mirror.

It reports that Juve are increasingly confident that they can win that battle and "believe they have a strong chance of signing the Arsenal striker, who only has 18 months left on his current contract."

The Mirror says the Gunners are worried that Sanchez will not put pen to paper on a new deal, with PSG also waiting in the wings and having "sounded out his representatives."

But the paper adds that Juventus "are putting together a financial package to make a huge offer at the end of the season, and there is a growing feeling that Sanchez could be sold."

The news comes after reports earlier this month said Juve were ready to offer him a three-year contract worth more than the reported £250,000 a week he is said to want from Arsenal.

The Chile international -- who has been offered a new Gunners deal worth a reported £180,000 a week -- scored twice in Saturday's win over Hull.

Barcelona could swoop for Caceres after Vidal injury
Barcelona might be about to scupper Southampton's hopes of signing free agent Martin Caceres, the Sun reports.

Citing reports in Spain, it says Barcelona want to replace Alexis Vidal after he was sidelined by a bad ankle injury suffered in the victory over Alaves on Saturday, and they could bring in a free agent despite the window having closed.

And former Juventus man Caceres -- who can play at full-back as well as in the middle of defence -- would fit the bill, according to the Sun, which notes that he has played for Barcelona in the past.

Earlier this month, sources close to Caceres told ESPN FC that Southampton were weighing up a move for him in order to bolster their defensive ranks.

AC Milan and Crystal Palace were also linked -- but now it appears the Camp Nou could be his most likely destination.

Blues, Manchester duo in Bakayoko battle
The Mirror predicts a three-way transfer battle for Monaco midfielder Tiemoue Bakayoko, claiming he has turned down the offer of a contract extension with the French title challengers.

It says Bakayoko, 22, is interesting clubs including Premier League trio Chelsea, Manchester United and Manchester City.

He is under contract until 2019 but "is expected to quit Monaco in the summer" and would command a fee of around £25m.

Bakayoko joined Monaco from Rennes and has made more than 50 appearances for them but, says the Mirror, "is thought to be keen on a move to the Premier League."

Tap-ins

- A bit more on Monaco: North London rivals Tottenham and Arsenal are set to do battle in the summer for their teenage striker Kylian Mbappe, according to the Mirror.

It reports that the 18-year-old, who scored a hat trick in the weekend win over Metz, has been hailed as a player with similar potential to the young Thierry Henry by Gunners boss Arsene Wenger.

But Tottenham are also interested, with the Mirror saying Mauricio Pochettino "has joined the chase."

- Swansea City chairman Huw Jenkins has said the Welsh club rejected big offers for three of their star names -- Gylfi Sigurdsson, Fernando Llorente and Federico Fernandez -- in the January window.

The South Wales Evening Post reports that midfielder Sigurdsson had interested Everton and two Chinese Super League clubs, while striker Llorente was linked with Premier League leaders Chelsea and defender Fernandez was on West Bromwich Albion's list of targets but Jenkins decided the "vital" players would not be sold.

(Source: ESPN)

PSG-Barcelona highlights last 16 of Champions League

MADRID (AP) — The knockout stage of the Champions League begins this week with Barcelona looking to extend its successful record against Paris Saint-Germain, and defending champion Real Madrid trying to confirm its favoritism over Napoli.

Borussia Dortmund and its record-breaking attack takes on Portuguese champion Benfica, while Arsenal faces Bayern Munich trying to avoid its seventh-straight elimination in the Round of 16.

Bayern, which won the title four years ago, is going for its fourth-consecutive semifinal appearance.

Five-time champion Barcelona eliminated PSG in the quarterfinals in 2013 and 2015, and lost only one of the last six games against the French club in the European competition, in the group stage in 2014.

"No team is unbeatable, but of course for me they are the favorites," PSG striker Lucas said. "They are the best team in the world, you have to respect them."

PARIS SAINT-GERMAIN-BARCELONA

It's not just about Paris Saint-Germain stopping Lionel Messi on Tuesday. Barcelona also has to find a way to contain Edinson Cavani.

