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## Iranian parliament designates U.S. military as 'terrorist'

**TEHRAN** — The Iranian parliament on Tuesday passed a triple-urgency resolution which designated the U.S. military, the Pentagon and affiliated organizations, as "terrorists".

All 233 present members of the parliament voted in favor of the motion, according to ISNA. **→3**

## Expulsion of U.S. from West Asia doomed fate of Washington, Zarif says

**TEHRAN** — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has said that the ultimate expulsion of the U.S. from West Asia is the doomed fate of Washington's unbridled exploitation of the tools of war, sanctions, and assassination.

"The path chosen by the U.S. for itself and the region is characterized by insecurity, war and bloodshed. But, Iran, as the unified voice arising from the heart of every child of this ancient **→2**

## The day Soleimani martyred declared International Day of Resistance

**TEHRAN** — Iran has declared January 3, the day Lieutenant General Qasem Soleimani was assassinated in a United States airstrike in Baghdad, as the International Day of Resistance.

According to the Pentagon, General Soleimani was assassinated on Donald Trump's order.

The U.S. airstrike also martyred Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the deputy commander of the anti-terrorist Iraqi Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF). **→2**

## Presence of trans-regional forces root cause of insecurity: Iran

**TEHRAN** — The Iranian deputy foreign minister said on Tuesday that trans-regional powers are in the Persian Gulf region under the pretext of preserving peace and stability but they are in fact after their own strategic objectives.

"Several security plans have thus far been offered for security in the Persian Gulf but we have not reached a suitable result so far. We do not have any specific security structure in the Persian Gulf region," Abbas Araghchi said, addressing the Tehran Dialogue Forum.

The forum, with a focus on security in the Persian Gulf, opened in the Iranian capital on Tuesday morning with the participation of a number of foreign officials, ambassadors, and experts.

Pointing to the barriers facing materialization of a suitable security plan in the region, he said, "The first reason is presence of trans-regional players which have been deployed in the region under the pretext of maintaining peace and stability in the Persian Gulf region but are actually after their own strategic objectives."

"The Persian Gulf Cooperation Council is not a comprehensive organization because Iran is not among its member states. If we lack a comprehensive structure in a region we will not enjoy specific security arrangements," the senior diplomat said.

He added, "The Persian Gulf's security is not separable. Security should be for all or for none. This is a comprehensive security."

Addressing the UN General Assembly late in September, President Hassan Rouhani unveiled Iran's new initiative for the establishment of peace and security in the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz.

"The goal of the Coalition for Hope is to promote peace, stability, progress and welfare for all the residents of the Strait of Hormuz region, and to enhance mutual understanding and peaceful and friendly relations amongst them," Rouhani told the delegates at the UN.

"This initiative includes various venues for cooperation, such as the collective supply of energy security, freedom of navigation and free transfer of oil and other resources to and from the Strait of Hormuz and beyond," he added.

"The Coalition for Hope is based on important principles such as compliance with the goals and principles of the United Nations, mutual respect, equal footing, dialog and understanding, respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty, inviolability of international borders, the peaceful settlement of all disputes, and more importantly, the two fundamental principles of non-aggression and non-interference in the domestic affairs of each other. The presence of the United Nations is necessary for the creation of an international umbrella in support of the Coalition for Hope," Rouhani underlined.

## Intl. museums, archeologist condemn Trump's threat to hit Iranian cultural sites

**TEHRAN** — The Victoria and Albert Museum in London, the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, the American Alliance of Museums, and a renowned Polish archeologist have condemned U.S. President Donald Trump's recent statements on threatening to target Iranian cultural sites.

According to Artnet News, Tristram Hunt, the former politician who is now the director of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, tweeted his dismay. Trump's threats "must be condemned," he wrote, "just as the bulldozing of Palmyra & significant heritage sites by ISIS was abhorrent." Hunt adds: "This is a worrying step towards the normalization of cultural destruction as a war aim." The V&A is planning a major exhibition of Persian art and design in the fall.

The renowned Polish archeologist Barbara Kaim, who specializes in the archaeology of Iran and Central Asia, compared Trump's threats to that of a "barbarian."

"I completely do not understand how modern man can let himself even just to think about destroying cultural goods," Kaim says. "How is this different from some known ISIS activities?" she asks, referring to the cultural vandalism of Islamic extremists.

Thomas Campbell, the former director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art who is now at the helm of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, has been unusually outspoken.

Campbell posted a powerful response on Instagram alongside a map of Iran's most important heritage sites. He explained that normally museum directors "remain behind the scenes... But when the President of the United States inverts every value system our country previously stood for, and calls for destructive attacks against cultural sites in one of the oldest civilizations of the world, you have to speak out vehemently and urgently."

The American Alliance of Museums also on

Monday condemned the targeting of cultural sites for destruction.

"Our nation has a long history of safeguarding cultural resources, particularly in nations experiencing political turmoil and armed conflict. Strikes against cultural sites anywhere in the world are a threat to our global heritage and contradicts treaties signed by the United States to protect humankind's cultural heritage in the 1954 Hague Convention for the protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2347, and 1972 UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage. We expect the United States Government to comply with international law and urge the US Government to reaffirm its commitment to its longstanding practice of not targeting cultural sites during peace or wartime." The AAM announced in an official statement. **→10**

## ARTICLE

**Sondoss Al Asaad**  
Political analyst from Beirut

## Letter on behalf of Resistance Youths

Dear Iranian youths and the entire Iranian nation, allow me, on behalf of my fellow sisters and brothers in the Resistance-axis, to extend our deepest sympathies and condolences to you at the irreparable loss of our dearly beloved Martyr Lieutenant General Qasim Soleimani and his great companions. We have all been utterly shocked and dismayed at Trump's heinous crime and the excruciating pain that ensues. May the almighty God ease our pain and grant us peace and patience.

Let me seize this opportunity to write to our unrivaled Martyr Soleimani and thank him for the furthestmost impact he has had on us. On our honour, we vow to perpetuate your exemplary mission and to serve our oppressed peoples at all times. We vow that your honourable martyrdom would be the starting point to revenge, humiliate and expel the Zionist and American criminal psychopaths from our entire West Asia region and to foil all their malicious schemes.

We are forever grateful. We are forever in your debt. You made the ultimate sacrifice, willing to give your life for the Ummah you had long loved and believed in. You lived humble and committed, fought fearlessly against terrorism, led dozens of honourable battles and martyred for us. Leader, thank you for setting our priorities straight, first and foremost, to be at the service of this holy path, your path and the path of our holy martyrs, who sacrificed their consecrated lives that we now enjoy freedom and dignity.

Tribute to the charismatic legend who has terrified Washington over the past four decades, to the inspiring revolutionary leader who awakened the consciousness of the oppressed peoples, who had long been subject to the arrogant colonialist culture of fear, cowardice, submission, and surrender. Tribute to the extraordinary Leader, who emerged from the homes of the vulnerable, and who long wished to be called a 'Warrior' defending the hopeless. Tribute to the devoted leader who endeavoured martyrdom with an Aalawi heart, Abbasi altruism and Hussaini perseverance, so he lifted upward as an immortal martyr. **→7**

## Germany slashing troop numbers in Iraq

Germany says it is reducing its military presence in Iraq, in the latest fallout from the United States' assassination of Iranian commander Lieutenant General Qasem Soleimani.

The German government told parliament in a letter on Monday that about 30 soldiers stationed in Baghdad and Taji would be moved to Jordan and Kuwait.

Germany has about 415 soldiers in the U.S.-led coalition purportedly fighting the Takfiri terrorist group of Daesh. About 120 of them are stationed in Iraq.

A German Defense Ministry spokesman told AFP that the withdrawal would "begin shortly."

According to the German government, the partial withdrawal was ordered by the U.S.-led joint command for fighting Daesh.

The move comes after Iraqi lawmakers unanimously approved a bill demanding the withdrawal of all U.S.-led foreign military forces following the U.S. airstrike that killed Lt. Gen. Soleimani. Iraq has condemned the strike as a violation of its sovereignty.

German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said late Monday that the basis for the German military presence in Iraq was "that we have an invitation from the Iraqi government and parliament."

"If that is no longer the case... then the legal

basis for us to be there is missing. We have to clarify this with those responsible in Baghdad as soon as possible," Maas said.

A U.S. drone carried out an airstrike at Baghdad's international airport early on Friday, assassinating Lt. Gen. Soleimani, who was the commander of the Quds Force of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the second-in-command of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), as well as eight other people.

Iran has pledged a "harsh revenge" against America for the assassination.

(Source: AFP)



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## Tehran Dialogue Forum focuses on Persian Gulf security

The Tehran Dialogue Forum brought together high ranking diplomats, ambassadors and foreign dignitaries on Tuesday. The forum primarily focused on security in the Persian Gulf region. The chief guests of the conference were Omani Foreign Minister Yousuf bin Alawi and former Afghan president Hamid Karzai. The Omani chief diplomat offered condolences for the martyrdom of top Iranian General Qasem Soleimani, who was assassinated in a terrorist act by the U.S. in Baghdad on Friday.

## Zarif: Failure to issue visa shows Washington's 'bankruptcy'

**POLITICAL** TEHRAN — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Tuesday that refusal by the United States to issue visa for him to attend a UN Security Council meeting scheduled in New York later this week shows Washington's political "bankruptcy".

"They fear that someone comes to the United States and reveals realities. They are mistaken. The whole world is not limited to New York. You can talk to the people of the United States from Tehran," he told reporters on the sidelines of the Tehran Dialogue Forum.

He also said, "An administration which carries out state terrorism, economic terrorism and threaten war crimes and crimes against humanity does not care about violating terms of United Nations' headquarters agreement."

Under the 1947 UN "headquarters agreement," the U.S. is required to allow access to the UN for foreign diplomats.

China said, "We urge the U.S. to earnestly fulfill this obligation and offer convenience to member states representatives to attend UN meetings."

### Regional countries should not sacrifice neighbors for U.S.'

Zarif also said that the regional countries should not sacrifice their neighbors for the U.S.

"I am not saying that the regional countries should enter war with the United States, however, they should not sacrifice their neighbors for their own security," he said.

## Muslims should unite after Gen. Soleimani's assassination: Malaysian PM

By staff and agency

Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad said on Tuesday that Muslim countries should unite to protect themselves against external threats, describing the U.S. assassination of Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani as immoral.

"The time is right for Muslim countries to come together," Reuters quoted him as saying.

He also said the U.S. drone attack on Soleimani was against international law.