Cavani has scored nine goals in his last six games, and 33 in all competitions this season, which is one more than Messi has. Cavani is well on track to shatter his career-best mark of 38, set with former club Napoli.

Messi and Cavani enter the duel at Parc des Princes as the Champion League's top scorers -- Messi with 10 and Cavani with six.

Barcelona has also been able to rely on Messi's teammates Neymar and Luis Suarez, but PSG remains highly dependent on Cavani. Only Brazilian winger Lucas has hit double figures this season aside from Cavani.

REAL MADRID-NAPOLI

Real Madrid and Napoli will both defend unbeaten streaks at Santiago Bernabeu Stadium on Wednesday.

Madrid hasn't lost at home in 11 Champions League matches, while Napoli is on an 18-match unbeaten streak in all competitions, one short of the club record.



The Spanish club has won nine matches and drawn twice since the home loss to Schalke in March 2015. Napoli, playing in the last 16 only for the second time in club history, has won 12 games during its streak.

Some 10,000 Napoli fans are traveling to the match, according to the Gazzetta dello Sport. In addition to the 4,000 Napoli supporters who bought tickets for the visitors' section, many more have found tickets for other areas of the Bernabeu -- some even by buying Madrid membership cards.

Among the Napoli fans expected in Madrid is its most famous former player, Diego Maradona, who has said he plans to attend the game.

BAYERN MUNICH-ARSENAL

Germany is waiting for Bayern Munich to show the same dominance it displayed at

the start of the season or under previous coach Pep Guardiola.

There is a sense that the freedom afforded to the players by Carlo Ancelotti has allowed complacency to creep in, evident in five labored performances since the winter break.

Only two very late goals secured a win over relegation-threatened Ingolstadt at the weekend, affording Ancelotti some breathing space. But the Italian knows more lackluster performances against Arsenal could lead to Bayern's first exit in the Round of 16 since Inter Milan prevailed on away goals in 2011.

Arsenal won 2-0 in Munich at this stage in 2013, but it was still eliminated on away goals after a 3-1 loss in the first leg.

The English club was knocked out by Bayern in the last 16 two other times -- in 2005 and 2014.

BENFICA-DORTMUND

Borussia Dortmund thrived in the group stage and set the competition's all-time scoring record with 21 goals in six games, but the squad is under pressure following disappointing recent performances in Germany.

"We're finding it really hard ... to show this sharpness in these games away from the big stage, away from the spotlight," Dortmund coach Thomas Tuchel said following the Bundesliga loss to bottom club Darmstadt on Saturday, a result that left the team 15 points behind leader Bayern Munich.

Runner-up in the Champions League in 2012-13, Dortmund is trying to make it past the last 16 for the first time since 2013-14.

Benfica is playing in the knockout stage for the second straight season, a first for the club. It was eliminated by Bayern Munich in last year's quarterfinals.

Ibrahimovic coy on Man United contract extension

Manchester United striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic has yet to commit his future to the Premier League club despite the Swede saying he has fulfilled the requirements needed to extend his contract.

The 35-year-old has silenced critics who suggested he may struggle to adapt to the pace and intensity of the English game, scoring 20 goals since moving to Old Trafford from Paris St Germain on a free transfer in July.

Manager Jose Mourinho said in November that United planned to exercise their option to extend Ibrahimovic's contract, which runs out at the end of the current campaign, for a second season.

"Something like that. I have to score 100 goals," Ibrahimovic told British media when asked if he has triggered the extension clause with goals and appearances.

"The option is already fulfilled. But there's nothing done yet. From my side. We'll wait and see. Let's see what happens."

Despite sitting sixth in the league, 12 points behind leaders Chelsea after 25 games, Ibrahimovic believes Manchester United are well placed to pick up silverware in other competitions.

United face Southampton in the League



Cup final on Feb. 26 and are still involved in the Europa League and the FA Cup.

"We have one (the Community Shield) and we can get our second one (the League Cup)," the charismatic Swede added.