"We are no longer safe now. If anybody insults or says something that somebody doesn't like, it is all right for that person from another country to send a drone and perhaps have a shot at me," he said.

General Soleimani was assassinated in a U.S. airstrike in Baghdad on Friday. His assassination has been declared as an act of war against Iran.

## IRGC chief: Our revenge for Soleimani will be 'harsh', 'decisive'

**POLITICAL** TEHRAN — Chief of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Hossein Salami said on Tuesday that Iran will take a tough revenge for martyrdom of Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani.

Talking mourners at the funeral procession of General Soleimani in Kerman, Salami said that Iran will take a tough revenge in a way that makes the United States regretful.

"I start with the last word. We will take revenge. Our revenge will be harsh, decisive and finishing. Stay assured and calm," the IRGC chief said.

The IRGC chief went on to say if the Americans take a military action after Iran's retaliatory measure "we will burn down the place that they love."

Brigadier General Ahmad Vahidi, the chairman of the defense and security committee of the Expediency Council, also said Iran's response will be "very tough, painful, long-lasting and destructive."

General Soleimani was brutally assassinated by a U.S. military airstrike on Friday morning during a visit to neighboring Iraq.

His remains arrived at the Kerman airport, after massive funeral processions were held in the Iraqi cities of Baghdad, Karbala and Najaf, as well as the Iranian cities of Ahvaz, Mashhad, Tehran and Qom.

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei released a message on Friday, saying Iran will take tough revenge on the criminals who killed the top Iranian general.

## The day Soleimani martyred declared International Day of Resistance

➔ Soleimani is recognized internationally as a legendary commander in the battle against terrorists groups, especially Daesh (ISIS). He commanded forces who resisted ISIS which was advancing toward the Iraqi Kurdistan and came close to Baghdad.

Officials in Tehran and independent retired military officers in the world have called the Soleimani assassination as an act of war against Iran.

Iran has vowed to take a "tough revenge" for Soleimani's blood.

## U.S. bases on heightened security alert following Soleimani assassination

U.S. military bases are placed on heightened security alert following the assassination of a top Iranian commander.

Iran's top intelligence and security commander Gen. Qassem Soleimani was killed by a U.S. assassination drone ordered by President Trump.

Following the assassination of Lieutenant General Soleimani, the commander of the Quds Force of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) in Iraq on Jan. 3, U.S. bases across the world tightened security amid the heated rhetoric between the two sides.

"While we will not discuss specifics, U.S. Northern Command is implementing additional force protection condition measures to increase security and awareness for all installations in the US NORTHCOM area of responsibility," according to a statement.

MacDill Air Force Base, Florida, began 100-percent identification checks on Saturday, according to a Facebook post. The base houses U.S. Central Command, U.S. Special Operations Command, Special Operations Command Central and Marine Forces Central Command among other base tenants.

(Source: Press TV)

# Hero at hometown

## Heartbroken mourners bid farewell to martyr Gen. Soleimani in his birthplace

**POLITICAL** TEHRAN — Millions of heartbroken mourners took the streets in the southeastern city of Kerman to say their last goodbye to Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani.

The burial ceremony in Kerman, the hometown of the top general, was postponed due to overcrowding. However, late on Tuesday the hero general was laid to rest.

Tens of people were also killed and many more were injured in a stampede during the funeral procession.

General Soleimani was brutally assassinated by a U.S. military airstrike on Friday morning during a visit to neighboring Iraq.

His remains arrived at Kerman airport, after massive funeral processions were held in the Iraqi cities of Baghdad, Karbala and Najaf and the Iranian cities of Ahvaz, Mashhad, Tehran and Qom.

Millions of mourners packed the streets of Tehran on Monday to bid farewell to Soleimani, who headed Iran's IRGC Quds Force, and chanted "Death to America".

According to the Pentagon, General Soleimani was assassinated on Donald Trump's order.

The U.S. airstrike also martyred Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the deputy commander of the Iraqi Popular Mobilization Forces (PMU).

Iran has vowed to take a "tough revenge" for Soleimani's blood.

On Saturday, Trump claimed that his military would hit "very important" targets, including cultural heritage sites, if the Iranians want to take a retaliatory action against the assassination of General Soleimani.

"We have ... targeted 52 Iranian sites (representing the 52 American hostages taken by Iran many years ago), some at a very high level & important to Iran," said Trump in a tweet while making a reference to the seizure of the U.S. embassy in Tehran in 1979 during which 52 Americans were taken hostage.

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif on Sunday responded to Trump, saying, "Through MILLENNIA of history, barbarians have come and ravaged our cities, razed our monuments and burnt our libraries."

However, Zarif added, "Where are they now? We're still here, & standing tall."



© ISNA/Hadi Zandi

From the early hours of Tuesday, large crowds of black-clad mourners began filling the streets of Kerman to pay their respects to the Middle East's most prominent anti-terror commander.

Chants of "Death to America" have been ringing out across the city, with mourners carrying the portraits of the national hero.

General Soleimani is viewed by the world as the key figure in the Middle East battles that led to the collapse of Daesh (ISIS), the world's most notorious terror group.

A separate mass funeral was also held for Muhandis in

the southwestern city of Abadan, from where his body will be transferred to Khorramshahr and Shalamcheh in Iran's Khuzestan Province for similar mourning ceremonies.

Addressing the mourners in Kerman, Major General Hossein Salami, chief of the IRGC, condemned the U.S. military's "cowardly" assassination.

"I start with the last word. We will take revenge. Our revenge will be harsh, decisive and finishing. Stay assured and calm," the IRGC chief said.

"The general's martyrdom is a starting point for an early end to America's presence in the Muslim world. I declare that you will see this happen very soon," he added.

## Expulsion of U.S. from West Asia doomed fate of Washington, Zarif says

➔ and proud land, heralds peace and quiet for the region," Zarif said at a speech at the Tehran Dialogue Forum on Tuesday.

"The U.S. will receive the definitive resolute response to its brazen, criminal act in a place and at a time it hurts most," he said, days after Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, the IRGC Quds Force commander, was martyred in a U.S. terrorist assault in Baghdad on Friday.

The text of Zarif's speech is as follows:

At the outset, I would like to seize the opportunity to welcome all of you to Tehran, to IPIS, and to the building that will henceforth be re-named after our proud Martyr General Qassem Soleimani. I also express my deep gratitude to the IPIS colleagues for having organized the "Tehran Dialogue Forum" in these extremely critical days and circumstances in our region. We have gathered here to engage in synergistic exchange of views towards exploring practical ways out of the perilous situation dominated by the paradigm of aggression, extremism and violence.

I would like to share with you, as thinkers and peace-lovers, a number of reflections and ideas.

### Excellencies,

Before turning to the substance of my remarks on the situation before us, let me say, it is indeed difficult for me to address this august assembly just four days after having lost, to the criminal and murderous state terrorism of the United States, a courageous, wise, rational, and visionary friend and colleague of mine, Martyr General Qassem Soleimani. A great man who embarked on a life-long struggle to make the world a better and safer place for us has now departed for the Heavens: slain at the hands of the most vicious people. The Iranian people, along with every other independence-seeking and anti-colonialist individual in the region is mourning this huge loss. The United States' terrorist assassination of one of the Iranian top military commanders has in fact opened the gates to an ugly course of action which might, sooner or later, come to haunt itself across the globe.

The U.S. has proved, once again, to everybody, its total, blatant disregard for the jus cogens in international law as well as for universally-recognized rights and immunities. This is the same schizophrenic approach that repugnantly threatens, in contravention of international law, to strike Iran's cultural sites which are part of the shared human cultural and civilizational heritage.

Martyr General Qassem Soleimani represented the voice of independence-seeking struggles of a region that has been afflicted with the unfortunate accumulation of multi-layered problems and difficulties emanating from the insatiable lust of international masters of money and might and their foolish, opportunistic allies. What transpired at the early hours of January 3rd was not a mere attack on Iraq's national sovereignty or just the cowardly, brutal

assassination of a proud Iranian general. In fact, one of the pillars of striving for security in this area, fraught with various plots, was targeted. Terroristic, extremist groups, from Al-Qaida to ISIS and Al-Nusra Front – the very brainchildren of the U.S. and its regional servants – are those who view commanders like Soleimani as their greatest enemy.

It comes as no surprise that the unmannered and tactless US President committed a strategic blunder, driven by folly and arrogance, in ordering the assassination of the great conqueror of battles against terrorism and extremism, and the most successful "peace-making general" of the region in recent decades. This time, though, he has made a huge gamble, and must know that the Divine promise is true: that the righteousness will be the ultimate victor, and that "Allah is dominant in His affairs."

### Ladies and Gentlemen,

One of the most important problems in the region surrounding us comes from the misconceptions and miscalculations that have profoundly impacted the regional equations. I have frequently stressed that this cognitive disorder and the miscalculations emanating from it constitute one of the most endemic roots of the current crisis in the region.

The U.S. has demonstrated, for the umpteenth time, how it can take dangerous steps, emanating from its miscalculations and misperceptions of the domestic situation in Iran and of the region, to wreak insecurity in the world and, ultimately in their own country. The depth of grief and bereavement among the nations in the region and the Muslim world at large, and in particular the unprecedented popular funeral processions held in both Iraq and Iran for Martyr General Soleimani and his life-long comrades, including Martyr Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, are telling signs of the profundity of the U.S. erroneous perceptions and calculations vis-à-vis Iran and the region.

Just note the statistics: the US foreign policy expenditures in West Asia under the current administration has increased by 1 trillion USD, reaching a total of 8 trillion USD. The figure, however, does not reflect at all the incalculable value of the bloods shed and the innocent lives perished due to such miscalculations.

It is a fact of history that many US presidents, and now Donald Trump, have set on fire a region and even the entire world for the short-sighted goals in their domestic policies. It is unfortunate that nowadays we are facing the biggest historical lie ever: that the U.S., notwithstanding a long trail of massacres and bloodshed, pretends to pursue the collective good and peace and security in the region and in the world.

Our region has been embroiled in endless wars, extremism and violence caused by the US continuous aggressions as well as by the conflicts in recent years. Resort to war, considered an exception in international relations, has unfortunately become a norm

and rule in the region due to the attitude and conduct of the U.S. and its followers. This is a vicious circle that must be broken by the regional actors and all those committed to peace, quiet, and stability.

Unfortunately, cognitive dissonance and miscalculations are not peculiar to the U.S. only. Some of the US allies and like-minded states in the region, due to their absolute dependence on foreigners and purchasing legitimacy and security from without, have also adopted and pursued the same wrong, calamitous path; a path that has led to divisions and conflicts more visible today than ever before – from battle of norms to the clash of strategies.

What is more deplorable is that these ongoing regional divisions and conflicts have in fact created the breathing space for malignant forces within and without of the region to strengthen and expand their illegitimate and illegal military presence in the region through fabricating trumped-up threats and artificial securitization scenarios. The most important and visible consequence of such ploys is to be seen in the endless pain and suffering the oppressed nations in the region continue to endure; from Afghanistan and Iraq to Syria and Libya. The other side of these devastating and incendiary policies concerns the sale of destructive arms to the region, in the order of hundreds of billions of dollars, equal to one fourth of the total global arms sales.

### Distinguished Audience,

The disorders and shortcomings we witness today in the region, from a dire lack of "inter-regional dialogue" to a want of institutionalized, structural interactions, unmistakably reveal the fact that regional conditions are not moving in the direction of improvement. For some, the accumulation and intensification of the crises might mean that the region has arrived at a practical and even conceptual impasse.

As Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, I deeply believe that although solutions to the current crises might far-fetched, they are, in actual fact, "within reach and accessible." To bring what appears to be "far" close and make it "accessible," in addition to requisite political will and mustering of regional capabilities, we need a paradigm shift. The needed shift requires both courage as well as collective efforts.

The paradigm currently imposed on our region – which is reproduced by some in the region, wittingly or otherwise – is premised on the presumption that American arms and war bring security. In my conviction, what can bring security to the vast geography of the West Asia and the Persian Gulf and can create lasting peace in this region lies in enhancing inter-regional solidarity, shared understanding, and cooperative relations.

Shared understanding is the cornerstone of any meaningful movement in this region – which requires, in the first place, dialogue. What this region needs now, more than ever before, is inclusive, comprehensive intra-regional dialogue. This lies at the

foundation of the initiative Iran has been pursuing for years within the UN framework. This initiative, currently known as HOPE - Hormuz Peace Endeavor – was introduced at the UN General Assembly last year by the honorable President of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

This initiative, taking into account the regional realities and based on the solid belief that building of a new, inclusive architecture free from the language of aggression and threat as the colonial heritage in the region, is not only "viable," but it is in fact the "most imperative" task everyone in the region should undertake. This is the very logic and language detested by masters of money and might; those who seek their interests in war and division, and hence, spare no efforts to preclude it, through recourse to terror and assassination.

### Ladies and Gentlemen,

The path chosen by the U.S. for itself and the region is characterized by insecurity, war and bloodshed. But, Iran, as the unified voice arising from the heart of every child of this ancient and proud land, heralds peace and quiet for the region.

The ultimate expulsion of the U.S. from West Asia is the doomed fate of Washington's unbridled exploitation of the tools of war, sanctions, and assassination. The U.S. will receive the definitive resolute response to its brazen, criminal act in a place and at a time it hurts most. However, I would like to send this message to the region, in my capacity as the Minister of Foreign Affairs, that Iran will continue to serve as the anchor of peace and security and also as the axis of regional development. The Islamic Republic of Iran pursues a proactive and solution-oriented regional approach and policy. All regional countries should also serve as an axis of solution to various regional cases and situations.

It goes without saying that this path requires the partnership of all neighbors and the imperative of taking clear steps by everybody in the region. Security cannot be realized through "hurling stones at the neighbor's house." We believe in security for all.

Now we are standing at an important juncture in the history of the region and the world at large.

As countries situated around the Strait of Hormuz, we – all of us, let me underline – should abandon the paradigm of elimination and antagonism premised on the illusion of purchasing security and development from without. This paradigm has not but brought war and turbulence to our region and to the world. We should instead opt for and subscribe to a paradigm of regional inclusivity and synergy – as the only realistic way out of the current cycle of perpetuating crises – so that we can proceed towards a thriving, prosperous future with a promising prospects for future generations.

And to conclude, let me say, that this will indeed be the actual realization of the greatest wish and aspiration of my martyred brother, General Qassem Soleimani.

# Nuclear deal savable if remaining signatories act willfully: Araghchi

**POLITICAL** TEHRAN — Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said on Tuesday the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), commonly called the nuclear deal, can be preserved if the remaining signatories show enough determination.

Araghchi told reporters on the sidelines of the Tehran Dialogue Forum that the fifth step in modifying JCPOA undertakings was the final step and there won't be any other step to take.

"There is still the possibility of preserving the JCPOA provided that the other side shows will," the senior negotiator said.

Under the 2015 nuclear deal, Iran agreed to put limits on its nuclear activities in exchange for termination of economic and financial sanctions. However, in May 2018 the Trump administration abrogated the agreement and started introducing the harshest ever sanctions on Iran. The remaining signatories, especially Europeans, have also failed to take a concrete step to shield Iran from sanctions.

Pointing to the Europeans' threat to resort to trigger mechanism, Araghchi said, "It is natural that such issues will create a situation for faster end of the JCPOA."

Late on Sunday, Iran took the fifth and last step to fully end commitment to the nuclear pact, the government announced in a statement.



According to the new step, from now on Iran will no longer commit to any limits on the level of uranium enrichment, stockpile of nuclear fuel and related research and development, the statement said.

On Sunday, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif announced via his official Twitter account that Iran was resolved to continue full cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) even after taking the fifth and final step to put an end to its obligations under the 2015 nuclear pact. "Iran's full cooperation w/IAEA will continue," Zarif tweeted.

According to the last step, Zarif said, Iran will see no "restriction on a number of centrifuges" that it can operate.

The chief diplomat reiterated the move is in accordance to paragraph 36 of the JCPOA. "As 5th & final REMEDIAL step under paragraph 36 of JCPOA, there will no longer be any restriction on the number of centrifuges," Zarif tweeted.

The chief diplomat reiterated Tehran's long-held position that if the remaining parties to the JCPOA take steps to offset sanctions on Iran, Tehran will reverse its decisions. "This step is within JCPOA & all 5 steps

are reversible upon EFFECTIVE implementation of reciprocal obligations," Zarif added.

Since May 8, Iran has been reducing its nuclear commitments with a series of steps every 60 days. In November, it gave Britain, France, and Germany a third 60-day deadline to salvage the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) or face a further decrease of commitments by Tehran. The deadline passed on Saturday.

On May 8, exactly one year after the U.S. abandoned the deal, Tehran said its "strategic patience" is over and began to partially reduce its commitments to the agreement at bi-monthly intervals.

In the first stage, Iran announced that it will not limit its stockpile of the nuclear fuel to 300 kilograms allowed under the deal. On that date (May 8) Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) said if the remaining parties to the JCPOA, especially Europeans, devise a mechanism to protect Iran from the sanctions' effect in the two-month deadline it will reverse its decision.

But since European parties missed the deadline, on July 7 Iran announced that it has started enriching uranium to a higher purity than the 3.67%, thereby starting the second step.

Again, as Europe missed the second 60-day deadline, Iran moved to take the third step, removing a ban on nuclear research and development (R&D).

## Zarif says assassination of Gen. Soleimani amounts to an armed attack on Iran

By staff and agency

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has said that assassination of Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani by the United States amounts to an armed attack against Iran.

"This is an act of aggression against Iran and amounts to an armed attack against Iran, and we will respond. But we will respond proportionally not disproportionately," he told CNN in an interview published on Tuesday.

"We will respond lawfully, we are not lawless people like President Trump," he said.

Referring to a tweet by the U.S. President Donald Trump on Saturday in which he threatened to target 52 Iranian sites, including cultural and civilian ones, Zarif said those comments showed Trump "has no respect for international law and is prepared to commit war crimes -- attacking



Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif says the assassination of Gen. Soleimani amounts to an armed attack on Iran. He also said that Trump threw the Middle East into

chaos by leaving the 2015 nuclear deal, known as the JCPOA, in May 2018.

"A war was started a long time ago by the United States, the United States destroyed stability in this region, the United States undermined security in this region," he said.

"What is important is for the Trump regime to realize that everything in this region was improving following the JCPOA," Zarif said.

He said that the U.S. has "destroyed stability" in the Middle East, warning of worse to come if the U.S. did not reverse course.

"We saw normal elections in Iraq, normal elections in Lebanon ... we had the reduction of tensions in Syria ... what happened? The United States started a maximum pressure campaign, terrorizing the Iranian people, making it difficult for Iranians to even get food and medicine."

## U.S. forces must flee from the region, says Larjani



**POLITICAL** TEHRAN — Parliament Speaker Ali Larjani has said ridding the region of American forces will be a retaliation for Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani's blood.

"I don't remember that we've ever had a triple-urgency motion passed in the parliament," Larjani said on Tuesday, after the parliament designated the U.S. military as a terrorist organization, according to Mehr.

"The important point is that the response to Haj Qassem Soleimani's blood should be [measures] to make American forces flee from the region and go somewhere else," he said.

"This step has been taken by the Iraqi parliament," he added.

This is only the beginning, the parliament speaker said. "They must leave the region."

Soleimani, the head of the IRGC Quds Force, was martyred in an airstrike at Baghdad's international airport on Friday morning by the U.S.

The U.S. airstrike also martyred Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the deputy commander of the Iraqi Popular Mobilization Units (PMU) and some other resistance forces.

The Pentagon had announced that General Soleimani was killed on Trump's order.

According to the New York Times, the

top Iranian general was killed when an American MQ-9 Reaper drone fired missiles into a convoy that was leaving the airport.

The strike was a serious escalation of Trump's growing confrontation with Tehran, which began almost a week ago when U.S. forces conducted drone strikes on locations of the PMU forces in Iraq, killing at least 25 individuals and leaving another 51 injured.

Referring to Soleimani's massive funeral procession, Larjani said the Iranian nation slapped the U.S. in the face.

"People expressed their anger at the U.S. crime by holding massive funeral processions for the martyred commander of IRGC Quds Force Lieutenant General Qasem Soleimani and his companions in Iraqi cities of Baghdad, Najaf, Kadhimiya, as well as the Iranian cities of Ahvaz, Mashhad, Tehran, Qom, and Kerman," he said.

He described the general's assassination as a "barbaric" move by Trump and a "terrorist, military operation."

"You have endangered the security of the region by doing this and must be held accountable," the parliament speaker said, addressing Trump.

"It is time for a crushing response."

Following Larjani's speech, Iranian lawmakers chanted anti-U.S. slogans at the parliament.