"We are still in the Europa League and FA Cup, so if we don't become champions in the Premier League, at least we can try and win two or three trophies."

United host French side St Etienne in the first leg of their round-of-32 Europa League clash on Thursday.

(Source: Reuters)

Toni Nadal to quit as Rafa's coach after this season

Rafael Nadal's uncle, Toni Nadal, will step down as his coach after this year's ATP Tour, as he feels he has been sidelined by other figures in the player's entourage, he told an Italian tennis magazine.

The 55-year-old has been with the 14-times grand slam champion since before the Spaniard broke into the big-time by winning the French Open as a teenager in 2005.

Two weeks after watching his nephew lose in five sets to Roger Federer in the Australian Open final, Toni Nadal told Il Tennis Italiano website that after this season he wants to concentrate on training emerging players.

"From next year I will no longer follow Rafael on the circuit but will dedicate myself exclusively to our academy," he said, referring to the Rafa Nadal Academy which opened last October in Mallorca.

"The relationship with my nephew has always been excellent, in all these years we have never had periods of crisis," he said, but added that he has felt increasingly sidelined by Nadal's manager Carlos Costa and the player's father.

"The truth is that every year I am



making fewer decisions, to the point that I won't be deciding anything any more!"

Former World number one and fellow Mallorcan Carlos Moya joined Nadal's coaching staff this season, hoping to help revive the player's career after two injury-plagued years.

Nadal, without a grand slam title since winning the French Open for a ninth time in 2014, withdrew from last year's tournament and missed Wimbledon because of a wrist injury.

(Source: Reuters)



@fernadotorres Today I have overcome the 114 goals of the big legend Adelardo. Thanks to everyone to make feel so many things every game.



@Cristiano Seems like I've found someone who perfectly fits the #DontCrackUnderPressure spirit, my great friend and amazing singer @JBalvin



@marchisiocla8Day off with My warrior ?????? #relaxing #sofa #ipadgames #home

It's a great honor a nominee of Laureus Award: Siamand Rahman

S P O R T S Strongest Paralympian ever d e s k Siamand Rahman will depart Tehran on Monday night for Monaco to participate at the Laureus World Sportsman of the Year with a Disability Award.

Rahman produced arguably the best performance of Rio 2016 when he lifted a world record 310kg to take gold in the men's over 100kg powerlifting event. In becoming the first Paralympian to lift over 300kg, Rahman made global headlines for Paralympic sport. His final lift of 310kg was the equivalent of lifting a large Siberian tiger.

"I am very happy to be in the ceremony as Iran's representative and I think it's an honor to be nominated for the award. I hope to add the honor to my collection," Rahman told Paralympic.ir.

"Lifting a world record 310kg in Rio 2016 was very significant for me because it happened after four years of waiting," he added.

The shortlist was decided by the IPC Governing Board following nominations from IPC members. The winner will be decided by members of the Laureus World Sports Academy and announced on Tuesday at a glittering awards ceremony in Monte Carlo, Monaco.

The Rio Paralympic Games provide all six Nominees for the highly respected Laureus World Sportsman of the Year with a Disability Award; swimmers Ihar Boki from Belarus and New Zealand's Sophie Pascoe; visually impaired Cuban sprinter Omara Durand, Iran weightlifter Siamand Rahman, Swiss wheelchair racer Marcel Hug and Italian fencer Beatrice Vio.



Persepolis release Ukrainian duo

S P O R T S Persepolis football club have officially d e s k released Ukrainian benchwarmers Volodymyr Pryyomov and Oleksiy Polyanskyi (with mutual consent) on Monday.

The Ukrainian duo, who joined Persepolis in the summer, couldn't meet the expectations and the fans were critical of signing them.

Polyanskyi made just four appearances for the Reds

while Pryyomov came in as a substitute 11 times.

Persepolis will take on Al-Hilal of Saudi Arabia in the AFC Champions League Group stage match on February 21st while they have to sign their non-Iranian player (Ukrainian successors) seven days before the match.

Branko Ivankovic men are still at the top of Iran Premier League table despite the 3-2 defeat against Esteghlal in the Tehran derby on Sunday.



Charlton's former Iranian striker on fire in Netherlands



S P O R T S Iranian international d e s k striker Reza Ghoochannejhad, who was a benchwarmer in Charlton, is currently Eredivisie second top scorer with 13 goals so far.

The 29-year-old struggled at the Valley, but is banging in goals with Heerenveen.

Charlton Athletic fans have had it tough in recent years. The club have slipped down the Football League under ownership widely criticized by their own fans. Currently, the Addicks sit 13th in League One and Premier League memories are in danger of being lost on a generation.

During their time in the doldrums Charlton have brought in some interesting players who have failed to live up to potential.

One such player was Iranian striker Reza Ghoochannejhad. He arrived, like so many, from Standard

Liege in 2014.

In two seasons at the club he only managed to score five goals in 42 appearances.

He had more fruitful spells on loan deals in Kuwait and Qatar but in the summer he was released, HITC.com reported.

So how is he doing? Charlton fans, look away now.

He is on fire.

He joined Heerenveen in the Dutch Eredivisie and has been scoring goals for fun. The 29-year-old scored again yesterday as his club lost to AZ. But the goal took his tally to the season to 15 goals in 26 games for the club this season in all competitions. His total of 13 Eredivisie goals is second only to Nicolai Jorgensen of Feyenoord.

Charlton fans will certainly wish they got to see this side of the Iranian during his time in England.

Esteghlal return to the continental stage after three-year hiatus: AFC



Islamic Republic of Iran giants Esteghlal return to the continental stage following a three-year hiatus after overcoming Qatar's Al Sadd on penalties in the Play-offs in the battle of the two-time Asian club champions.

Esteghlal are Iran's most successful side on the continent, having been crowned Asian champions in 1970 and 1991. However, their best performance since the inception of the AFC Champions League came in reaching the 2013 semi-final before defeat to FC Seoul. A year later, in their last appearance in the tournament, the Tehran-based team failed to progress beyond the Group Stage.

Key Players

Goalkeeper and captain Mehdi Rahmati is one of Iran's most decorated players having won four league titles and two Hazfi Cups. Currently in his third spell with Esteghlal, Rahmati was part of the side that reached the 2013 semi-finals. The experienced Khosro Heydari, who

returned for a second stint with Esteghlal from Sepahan in 2011 could also prove to be a key figure for the Iranian side. The 33-year-old has over 50 appearances for Iran to his name as well as two league titles with Esteghlal. Meanwhile, much is expected of striker Kaveh Rezaei who started the Play-Off encounter against Al Sadd. The promising 24-year-old joined Esteghlal last year and was on target during his club's 3-2 defeat of Persepolis on Sunday.

Coach: Alireza Mansourian

Former Iran international Alireza Mansourian guided city rivals Naft Tehran to the 2015 AFC Champions League quarter-final after spending four years as part of the national team set-up. Mansourian, who enjoyed spells in Germany and Greece as a player, also represented Iran at the 1998 FIFA World Cup and made more than 200 appearances for Esteghlal.

(Source: the-afc)

Mehdi Bibak named Iran Taekwondo coach

Mehdi Bibak has been appointed as new head coach of Iran's men taekwondo national team.

Bibak replaced Bijan Moghanloo, who stepped down as head coach of Iran taekwondo team following poor performance in the WTF World Team Championships.

He will lead Iran taekwondo team in the Baku 2017 Islamic Solidarity Games scheduled for May 12-22.

Bibak will also coach the Iranian team at the 2017 World Taekwondo Championships in Muju in South Korea which will take place from June 24 to 30.

Also, Mahroo Kamrani was appointed as head coach of Iran's women's taekwondo team.

She will also head the women's team in the Islamic Solidarity Games and World Taekwondo Championships. (Source: Tasnim)

Experienced Pfister named new head coach of Afghanistan

German Otto Pfister has been named as the new head coach of Afghanistan.

The vastly experienced 79-year-old was officially unveiled on Sunday after signing a one-year deal with the Afghanistan Football Federation (AFF).