## Afghan officials, people sympathize with Iranians over assassination of Gen. Soleimani



**POLITICAL** TEHRAN — A large number of Afghan officials, politicians and people have gone to Iran's embassy in Kabul and consul general in Herat to extend their condolences to the Iranian nation and government over assassination of Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani.

Soleimani, the chief of the IRGC Quds Force, was martyred in a terrorist attack by the U.S. military in Baghdad on Friday morning. Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the deputy commander of the Iraqi Popular Mobilization Forces (PMU), and some other forces were also martyred in the attack.

Abdullah Abdullah, the executive head of Afghanistan's national government, paid a visit to the Iranian embassy in Kabul to sign a book in commemoration of the top military commander. Hundreds of officials, politicians and ordinary people have also went to the Iranian embassy to express condolences and sympathy with the Iranian nation over the terrorist attack.

In Herat province, western Afghanistan, former commander Mohammad Esmayel Khan as well as a number of provincial officials visited the Iranian consul general to mark the Soleimani martyrdom.

According to the Pentagon, General Soleimani was killed on Trump's order. He was assassinated in an air raid on Baghdad airport on January 3.

Since January 3, Iranians and Iraqis,

in huge numbers, have been mourning his martyrdom. On Saturday, massive funeral ceremonies were held in the Iraqi cities of Kadhimiya, Baghdad, Karbala and Najaf for General Soleimani and al-Muhandis. Iraqi dignitaries including Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi participated in the funeral procession in Baghdad.

On Sunday, millions of angry mourners participated in separate funeral ceremonies held in the southwestern city of Ahvaz and the northeastern city of Mashhad.

The funeral processions to honor the general first started in Ahvaz, after his remains arrived from Iraq.

Soleimani, who is internationally recognized as the champion of war on terrorism, is called "the General of the Hearts".

On Monday morning, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei performed the Islamic funeral prayer for Soleimani and his martyred companions at the University of Tehran.

Millions of Tehraners participated in the funeral ceremony. Another funeral ceremony was held for the martyr general in the shrine city of Qom on Monday afternoon.

On Tuesday, funeral and burial ceremonies were held for the general in Kerman, Soleimani's hometown, but due to flock of mourners and following a stampede, the burial ceremony was postponed.

## Iranian parliament designates U.S. military as 'terrorist'

**1 ->** The Iranian lawmakers chanted "Down with the U.S." after the bill was passed.

The move came after Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, the commander of Iran's IRGC Quds Force, was assassinated in an attack by the U.S. military in Iraq's capital, Baghdad.

The attack was directly ordered by U.S. President Donald Trump.

The assassination of the top Iranian commander along with Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the deputy head of Iraq's anti-terror Popular Mobilization Units, and eight others has sent shock waves across the world.

Both Soleimani and Muhandis played a key role in defeating Daesh (ISIS) which at its peak, threatened a complete

take-over of Iraq and Syria.

The bill was confirmed immediately by the Guardian Council.

Guardian Council spokesman Abbasali Kadkhodaei said the council approved the first triple-urgency motion since the victory of the Islamic Revolution.

"I thank the honorable members of the Majlis and the presiding board for adopting a positive measure in the shortest time by taking a tough revenge through approving the triple-urgency motion," Kadkhodaei said.

Back in April 2019, the United States officially designated Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) as a foreign terrorist organization.

Soon after the move, the Iranian Supreme National Security Council named the United States Central Command (CENTCOM) a terrorist organization, and the U.S. government a sponsor of terror.

It also condemned the move as "baseless" and warned of the consequences of its move for peace and security in the Middle East.

The IRGC designation came a year after Washington withdrew from the 2015 nuclear agreement and adopted a much more hostile policy toward Tehran which it described as the "maximum pressure policy".

Tensions have soared between Tehran and Washington after the U.S. withdrawal.

## Gabbard blasts Trump over Soleimani killing, demands immediate pullout of U.S. troops from Iraq, Syria

The Hawaii congresswoman and Democratic presidential candidate, who deployed to Iraq during her service with the U.S. Army National Guard, warned that a conflict with Iran would be "far more devastating" to the U.S. than its Iraq campaign.

Congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard issued a series of statements slamming President Trump for the drone strike which killed senior Iran's IRGC Quds Force Commander Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, saying that the president's actions were dragging the U.S. into a "quagmire" and possible "war with Iran."

"Trump's actions in bombing the Baghdad airport, with the targeted killing of Iran's top military general was an act of war with no authorization or declaration of war from Congress," Gabbard said in a video uploaded to Twitter.

"He has put us in a state of war with Iran, and has seriously escalated this tit for tat conflict, pushing us deeper into an endless quagmire," Gabbard added.

Calling Trump's Middle East policies "short-sighted, damaging, and undermining our national security," Gabbard called on the White House to "get out of Iraq and Syria" and to "bring our troops home."

The congresswoman followed up the video with several more tweets, in which she argued that "necons" such as Senator Lindsey Graham and former National Security Advisor John Bolton were "cheering" Trump's decision to kill Soleimani.

Later, in an appearance on Fox and Friends, Gabbard warned that the escalation with Iran could lead to the deaths of thousands of Americans and scores of Iranians. "I've said for a long time that going to war with Iran would make the war in Iraq and even Afghanistan look like a picnic," she said.

Gabbard, a candidate for president from the Democratic Party and a member of the House Armed Services Committee, deployed to Iraq in 2004 for a 12 month tour of duty as a specialist in a medical unit. Occasionally praising Trump in the past for his non-interventionist rhetoric, Gabbard has also fiercely criticized him over his rhetoric and policy with regard to Iran.

In September, after Trump announced plans to beef up the U.S. military presence in Saudi Arabia following an alleged 'Iranian-backed' attack on Saudi oil facilities, Gabbard accused Trump of trying to "pimp" out U.S. soldiers.

Qassem Soleimani was killed in an airstrike at the Baghdad International Airport on Friday morning, when the vehicle he and a senior Iraqi Shia popular forces' leader were riding in was struck by a missile launched by a U.S. drone. Before his death, the commander facilitated the provision of military assistance to Iranian-allied militia groups and governments across the Middle East, including Lebanon, Syria and Iraq. Soleimani coordinated Iranian support to the Baghdad-allied militias known as the Popular Mobilization Forces during the war against Daesh (ISIL).

Soleimani's assassination led to another serious deterioration in relations between Tehran and Washington, with Iranian leaders threatening to "retaliate" against U.S. forces stationed across the Middle East. Iraqi officials also condemned the U.S. operation, while Moscow warned that there would be "grave consequences for regional peace and stability" as a result of U.S. actions.

## Britain to discuss Iran with France, Germany

TEHRAN (MNA) — The British, French and German foreign ministers meet in Brussels on Tuesday to hold urgent talks over Iran as they prepare their reaction after Tehran's decision to scrap the nuclear enrichment limits under a 2015 accord.

The ministers had already been scheduled to meet with their Italian counterpart to discuss the crisis in Libya but opted to hold separate discussions on Iran amid the crisis that erupted following the US assassination of Iran's Lt. Gen. Soleimani, according to Reuters.

Iran announced late Sunday that the country was going ahead with the fifth and final step in reducing commitments to the nuclear agreement. The fifth step removes the last of operational limitations Iran had accepted within the framework of the JCPOA, that is, the limit on the number of centrifuges.

Britain's foreign office said the E3 - Britain, France, and Germany, would meet to discuss ways to defuse tensions between the US and Iran.

"The talks will also cover the nuclear deal following Iran's latest announcement on Sunday that it is withdrawing from further commitments in the deal," a British foreign office spokesman said. A French diplomatic source confirmed the talks.

The bloc's 28 ministers meet on Friday in Brussels to discuss the Iran crisis.

"It is imperative that we find a way to deescalate things," France's junior foreign affairs minister told Reuters in an interview on Tuesday.



**"I've said for a long time that going to war with Iran would make the war in Iraq and even Afghanistan look like a picnic," Democratic presidential candidate Tulsi Gabbard said.**



STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	358843.2
IFX	4630.89

Sources: tse.ir, ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	47,010 rials
GBP	55,316 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$68.22/b
WTI	\$62.71/b
OPEC Basket	\$67.15/b
Gold	\$1,569.20/oz
Silver	\$18.21/oz
Platinum	\$973.90/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

1st phase of Garmsar Special Economic Zone goes operational

**ECONOMY** TEHRAN — The first phase of the Garmsar Special Economic Zone in the southeast of capital Tehran officially went operational, the portal of Industrial Development and Renovation Organization of Iran (IDRO) reported.



Secretary of Iranian Free Zones High Council, Morteza Bank (L) hands over the license for the implementation of the first phase of Garmsar Special Economic Zone to the managing director of the zone, Abdolreza Naderi, on Tuesday.

As reported, the Secretary of Iranian Free Zones High Council Morteza Bank handed over the license for the development of 46 hectares of the zone's total area to its managing director on Tuesday.

Covering 2000 hectares of land, Garmsar Special Economic Zone is going to be one of the country's major trade, industrial and productive centers due to its proximity to the capital.

Eurozone business activity picks up despite persistent manufacturing slump

Business activity in the eurozone ticked up more than expected in December, boosted by a rise in the domestically-focused services sector that outweighed another slide in the manufacturing sector, according to a closely watched survey.

The economic outlook of companies in the eurozone also improved to its highest level since May, amid relief that the U.S.-China trade war is easing and as the prospect of a sudden UK exit from the EU has faded.

The IHS Markit eurozone purchasing managers' index rose to 50.9 in December, taking the key indicator of economic health above last month's preliminary estimate for it to remain unchanged from its 50.6 level in November.

While the data is better than expected it remains only slightly above the crucial level of 50, below which the majority of companies surveyed are reporting a shrinking of activity.

The eurozone economy has slowed sharply in recent years and after cutting interest rates in September to boost activity, the European Central Bank forecast growth for 2019 of 1.2 percent — down from 1.8 percent the previous year and 2.4 percent in 2017.

"Another month of subdued business activity in December rounded off the eurozone's worst quarter since 2013," said Chris Williamson, chief business economist at IHS Markit. The "PMI data suggest the euro area will struggle to have grown by more than 0.1 percent in the closing three months of 2019."

The index for the eurozone's services sector rose to a four-month high of 52.8, up from 51.9 in November. All nations covered by the survey recorded higher activity, led by Spain and Ireland.

While the data indicated increasing growth in the services sector, it pointed to a further slide in manufacturing output to an almost seven-year low.

Sentiment among eurozone investors rose for the third month in a row in January, according to the German-based Sentix survey, which rose to 7.6 points this month from 0.7 in December. A positive score indicates a larger proportion of institutional and private investors reported a good economic situation than those who said it was bad.

A "recession in the eurozone seems to be off the table for the time being," Sentix said. "More important seems to be the gain in momentum in other regions of the world, especially in Asia, as well as the slight easing of the trade dispute between the United States and China."

(Source: ft.com)

Govt., private sector discuss business, trade issues in dialogue council

**ECONOMY** TEHRAN — The 92nd dialogue council of the government and the private sector was held in Tehran on Tuesday to discuss issues pertaining to economy, trade and the market, IRNA reported.

Senior officials including the Iranian Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Reza Rahmani, and the Head of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) Gholam-Hossein Shafeie attended the event which was chaired by Iran's Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Farhad Dejpasand.

In the meeting, various issues regarding the country's current economic situation were discussed and the government representatives and the private sector explored ways of removing barriers in the way of improving the business environment.

Govt. calls on private sector's financial backing

In the opening speech of the mentioned session, Dejpasand called on the country's private sector for cooperation with the government in financing various projects by attracting investors.

Mentioning some unnecessary regula-



Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Reza Rahmani (R) and ICCIMA Head Gholam-Hossein Shafeie (L) attend a council meeting chaired by Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Farhad Dejpasand (M) on Tuesday.

tions and bureaucracies that are prohibiting the private sector from reaching its full potential, Dejpasand said: "When we are having trouble financing our projects,

we should not allow problems like unnecessary regulations to impede the private sector's activities [which could help the government]."

'Improvement of the business environment a must'

Elsewhere in the meeting, ICCIMA Head Gholam-Hossein Shafeie mentioned the law on improvement of the business environment and said: "Seven years have passed since the Law on Continuous Improvement of the Business Environment was passed, but it has not yet been implemented."

Shafeie urged the country's judiciary bodies to deal with organizations which do not perform their duties to enforce the law.

Industry Ministry ready to implement the law

Industry Minister Reza Rahmani also underlined the importance of implementing the law on improvement of the business environment and expressed his ministry's readiness for complete implementation of the mentioned law.

According to Rahmani, considering the country's current economic situation, the best way is to support and facilitate businesses and implementing the mentioned law is going to be a big step in this regard.

"The industry ministry sees no technical or theoretical problem regarding the implementation of this law and even considers it a necessity," he stressed.

Commercial profit tax exemption for imported machinery showcased in exhibits

By Mahnaz Abdi

**TEHRAN** — Iranian cabinet has approved the proposal submitted by Iran International Exhibitions Company to exempt commercial profit tax for the machinery which are imported to be showcased in the exhibitions inside the country, the managing director of the company announced.

Bahman Hosseinzadeh said Iran International Exhibitions Company proposed the tax exemption in an attempt to transfer technology to the domestic producers for free, International Affairs and Public Relations Department of the company reported on Tuesday.

It is another effective step the company has recently taken in line with its policy of invigorating Iran's production and exports under the sanctions condition.

While strengthening domestic production and boosting exports are two major economic approaches of the country during the sanctions, holding exhibitions inside and outside the country is one of the most fruitful ways to materialize these objectives.

Holding high number of exhibitions is a specification of the countries like Germany that has some strong economy and Iran is a country acting strongly in this field as it holds the highest number of exhibitions in the region.

During the sanctions, Iran International Exhibitions Company, which is in charge of holding different exhibitions inside and outside the country, is making every endeavor to support domestic production and exports, as several times stressed by its managing director.

In this year, the company has managed to promote the status of Iranian exhibitions significantly through a number of measures.

One of those measures was setting up a customs office



at Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds in order to facilitate customs operations for exhibitors and participants of international exhibitions in the country.

"Operating only for clearing commodities which are going to be exhibited in events or are needed for international exhibitions, the office has been launched in accordance with the existing customs conventions in order to encourage the presence of foreign companies in these exhibitions and their cooperation with Iranian companies," the managing director of Iran International Exhibitions Company said at the time of opening the office.

"The office provides important services to companies intending to import technology into Iran, and in the face of the U.S. sanctions this step can have a significant impact on developing the country's industry," Bahman Hosseinzadeh asserted.

And on Monday the official said that setting up the customs office at Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds has facilitated trade exchange for the foreign exhibitors.

Hosseinzadeh also said it is a privilege led to more presence

of foreigners in the Iranian exhibitions and bringing more foreign currency for the country.

"The specialized exhibitions we have held over the past two years have played some fruitful part in boosting production and also exports to the neighboring countries", the official underscored and stressed that development of presence in the neighboring countries and Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) will help Iran's promotion of exports a lot.

Now, the company's proposal for commercial profit tax exemption for imported machinery which will be showcased in exhibitions is a new fruitful initiative.

This proposal was welcomed by the industry minister, Hosseinzadeh noted and said based on this exemption imports of those products, equipment and machinery to be showcased in the exhibitions will be tax free on condition that they are not produced inside the country and also being approved by the Industry Ministry.

The official further mentioned opening the customs office at the place of Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds and said these two measures are in line with facilitating domestic producers' access to the foreign technology in a way that the sanctions cannot limit their activity.

Referring to the title of current Iranian calendar year which is named "Pick up in Production" by the Leader of Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei, Hosseinzadeh said Iran International Exhibitions Company is making every effort to support domestic production.

The Company's supports to the startups and knowledge-based companies is another new approach which has been resulted in flourishing of domestic production.

"We allocate one salon to these companies in every exhibition and this approach is fortunately supported by the related officials", Hosseinzadeh has previously announced.

Iran in talks with foreign investors for funding Chabahar airport project

**ECONOMY** TEHRAN — Chairman of the board of Chabahar Free Trade-Industrial Zone Organization said his organization is in talks with foreign investors for financing the project for construction of an international airport in the port city.

According to Abdolrahim Kordi, Chabahar Free Trade-Industrial Zone Organization is going to invest 5.5 trillion rials (about \$131 million) supplied by domestic sources in the first phase of the mentioned project which is expected to be completed within two years, Tasnim news agency reported on Tuesday.

In the meantime, the organization is also negotiating with foreign investors for attracting more investment for other phases of the project.

"Since the project has various sections, it is even possible for us to award different parts to different investors under build-operate-transfer (BOT) contracts," Kordi said.

Although, the main focus will be on the cargo section of the project, in the first phase the airport will have the capacity of transporting 800,000 passengers, he noted.

The official further said that a strategic committee has been established to supervise the Chabahar International Airport project, adding that all the related matters



will be addressed by this committee.

Located in southeastern Iran, Chabahar

Port is the country's only oceanic port.

Although Iran has awarded the development project of this port to India and the South Asian country committed \$500 million to build two new berths in this port, several foreign countries are eager to contribute to the development of this strategic port.

Back in December 2019, the director general of Ports and Maritime Department of Sistan-Baluchestan Province said that 17 countries had expressed willingness for contribution to development of Chabahar Port.

According to Behrouz Aghaei, so far 130 foreign company representative delegations have visited Chabahar, of which 17 have expressed willingness for investment in the port.

Currency market fully under control: CBI governor

**ECONOMY** TEHRAN — The Governor of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) says the bank is fully controlling the foreign currency market and people should not have any worries over the exchange rates.

"There are no worries regarding unpredictable shocks in the market and people don't have to worry about sudden rises in the exchange rates," Abdolnaser Hemmati told ILNA on Tuesday.

Asked about the supply of foreign currency for the imports of basic goods in the upcoming year, Hemmati said: "Necessary provisions have been made in this regard and we have not only considered the foreign currency needed for the imports of basic goods but also for the imports of raw materials and machinery by our producers."

Pointing to the preferential trade agreement with the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), the official said the processes for trade with these countries is well underway and the situation will improve and new capacities will be created for increasing the country's exports.

Following assassination of Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani in a U.S. air raid in Iraq on Friday, Iran's foreign currency market undergone some fluctuations. The central bank, however believes that such



changes in the currency exchange rates are short term and the CBI management has restored balance in this market.

Since the re-imposition of U.S. sanctions on Iran, the central bank has been seeking ways to protect the national currency with measures that include setting up a government-run foreign-exchange platform known as NIMA to quell the black market and controlling interest rates.

Back in December 2019, Hemmati had said that the country's forex market was re-stabilized after a turbulent year.

The official said that despite the continued pressure from U.S. sanctions, the country's non-oil exports continue to rise and the Forex Management Integrated System, locally known as NIMA, is supplying the importers with their required foreign currency.

TEDPIX, IFX dropping more

**ECONOMY** TEHRAN — Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE) and Iran's over-the-counter (OTC) market known as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB), that began the Iranian week on Saturday with their indexes falling, witnessed more drops on Tuesday, IRNA reported.

TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange, fell 6,672 to 358,843 on Tuesday. Some 6.388 billion securities worth 27.401 trillion rials (about \$652.4 million) were reportedly traded at TSE.

As previously announced, TEDPIX rose



49,000 points, or 16.7 percent, to stand at 353,997 points at the end of the past Iranian calendar month of Azar (ends on December 21).

Reportedly, some 82.215 billion securities worth 432.151 trillion rials (about \$10.29 billion) were traded through 10.153 million deals at TSE during the previous month, with growth of 61 percent and 76 percent in the number and value of traded securities, respectively, while 71 percent rise in the number of deals.

In Iran's over-the-counter market, IFX, the main index of Iran Fara Bourse, fell 112

points to 4,630 on Tuesday. Some 2.569 billion securities worth 12.569 trillion rials (about \$299.2 million) were traded at IFB on Tuesday.

IFX rose 15 percent in the past Iranian calendar month of Azar, while experiencing a 102-percent rise since the beginning of current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2019).

The index stood at 4,559 points at the end of the past month.

Value of trades at IFB rose 16 percent in the previous month and 85 percent since the year start.

# South Pars daily gas production capacity up 14mcm

**ENERGY** TEHRAN – Daily gas production from Iran's giant South Pars gas field (in the Persian Gulf) has increased by 14 million cubic meters (mcm), IRNA reported on Tuesday, quoting deputy operator of the phases 22-24 development project.

After the installation and implementation of the third platform of the phases 22, 23, 24 of the field's development project, sour gas from this platform is being transported to the refinery via pipelines and the daily production capacity of the field is increased by 500 million cubic feet (14.2 million cubic meters), Ali-Asghar Sadeqi told IRNA.