Pfister will now oversee Afghanistan's attempt to book a spot at the 2019 AFC Asian Cup when the third and final

round of qualifying gets underway next month.

"After the resignation of former coach Petar Segrt, we tried to hire a good coach and we were able to reach an agreement with Pfister," AFF President Keramuddin Karim told reporters.

"We have signed a contract with him and I hope that with Pfister and the new

technical staff we will be able to fulfill our people's wishes."

Pfister, Africa's Manager of the Year in 1992, already has a wealth of experience under his belt, having famously guided Saudi Arabia to the 1998 FIFA World Cup, Togo at the 2006 FIFA World Cup and Ghana to success at the 1991 FIFA U-17 World Cup.

The Cologne native has also won league titles in Lebanon and Egypt with Nejmeh and Zamalek respectively.

Afghanistan's quest to reach the 2019 edition of the AFC Asian Cup continues on March 28 with a Group C clash against Vietnam in the neutral venue of Dushanbe.

(Source: AFP)

Pogba on Pogba: 'We're so proud of him'

Florentin Pogba is gearing up to meet his brother Paul for the first time in a competitive game when St-Etienne visit Manchester United in the UEFA Europa League round of 32. The 26-year-old defender spoke to UEFA.com.

"I predicted it! I was speaking to my brother during the draw and said: 'Watch, we're going to get Manchester United.' We were drawn first and they came out of the hat second. We had a laugh and said: 'The day has come. We're going to face each other on the pitch, rather than on our neighbourhood mini-pitch.' It's incredible, a one-off, so we're going to make the most of it."



"When we play together on holiday, we're always on the same team. Now I will be playing against him and I'll be marking him. It will be weird but that's football. It's something for the whole family to enjoy because I don't know if it will happen again. My parents will have mixed feelings because whatever happens there will be one winner and one loser. However, there are two winners because this game will be an unforgettable occasion. Who will my twin brother Mathias support? He will support his brothers."

"These two games will be emotional and I hope we'll take something positive from them. Even if United are a great club, anything is possible in football. The fact they're better than us on paper doesn't matter."

On growing up in the Parisian suburb of Roissy-en-Brie

"We'd always meet up with friends after school and play on our local artificial pitch until we were 15 or 16. That's where we took our first steps in football. Paul enjoyed going in goal as a bit of joke. Otherwise, we always played outfield and we all liked scoring goals, copying the stars we watched on television. It was great."

"We were separated in 2007 when my twin brother and I left for Spain to join Celta Vigo and my younger brother went to Le Havre. To reach the level we're at today, I think we had to do that. Now all three of us are professionals, so we have no regrets about that move. We only moved apart in terms of distance. Even if we don't call each other, we message each other every day."

On Paul Pogba's rise to stardom ...

"I've known how good he is since he was very young, but for him to be in the first team at such a big club is amazing."

"In terms of being the world's most expensive player, I think he has put that to one side because it's more an issue for the media. He is not letting it bother him. He's just playing his football, even though everything he does gets three or four times more attention, good or bad. He can handle all of that because of the mental strength he has had since his youth."

"He is quite irritable though, he doesn't like to lose. His head starts buzzing when he loses. I learned to lose and I would say that you're not losing but learning. But for him, when he loses, he goes mad."

"We'll always be behind him. He knows what it's like in our family. Whether he has a good game or a bad game, we'll always be there for him. He can win all the trophies in the world, he'll still be my little brother."

(Source: UEFA)

Veteran Iranian wrestler Hosseinpour dies

Iran's veteran wrestler Nasser Hosseinpour has died of colon cancer after suffering a nearly three-long battle with the malady that had invaded other parts of his body, and had even struck him with a brain hemorrhage.

Hosseinpour passed away at his home in the northern city of Juybar, located more than 270 kilometers north of the capital Tehran, at 2:30 a.m. on Monday (2300 Sunday).

The late Iranian athlete had collected gold medals at the International Military Sports Council (CISM) World Games and Junior World Championships.