According to the official, the platform of the phase 23, officially started operation on Sunday.

Mentioning the fact that all the operations regarding the construction, loading and installation of the mentioned platform were carried out by Iranian experts, Sadeqi said the hook-up operations of the platform were done over two weeks despite the unstable weather conditions.



He further noted that considering the production of 28 mcm of gas from the two previously installed platforms of the phases 22-24, the total daily output of the

mentioned phases has now reached 42 mcm.

The platform SPD-23, which is the third platform of the phases 22, 23, 24 of South Pars gas field development project was installed at its designated offshore place in phase 23 in mid-November, 2019.

Phases 22-24 are expected to produce 56 million cubic meters of sour gas, 75,000 barrels of gas condensate, and 400 tons of sulfur per day, in addition to 50 million cubic meters of methane, 2,900 tons of LPG and 2,750 tons of ethane.

South Pars gas field, which Iran shares with Qatar in the Persian Gulf, covers an area of 9,700 square kilometers, 3,700 square kilometers of which, called South Pars, are in Iran's territorial waters. The remaining 6,000 square kilometers, called North Dome, are situated in Qatar's territorial waters.

The field is estimated to contain a significant amount of natural gas, accounting for about eight percent of the world's reserves, and approximately 18 billion barrels of condensate.

## Germany could miss its national target for renewable electricity in 2030

Germany could miss its national target to cover 65 percent of gross electricity consumption with renewable energies in 2030, according to an analysis published by the Institute of Energy Economics (EWI) at the University of Cologne on Monday.

"The calculations for the expansion of renewable energies and the development of electricity demand indicate that Germany will miss the 65 percent target in 2030," said Max Gierkink, manager at EWI.

According to EWI, gross electricity consumption could rise to 748 terawatt hours (TWh) by 2030. At the same time, electricity generation from renewables in Germany would increase to 345 TWh, resulting in a share of renewable energies of only 46 percent.

The current model used by the German government would assume a gross electricity consumption of only 595 TWh by 2030 which would be "slightly below" the current level, EWI pointed out.

"The assumptions of the German government regarding future electricity demand are untenable," Hermann Albers, president of the German Wind Energy Association (BWE) told Xinhua on Monday.

Gierkink stressed that "the central drivers" for the increase of gross electricity consumption in Germany were the "growing number of electric vehicles and heat pumps." The production of green hydrogen using the electrolysis process was "also gaining in importance."

According to the EWI analysis, transport alone would

boost electricity consumption in Germany by 64 TWh by 2030. At the same time, the rising number of electric heat pumps would drive energy consumption in buildings by 17 TWh.

On the other hand, the electricity consumption by the German industry was estimated to fall by 15 TWh because of improvements in energy efficiency, according to the analysis.

"German industry is embarking on the path of decarbonization and investing in CO2-free production processes," Albers said, adding that "if renewable energies are not expanded quickly enough, there is a threat of a green electricity gap that will make investments in power-to-gas, electro mobility and renewable heating technologies absurd."

(Source: Xinhuanet.com)

## Global energy use to increase 50% by 2050: EIA

Global energy consumption is estimated to grow by nearly 50% between 2018 and 2050, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA).

"Most of this growth comes from countries that are not in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and this growth is focused in regions where strong economic growth is driving demand, particularly in Asia," the EIA said in a statement on Friday.

The industrial sector, which includes refining, mining, manufacturing, agriculture, and construction, is expected to account for the largest share of energy consumption of any end-use sector.

The global industrial sector's energy consumption is forecast to rise by more than 30% between 2018 and 2050 as consumption of goods increases.

During that period, energy consumption in transportation worldwide is estimated to increase by nearly 40%. Non-OECD countries, where energy consumption in transportation is expected to increase by nearly 80% between these years, will mostly drive this increase.

"Energy consumption for both personal travel and freight movement grows in these countries much more rapidly than in many OECD countries," the statement said.

In the buildings sector that includes residential and commercial structures,



energy consumption is expected to jump by 65% between 2018 and 2050, as rising income, urbanization, and increased access to electricity lead to rising demand for energy.

Renewable energy, which includes solar, wind, and hydroelectric power, is expected to be the fastest-growing energy source between 2018 and 2050, surpassing petroleum and other liquids to become the most used energy source.

Global renewable energy consumption is expected to increase by 3.1% every year between 2018 and 2050.

During those years, consumption of petroleum and other liquids is estimated to post a 0.6% annual growth in, while 0.4% consumption growth is expected in coal, and a 1.1% growth rate is anticipated for natural gas, according to the EIA.

(Source: aa.com.tr)

## Oil tumbles as investors rethink Mideast disruption risk

Oil prices on Tuesday surrendered some gains made over the previous two days as investors reconsidered the likelihood of Middle East supply disruptions in the wake of the United States killing a top Iranian military commander.

Brent crude LCOc1 fell as much as 1.5% to \$67.86 a barrel and was at \$68.39, down 52 cents, at 0737 GMT. U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures CLc1 were at \$62.85, down 42 cents, after earlier dropping 1.5% to an intra-day low of \$62.30.

Prices surged during the previous two sessions, with Brent reaching its highest since September while WTI rose to the most since April. The gains followed fears of escalating conflict and potential Middle East supply disruptions after the January 3 drone strike in Baghdad that killed Iran's Qassem Soleimani. But, some analysts have tempered expectations for a widespread conflict.

The "market's clearly worried about the potential for supply disruption but there's no obvious path forward from here," said Lachlan Shaw, head of commodity research at National Australia Bank.

"It's all a matter of scenarios that may impact oil production or not, so the market seems to have recalibrated in the last 24 to 36 hours on some of those likelihoods."

He added that Iran will need foreign currency earnings from continued oil exports

and it will be counter to their interest if they try to block the Strait of Hormuz. Roughly 20% of the world's oil passes the Middle East waterway, which borders Iran.

Prices fell despite higher compliance among the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) on meeting production quota curbs aimed at reducing supply.

OPEC members pumped 29.50 million barrels per day (bpd) last month, down 50,000 bpd from November's revised figure, according to a Reuters survey published on Monday.

"We still believe in the absence of retaliation or disruptions, that oil prices will trend lower over the course of Q20, with the market remaining well supplied over the first half of 2020," ING analysts said in a note.

U.S. crude oil stockpiles likely dropped last week for a fourth week in a row as exports ramped up although refined products stocks were expected to rise, a Reuters poll showed on Monday.

Six analysts estimated, on average, that crude stocks fell by 4.1 million barrels in the week to Jan 3.

Even before Soleimani's death, investors were increasing their bullish WTI holdings, with money managers raising their net-long positions in the week to Dec. 31, the Commodity Futures Trading Commission said on Monday.

(Source: reuters.com)

## 2020: The decade for energy storage

By Tsvetana Paraskova

The developers of the lithium-ion battery won the Nobel Prize in Chemistry 2019, in recognition of a scientific achievement that has helped power our mobile phones, laptops, and electric vehicles (EVs).

"It can also store significant amounts of energy from solar and wind power, making possible a fossil fuel-free society," The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences said, noting that lithium-ion batteries have created a rechargeable world over the past decade.

In the new decade, batteries and battery technology are set to play an increasingly important role in bringing more electric vehicles and renewable energy to the market, analysts say.

Rapidly declining costs and the potential to scale up existing and breakthrough battery and energy storage solutions are set to dramatically change the global mobility market and the power grid over the next ten years.

A lot of investments will be necessary in scaling up emerging battery and energy storage technology, as well as in the further development of lithium-ion batteries and alternative battery tech, to support the clean energy transition while global demand for electricity continues to rise.

Continuously falling battery costs, and rising capacity and usage of clean energy are set to result in booming global stationary energy storage over the next two decades, which will require total investments of as much as \$662 billion, BloombergNEF (BNEF) said in a report last year.

### The energy storage installations

Energy storage installations across the world are expected to soar to 1,095GW, or 2,850GWh, by 2040, compared to a modest deployment of just 9GW/17GWh as of 2018, according to BNEF's forecasts.



Unsurprisingly, the key driver of the energy storage installation boom will be additionally plunging costs of lithium-ion batteries, which will give financial rationale to additional uses of storage and surging installations of stationary energy storage.

According to BNEF, the exponential rise in renewable-sourced electricity and EV use will transform the global power systems and the transportation sector, driving demand for energy storage.

The "report finds that energy storage will become a practical alternative to new-build electricity generation or network reinforcement," according to BNEF's analysts.

According to UBS, energy storage will be the next critical catalyst for a global shift towards renewable energy.

Current energy storage capacity represents just 17 percent of total installed solar and wind capacity, UBS said in a report in November.

"Energy storage cost has almost halved in the past five years but generally remain too pricey for scale-up applications," UBS says.

### Related materials and chemicals

The investment bank expects that by 2025, energy storage cost will be under a third of what it is now. These lower costs would spur additional demand for renewables, batteries, and related materials and chemicals.

In the coming decade, energy storage costs are set to fall

by 66-80 percent, driven by battery makers' expansion plans, experience from EV batteries, and material cost cuts in renewables lowering power system costs, UBS's analysts note.

The energy storage market could be worth up to \$426 billion by 2030.

That is six times the current market value, UBS said.

Battery prices have declined by 87 percent in real terms since 2010, to \$156/kWh in 2019. By 2023, average prices will be close to \$100/kWh, BNEF said a report last month.

"New technologies like silicon or lithium anodes, solid state cells and new cathode materials will be key to helping cost reductions play out," BNEF said.

Lithium-ion batteries have emerged as the clear winner in the battery race, but their drawback in energy storage currently is that lithium-ion energy storage systems are maxing out at around four hours, Wood Mackenzie's Principal Analyst – Energy Storage, Rory McCarthy, says.

"In the race to develop a winning storage solution, various other technologies will strive to compete with lithium-ion. It won't be easy to beat on economies of scale, but for storage exceeding the four-hour mark, there's a clear gap in the market," McCarthy said.

According to a Rocky Mountain Institute report from October 2019, as early as 2025, and no later than 2030, non-Lithium-ion battery technologies are set to make early-stage deployments in long-duration energy storage, electrification of heavy-duty transport, and battery-integrated approaches to EV fast-charging infrastructure.

"Massive investments in battery manufacturing and steady advances in technology have set in motion a seismic shift in how we will power our lives and organize energy systems as early as 2030," Rocky Mountain Institute said.