He was also a bronze medalist in Dan Kolov and Nikola Petrov International Tournament and Medved Cup.

Iranian wrestler and two-time World Champion Reza Yazdani - nicknamed The Leopard of Juybar, freestyle wrestler Komeil Nemat Ghasemi, freestyle wrestler Hassan Yazdani Cherati and veteran wrestler Askari Mohammadian had lately visited Hosseinpour, and paid tribute to him and honors he brought to Iran.

The Islamic Republic of Iran Wrestling Federation extended its condolences to Hosseinpour's bereaved family in a message on Monday.

INTERNATIONAL DAILY
www.tehrantimes.com

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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: Kayhan - ISSN: 1017-94

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



NEWS IN BRIEF



Belgian festival screening Iranian movies

TEHRAN — Two Iranian films are on screen at the 33rd Mons International Love Film Festival, which is underway in the Belgian city.

"Daughter" by Reza Mirkarimi is competing in the official section while "Apricot Groves", an Iranian-Armenian film production by Iranian director Purya Heidari-Ureh, is scheduled to go on screen in the European Competition section of the festival, which will run until February 17.



Iran's Art Bureau offering films at Berlinale market

TEHRAN — Iran's Art Bureau is offering a number of its latest productions at the European Film Market (EFM), which is currently underway on the sidelines of the 67th Berlin International Film Festival in Germany.

Among the films are "Under the Smoky Roof" directed by Puran Derakhshandeh, "Rag-e Khab" by Hamid Nematollah, "The Human Comedy" by Mohammad-Hadi Karimi and "Twenty-One Days Later" by Mohammadreza Kheradmandan.

The lineup also includes veteran Iranian director Mohammadreza Aslani's documentaries "Cup of Hasanlu" and "Tehran - a Conceptual Art".

Two more documentaries and eleven short films are also on the list.

Over 9,000 producers, buyers, sales agents, distributors, exhibitors and financiers from about 100 countries are visiting the market, which will run until February 17.

Encyclopedist Ali Mohammadkhan Mohammadi dies at 62

TEHRAN — Ali Mohammadkhan Mohammadi, encyclopedist, writer and translator has died at the age of 62, the Ferdowsi Foundation announced on Sunday.



The scholar, who was a former member of the board of directors of the Ferdowsi Foundation, was battling cancer (the type of the cancer not revealed in the news) for several years.

His memorial service will be held on Friday in the Rasul Mosque located in Sadatabad neighborhood. He was buried in the Luminaries Section of Tehran's Behesht Zahra Cemetery on Monday, accompanied by a large number of cultural and scientific scholars.

Mohammadi was the compiler of several encyclopedias on aerospace, while he was also the writer and translator of several scientific books.

He was also active in the field of Persian literature and was a member of the Academy of Persian Language and Literature.

Daniel Radcliffe talks comedy, nerves in return to London stage

LONDON (Reuters) — "Harry Potter" star Daniel Radcliffe has plenty of stage experience but the British actor still gets nervous before each performance.

"[I] get a bit twitchy and nervous," Radcliffe said. "You need nerves, you need that. If you don't feel that then why are you here? That's exciting. That's fun."

Taking inspiration from "Hamlet", Radcliffe, 27, will return to the London stage in a 50th anniversary celebratory production of Tom Stoppard's "Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead" later this month.

The play is a mind-bending situation comedy in which two minor characters, Rosencrantz (Radcliffe) and Guildenstern (Joshua McGuire), stumble in and out of the action of Shakespeare's iconic drama, all while having an identity crisis.

Fajr pays homage to Kiarostami in poster

TEHRAN — The 35th Fajr International Film Festival has paid tribute to the legendary Iranian artist Abbas Kiarostami with a poster portraying a work from his photo series "Snow White".

The poster was published Monday on the website of the event, which is scheduled to be held in Tehran from April 21 to 28.

The "Snow White" collection focuses on winter. "I have taken all these photos in Iran. I have been taking photos of snow over the past 30 years. Sometimes, I have only taken eight

photos throughout one winter. So this collection has been formed little by little," Kiarostami had said about his photos.

In its latest edition, the Fajr Film Festival, which ended last week, also commemorated Kiarostami by a poster for its Art and Experience Cinema, a category dedicated to art films. The festival focuses on Iran's national cinema.

A winner of the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival in 1997 for his "Taste of Cherry", Kiarostami died last July at the age of 76.



35th Fajr International Film Festival
سی و پنجمین جشنواره‌ی جهانی فیلم فجر
21 - 28 April 2017, Tehran
یکم تا هشتم اردیبهشت ماه ۱۳۹۶ تهران

Iranian Literature Center to celebrate World Short Story Day

TEHRAN — The Iranian Literature Center in Tehran will observe World Short Story Day during a special ceremony today.

Fariba Vafi, an Iranian writer who is mostly known for her collections of short stories, is scheduled to be honored during the ceremony, the center announced in a press release on Monday.

Scholars Mohammadreza Gudarzi, Fariba Hajdai and Sepideh Abraviz will also deliver speeches.

In addition, messages from Iranian and world writers are scheduled to be



WORLDSHORTSTORYDAY

FEBRUARY 14

read at the ceremony, which is open to the public.

February 14 is celebrated annually as the World Short Story Day by literati around the globe.

Tehran meeting to discuss Persian-Italian, Italian-Persian interpretation

TEHRAN — A number of Iranian scholars will come together in a session at the Iran Cultural Fairs Institute in Tehran today to discuss Persian-Italian and Italian-Persian interpretation.

Italian Cultural Attaché Carlo Cereti will attend the program, which is organized by the Department of Italian Language at the Islamic Azad University.

Iranian scholars Antonia Shoraka, Bahram Moftakhr Kamraninejad and Hanieh Inanlu are scheduled to speak during the meeting.



ترجمه شفاهی

The session has been organized to acknowledge Italy as the special guest of the 30th Tehran International Book Fair (TIBF), which will be held in May.

Japanese scholar's studies on Iranians injured by chemical weapons published in Persian

TEHRAN — The studies of Japanese scholar Shizuko Tsuya about Iranian victims of chemical warfare have recently been published in Persian.

The book entitled "With Iranians Injured by Chemical Weapons" was unveiled during a ceremony at the Iranian Artists Forum in Tehran on Monday.

Tsuya who is a physician and the president of MOCT Association of Hiroshima has collaborated with Iran's Society for Chemical Weapons Victims Support (SCWVS) for 13 years.

"With Iranians Injured by Chemical Weapons" was

translated by Yaser Shahbazi.

Iran was subjected to several violent attacks with chemical weapons by Iraq during the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war.

According to an article by Tsuya, during the war, about 6,000 Iranians were killed during the attacks and today, about 55,000 survivors of these attacks are still suffering from the aftereffects.

In the Sardasht bombardment in West Azerbaijan Province on June 28, 1987 alone, poison gas killed over 1,000 and injured over 8,000 civilians, many of whom were permanently disabled.



"La La Land" wins big at Britain's BAFTA awards to continue hot streak

NEW YORK (Reuters) — Musical "La La Land" won big at Britain's main film awards on Sunday as it scooped the prize for best film, while Emma Stone and Damien Chazelle picked up awards for best actress and best director respectively.

It won five gongs in total to keep its hot streak in the movie awards season going before the Oscars later this month, as it also picked up awards for cinematography and original music.

Amid the awards there were also veiled references to new U.S. president Donald Trump, who has caused controversy with his plans to build a wall on the Mexican border and his restrictions on migration.

"In a time that's so divisive I think it's really special that we were able to come together... to celebrate the positive gift of creativity and how it can transcend borders and how it can help people to feel a little less alone," Emma Stone said in her acceptance speech.

"La La Land", a throwback musical about an aspiring actress and a jazz pianist who are trying to make their way in Hollywood, had been nominated for 11 British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) awards. Its success follows on from the Golden Globes, where it picked up seven awards.

It has a joint-record 14 nominations for the Academy Awards on February 26, Hollywood's highlight of the awards season.