(Source: oilprice.com)

## The LNG SPA and the energy transition

By Michael Polkinghorne, Paul Griffin

A pivotal role for natural gas and LNG as an enduring participant in a low-carbon future had previously seemed assured—regardless of uncertainties concerning the extent or pace of moves towards that future. However, questions are now being raised in relation to the markets and applications which will be appropriate for natural gas and LNG over the coming decades.

Over the last decade, natural gas has grown through displacement of coal and oil consumption in the large consumer markets of China and India, penetrated further into the energy mix of emerging market jurisdictions such as Pakistan and the Philippines, and adapted its traditional structures, relationships and contractual arrangements to take account of new sources of supply (such as the U.S.)—in short fulfilled a leading part in the changing world of energy.

The move from hydrocarbons to electrons is accelerating across the globe and is likely to have an impact not only oil but also on gas.

The pace and scale of change in the international natural gas business, and particularly the LNG sector, has been remarkable over recent years.



The development of aggregators, the influence of commodity traders and moves towards floating facilities and smaller-scale developments have had their effect—as has the move of the US from a position of major LNG importer to leading LNG exporter.

The previously segregated regional markets for natural gas and LNG have moved closer together and, whereas the development of a global gas price (akin to Brent as global oil price) still seems some way off, the growth of hubs and integrated prices and markets is undeniable. What were once the predictable provisions of a long-term LNG sale and purchase agreement (SPA) and the connected links in the LNG chain have been largely undone in many areas.

### Few signs of abating

And this pace of development shows few signs of abating. This year and next seem likely to see final investment decisions (FIDs) in relation to substantial new quantities of LNG, with sales being made on many diverse bases to an increasing number of markets — and with funds being raised in many ways, both traditional and innovative.

The durations of many of the related state grants and contractual arrangements extend for some decades, with continuing production and trading of LNG being committed to 2040 and beyond. Also, many of these arrangements will be made under a chosen law which is a common law, and often English law.

The making of a binding and enforceable agreement under English law depends on the parties reaching agreement through terms which are certain and final.

The longer the duration of the intended arrangements, the more difficult it becomes to have the required clairvoyance to do this.

In the absence of specific wording, the law will be slow to provide relief for a party which considers itself to be suffering economic hardship or adverse commercial circumstances.

The law will be equally slow to find that the contract has come to an end in those circumstances, unless that is what the parties have specifically provided in their agreement.

A typical SPA will be a document of some length and complexity, but some parts of that document may not be expressed in detail, despite the inevitably long period of negotiation.

These provisions may look to address circumstances which are themselves uncertain or unexpected—or cover matters which are sufficiently difficult or subordinate to the main elements of the contract that the parties are comfortable to leave them in comparatively uncertain terms in the interests of closing all other elements of the overall agreement.

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### The expected equilibrium

To the extent that the parties can foresee and agree on particular changes of circumstances that may have the effect of distorting the expected equilibrium of their agreement and its operation, it is not unusual to see international commercial contracts that look to ameliorate these effects by the inclusion of specific provisions. In many cases, these provisions will provide for the parties to meet and seek to agree revised contractual terms in the light of the changed circumstances (under the discipline of obligations of good faith and reasonable endeavors) and, in the absence of agreement, for reference to arbitration for resolution of their differences.

In relation to SPAs, this type of provision is rarely seen in general terms, but is often seen in the specific context of changes of markets and prices—the so-called 'price re-opener' provision.

Whereas these provisions might once have been seen as little more than a periodic invitation to re-negotiate the contract price and its terms, the last decade or so has seen many references to formal dispute resolution in relation to European markets and by means of arbitration.

Pursuing these trends, it seems appropriate to ask whether it will be necessary to consider how to address increasing demands for de-carbonisation.

Politicians are increasingly subjected to pressures to implement current broad targets for carbon reduction, or even to go beyond them, whether for reasons of air quality or otherwise. The means of implementation are necessarily becoming more specific and local.

In these circumstances, a withdrawal from all fossil fuels may come to be demanded, regardless of how clean one or other of them may be. Within the natural gas sector, this will raise particular challenges related to long-term recovery of capital outlays and the long-term nature of many LNG sales agreements.

(Source: petroleum-economist.com)

## Dialogue urged on Middle East

By Zhao Huanxin in Washington and Cao Desheng

**BEIJING** — Yang, a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and director of the Office of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the CPC Central Committee, told Pompeo that relevant parties should return to dialogue as soon as possible.

In telephone talks with Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, Wang said the act by the U.S. goes against the basic norms of international relations and will aggravate tension in the region.

“Military means will lead nowhere. Maximum pressure won’t work, either. China urges the U.S. to seek resolutions through dialogue instead of abusing force,” Wang said. “China will continue to uphold an objective and just position and play a constructive role in safeguarding peace and security in the Gulf region of the Middle East.”



Mourners carry the casket of slain Iraqi militia leader Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis toward the Imam Ali Shrine in Najaf in central Iraq during a funeral procession on Saturday. Thousands of Iraqis mourned the deaths of al-Muhandis and Iranian military commander Qassem Soleimani, who were killed in a U.S. drone attack on Friday. (HAIDAR HAMDANI/AFP)

In speaking with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian, Wang noted that their countries, together with China, are permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, and therefore shoulder important responsibilities in safeguarding world peace and security.

Both Lavrov and Le Drian said their countries have similar positions with China on the flare-up of U.S.-Iran conflicts, and stand ready to maintain close communication with China and play a positive role in preventing escalating tensions in the region.

Wang underscored the importance of implementing the Iranian nuclear agreement, which the U.S. withdrew from in 2018, and expressed the hope that all parties will stay in close communication so as not to let the attack affect the implementation of the agreement.

Hundreds of U.S. troops deployed on Saturday from Fort Bragg, North Carolina, to Kuwait to serve as reinforcements in the Middle East amid rising tensions following the killing of Soleimani, Teheran’s most prominent military commander, The Associated Press reported.

Jon Alterman, a senior vice-president of the Center for Strategic & International Studies in Washington, said that following the drone attack on the Iranian military leader, Iran will respond, forcing itself to the forefront of U.S. foreign policy considerations for years to come and drawing the United States into the sort of shadowy battles the Pentagon has been trying to escape for more than a decade.

“As a consequence of this action, the United States will grow more enmeshed militarily in the Middle East,” Alterman, also director of the Middle East Program at the CSIS, said in a post on Friday.

One expert said Washington and Teheran can still take an off-ramp rather than escalating tension further.

“It is in both U.S. and Iranian interests to preserve the option of diplomacy to resolve the outstanding issues before tragedy ensues,” said Michele Dunne, director and senior fellow of the Middle East program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, in an article on the endowment’s website.

Meanwhile, State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi had telephone talks on Saturday with the foreign ministers of Iran, Russia and France, reiterating that China opposes the abuse of military force in international relations.

On Friday, China’s top diplomat, Yang Jiechi, expressed the country’s high concern over the current Middle East situation during a phone conversation with U.S. Secretary of State Pompeo, urging all sides, particularly the U.S., to maintain restraint.

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(Source: China Daily)

# Congresswoman Jayapal accuses U.S. border security of targeting Iranians

Families with children held up to 12 hours

By Yvette Brend

**BRITISH COLUMBIA** — U.S. Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal and other human rights advocates are condemning the up to 12-hour detentions of more than 60 Iranian-Americans at the U.S. border on Saturday at the Blaine, Wash., crossing.

The U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agency has said nobody was detained because of their background, and the delays at the border were related to staffing issues and a pop concert that large groups of Iranians were attending.

But Jayapal and other human rights advocates said what happened this weekend was wrong, if not illegal.

■ **‘This seemed to be a directive’**

“It was the result of some sort of directive that we are trying to get to the bottom of what that was. I understand that CBP has said that no such thing occurred, but it is difficult to believe that when you listen to the multiple accounts of what happened,” said Jayapal in a news conference in Seattle on Monday.

Jayapal is a U.S. representative from Washington’s 7th congressional district which encompasses Seattle and suburban King County.

She said her office is trying to gather information to determine exactly what happened and why.

“This seemed to be a directive to pull aside anybody of Iranian descent,” said Jayapal.

She said witnesses described more than 60 people facing up to 11 or 12 hour delays as they crossed into the U.S. after shopping, skiing or visiting Canada for various reasons.

“We have been in touch with a number of people [U.S. citizens] who are afraid to say anything,” said Jayapal.

If the U.S. or Canadian citizens affected were also Nexus cardholders, a Nexus card is an expedited border control program designed to pre-approve low-risk travellers.

At the Monday morning news conference, 38-year-old interior designer Negah Hekmati, who settled in the U.S. more than seven years ago, described her ordeal at the border.

■ **‘Children ‘frightened’**

Hekmati said she has a U.S. passport and often visits Canada. On Saturday, she was returning from a ski trip when she, her five- and eight-year-old children and her husband faced a five-hour delay and questioning. She said that her passport and car keys were confiscated by authorities, and her family was not allowed to wait in their vehicle where the children could have slept.

“[The children] were very frightened,” said Hekmati. She described how her daughter feared being taken by authorities and urged her mother not to speak Farsi.

“My kids shouldn’t experience such things. They are U.S. citizens,” said Hekmati who holds Canadian, U.S. and Iranian citizenship.

“If there is a war, my kids will be picked on in school, because



Rep. Pramila Jayapal is an outspoken critic of President Donald Trump. She has condemned the detention of Iranian-Americans at the U.S. border crossing in Blaine and is digging into whether there was a directive to target Iranians and where it came from. (Aaron P. Bernstein/Reuters)

they speak fluent Farsi ... We chose this country [America], because we thought we were free.

Rights advocates at the news conference said that many U.S.-Iranians told a similar story of U.S. border patrol agents asking them to exit their cars and step inside the building. Once inside, their passports were confiscated and they waited in lines before being questioned for hours about family, school and work histories.

Jorge Barón is the executive director of the Northwest Immigrant Rights Program (NWRIP). He said despite border officials claim that nobody was detained, “these people were not free to leave.”

“We believe this was illegal.”

In an earlier statement, Jayapal chastised the president for inciting or ordering policies that chip away at American freedoms.

■ **Border staffing issues, Iranians not targeted**

“If these reports are true, the Administration would be following its dangerous foreign policy decisions with dangerous policies here at home. Let me be clear: Instituting xenophobic, shameful and unconstitutional policies that discriminate against innocent people, trample over basic civil

rights and put fear in the hearts of millions, do not make us safer” she wrote.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) denied reports of people being held for questioning, calling social media posts about this “false.”

The CBP blamed longer wait-times on reduced staff due to holiday traffic and people returning from an Iranian pop concert.