Justin Hurwitz, who won the award for the film's music, said that he hoped the success of the film might prompt a renaissance in the genre.

"I love to go to the theater and see musicals. So if this can help any more musicals get green-lit, that would be amazing," he told Reuters ahead of the

ceremony.

While Stone triumphed, co-star Ryan Gosling lost out in the best actor category to Casey Affleck, for his performance in family drama "Manchester by the Sea". Gosling was also notable by his absence, with the film's producers saying he had a family matter to attend to.

"Manchester by the Sea" picked up two awards in total, with Kenneth Lonergan's picking up an award for original screenplay.

A popular pick among the audience in the Royal Albert Hall, Londoner Dev Patel, 26, won best supporting actor for his performance in "Lion", which charts the real-life story of an Indian boy adopted by an Australian couple. The film also won an award for best adapted screenplay.

Viola Davis took home the prize for best supporting actress for her performance in "Fences", an adaption of the Pulitzer Prize winning play about the life of a black family in 1950s Pennsylvania.

She alluded to issues with race relations in the United States in her acceptance speech, and defended Meryl Streep, who was criticized by Trump after the Golden Globes.

"Anyone who labels Meryl Streep 'an overrated actress' obviously doesn't know anything about acting," she told reporters. "That's not even just directed towards Donald Trump, that's directed towards anyone."

Outspoken director Ken Loach turned his ire onto British politicians, lambasting the "callous brutality" of the government as he accepted the award for "I, Daniel Blake", an unflinching depiction of a man's struggles while on benefits.

Adele sweeps Grammy awards in upset victory over Beyonce

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — Adele swept the Grammy Awards on Sunday, taking home statuettes for the top prizes - album, record and song of the year - in a shock, history-making victory over Beyonce on a night marked by political statements and emotional tributes.

Adele, 28, won all five Grammys for which she was nominated, including for her comeback album "25" and her soaring ballad "Hello". She became the first person in Grammy history to win the top three awards twice, following her wins for her last album "21" in 2012.

Beyonce, 35, had gone into Sunday's awards show with a leading nine nominations for her powerful "Lemonade" album about race, feminism, and betrayal. She had been hoping to win her first album of the year Grammy.

Adele, who now has a career total of 15 Grammys, seemed stunned, telling reporters backstage that she "felt like it was her (Beyonce's) time to win."

"My queen and my idol is Queen B. I adore you," the British singer said to Beyonce, seated in the front row, as she accepted her award.

"I can't possibly accept this award, and I'm very humble and very grateful. But my artist of my life is Beyonce. This album for me, the 'Lemonade' album, was so monumental," she added.

In her first public appearance since her announcement 12 days ago that she is expecting twins, Beyonce donned a sheer, glittering gold dress and halo crown to perform her ballads "Love Drought" and "Sandcastles."

Moments later, Adele literally

stopped the show after flubbing the start of a tribute to the late British pop star George Michael.

"I'm sorry. I know it's live TV," she said, cursing, stopping her slow ballad version of Michael's "Fastlove" and asking to start again. "I can't mess this up for him (Michael)," she said. She later apologized for causing any offense.

Later, Minneapolis band The Time and Bruno Mars performed an up-tempo tribute to Prince, celebrating his musical legacy.

As with other recent Hollywood award shows, artists wasted no time getting political.

Katy Perry wore a glittering armband saying "Persist" and her performance of "Chained to the Rhythm" featured banners showing the words "We the People", the opening sentence of the U.S. Constitution.

Host James Corden, opening the show with an extended rap about the power of music, sang "Live it all up, because this is the best, and with President Trump, we don't know what is next."

The other big winner was late British singer David Bowie, whose final album "Blackstar" won all five of its nominations, including best alternative album. The British singer had never won in his lifetime for an individual album or song.

"Blackstar" was released two days before his death in January 2016 of cancer.

Other winners on Sunday included Chicago's Chance the Rapper, who won three Grammys including best new artist while Twenty One Pilots won best pop duo/group performance for "Stressed Out."