But Washington state immigration lawyer Len Saunders said he believes the heightened scrutiny was related to U.S. President Donald Trump’s order to have Iranian Gen. Qassem Soleimani assassinated.

Early Friday morning, a U.S. airstrike assassinated Soleimani, 62, and others as they travelled from Baghdad’s international airport.

Following the strike, the Pentagon said Trump ordered the U.S. military to take “decisive defensive action to protect U.S. personnel abroad.”

There were unconfirmed reports that some Muslim travelers with non-Iranian backgrounds were also questioned at the border.

(Source: CBC News)

## Outraged Americans condemn U.S. actions in Iraq and Iran: ‘Enough with this nonsense’

By Grace Hauck and Chris Woodyard

Demonstrators took to the streets across the U.S. on Saturday to protest the Trump administration’s killing of a top Iranian general and decision to send about 3,000 more soldiers to the Middle East.

“No justice, no peace. U.S. out of the Middle East,” about 200 protesters chanted near the Trump Tower in Chicago. Protesters held signs that read “Stop bombing Iraq” and “U.S. troops out of Iraq.”

More than 70 planned protests were being spearheaded by Act Now to Stop War and End Racism, a U.S.-based anti-war coalition, in conjunction with other organizations. They seek withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq and end to what it says is a war on Iran, according to spokesperson Walter Smolarek.

In Philadelphia, he said about 500 protesters took part. Demonstrations also took place outside the White House and in New York City’s Times Square.

Cincinnati protesters chanted, “Trump says more war. We say no war,” and “No more U.S. attacks. Iraq, we got your back.”

“Both Democrats and Republicans have coordinated efforts and combined to wreak havoc on this entire region,” said Mike Jasko of the Party for Socialism and Liberation, who was at the Cincinnati protest. “What we’re seeing with the airstrikes of the assassination of an Iranian general is that we’re seeing tensions escalate, and they want another war.”

Several from among the about 60 people who gathered in Phoenix, expressed concern about the possibility of another long-term



Air Force veteran Mike Fitzgerald stands near an anti-war protest outside the Federal Courthouse in St. Louis. (David Carson, AP)

conflict.

“Every time we go into the Middle East it’s like going into a tar pit,” said Sue Baird, holding a sign that said “No War With Iran.” Another protester, Amy Picone, went further, saying she is “100% scared for another world war.”

The Pentagon launched an airstrike Thursday night that killed a powerful Iranian military leader, Gen. Qasem Soleimani, at Baghdad’s international airport. The Defense Department said it conducted the attack as a “defensive action” against Soleimani, who it said was planning further attacks on American diplomats and service members.

President Donald Trump has denied accusations that the assassinated general was designed to start a war with Iran. “We took action last night to stop a war. We did not take action to start a war,” he said Friday.

In Chicago on Saturday, protesters took aim at Trump.

“I’m outraged at the fact that Trump is trying to force a foreign policy on the rest of us that makes absolutely no sense,” said Janice Misurell-Mitchell, a composer and professor at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, who attended Saturday’s protest. “Getting out of the Iran nuclear deal was ridiculous

and stupid.”

Another academic, Benjamin Balthaser, an associate professor of English at Indiana University, said years of war in the Middle East had only destabilized the region.

“This kind of reckless, outrageous behavior by this president is only going to kill more people, spend more money, and make the world far more unsafe. We have serious problems that we need to come together to solve. This is only going to make us more divided,” Balthaser said.

After holding one rally Friday, protesters in Memphis held another demonstration Saturday in which they implored motorists to show their support. “Honk for no more war,” protesters chanted.

The protests come after several days of escalating tensions between the U.S. and Iran that started with the killing of an American contractor.

It’s also the latest in a broader dispute between the two nations, including Trump’s withdrawal from the Iran nuclear pact in 2018 and subsequent sanctions he imposed on Iran in order to make them come to a new deal.

Hundreds of thousands of Iranians protested Friday against the U.S. airstrike in the capital of Tehran, shouting “death to America.” Meanwhile, dozens of people in Iraq and Syria sang and danced to celebrate the general’s death. Protests weren’t confined to the U.S.

In Berlin, Germany, about 50 people demonstrated against U.S. actions, according to the Coalition Berlin, which co-organized the protest.

(Source: USA TODAY)

## On day 156, Kashmir’s journalists urge authorities to lift internet ban

Journalists from different media organizations and representing leading journalist bodies of the Valley urged the government to restore services for the media fraternity.

**SRINAGAR** — Kashmir’s journalist fraternity and Kashmir Press Club on Tuesday held an interactive session “cyber curfew”, seeking an end to the ongoing internet ban which has entered sixth month since August 5 last year. Several Kashmiri journalists, editors, and photojournalists shared their experiences of working without internet for the last 156 days — the longest internet shutdown imposed in the world.

The interactive session was followed by a peaceful sit-in protest inside the press club premises.

Journalists from different media organizations and representing leading journalist bodies of the Valley urged the authorities to restore internet services for the media fraternity so that they can properly discharge their professional duties.

Senior journalist Ehsan Fazili said that it’s “very unfortunate that in this 21st century Kashmir’s journalists are deprived of internet for the past 156 days and counting”.

Journalist Naseer Ganie said that despite the continued internet shutdown and hostile conditions, Kashmir’s journal-

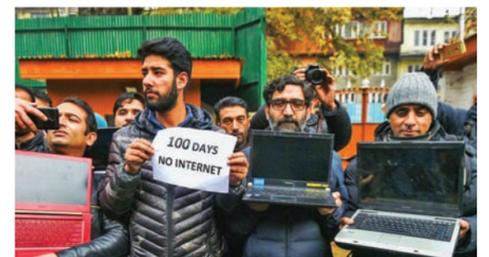
ists reported about the ground situation for several national and international publications in the past five months since the lockdown began on August 5 last year.

Another journalist Peerzada Ashiq compared the curbs faced by Kashmir media and journalists since August 5 with Stalin’s Russia and Zia-ul-Haq’s Pakistan.

“The post August 5 situation in Kashmir is unprecedented. Even in the early 1990s, the media in Kashmir did not face such unprecedented curbs. We also have to see what happened to those who summoned the courage to speak up or write in an objective manner,” said Ashiq adding that journalists were also being summoned by the local police regarding stories done post August 5.

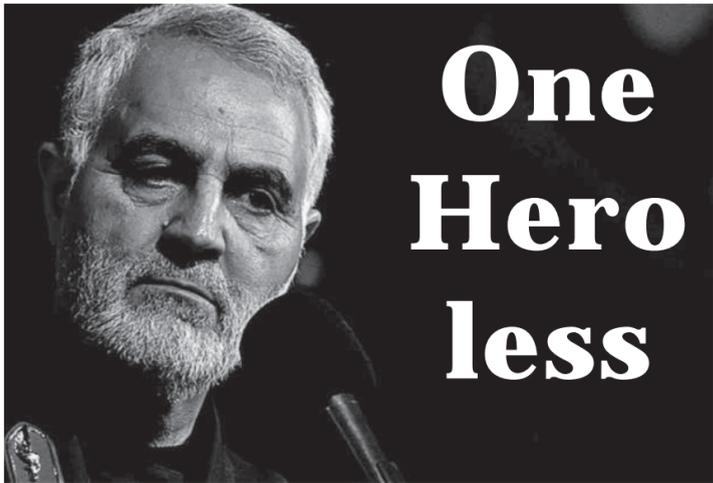
Ashiq said that the internet is a major tool of communication for journalists for research and to gain access to information and file stories in time.

Haroon Rashid Shah, who represents Kashmir Editors’ Guild, said that Valley’s media fraternity abandoned Anuradha



Bhasin, the executive editor of the Jammu-based English daily Kashmir Times, when Bhasin filed a petition in the Supreme Court challenging the internet ban imposed from August 5.

(Source: The Wire)



# One Heroless

By Costantino Ceoldo

**GEOPOLITICA** — The death of General Qasem Soleimani at the American hand was a cowardly political murder for the sole purpose of blowing up the table and plunging the Middle East into a chaos from which only the United States and their few regional allies, Israel in the first place, can emerge winners. Although from a strictly military point of view such a thing always happened, it is good to remember that over the centuries other perspectives have also been seen and that there have been brave men who in war refused to follow some paths because thought as dishonorable.

President Trump, in whom I had placed high hopes for a pacification of the ongoing conflicts, tweets his satisfaction for Soleimani's death and promises further terrible military actions if Iran tries to fulfill its revenge purposes. The Donald threatens also to hit places of great historical and cultural value for the Iranian nation. In this by differentiating himself from the Nazis who saved works of art while stealing them from invaded countries and making himself equal to ISIS (of which the Americans were creators and defenders) which worked hard to destroy Palmyra, fortunately blocked in time by Russians and Iranians.

Russia and China do not speak much. Perhaps they have given themselves to an underground diplomacy that they hope

is more effective, but who really rules in Washington? In any case, they would do well to remember that it will be up to them after Iran. The redesign of the Middle East pursued by the Americans serves both to carry out in style the Brezinski doctrine for the partition of Russia and the preventive confinement of China.

If the situation worsens, Internet connections with Iran may be cut off. I therefore rushed to ask ParsToday's Davood Abbasi a few questions, the answers to which I thankfully report here.

■ Can you briefly remind us who was Qasem Soleimani?

A) A boy from a peasant family in Kerman, an area of eastern Iran, who in the space between 1980 and 1988 had gone to the front to defend his country. Initially he worked in the supply section of the front but showing his talents ended the war as commander of the army of the city of Kerman. He became commander of the Quds forces of the Pasdaran, that is the division that carries out operations across borders, he was in charge of operations against ISIS. The defeat of Isis is his greatest work. Surely, he is the person to whom we owe mostly the end of ISIS. I believe the news of his death cheered terrorists from the Middle East region more than anyone else. Recall that by defeating ISIS in Syria and Iraq, he probably also saved the lives of thousands of Europeans and Americans.

Unfortunately, he was not rewarded by the West for the services he had given to Western populations as well. He died as a martyr, like the descendants of Muhammad he was inspired by, like Ali and Hussein. Among other things, he died not far from where these Shiite Imams died, that is, in Iraq. He went there to examine the ways with Iraqis to face the challenges posed by the latest pockets of resistance of ISIS.

■ Is it true that the US command in Iraq had been warned of the arrival of the general because Soleimani was on a diplomatic mission?

A) It is true that he made the flight completely in the sunlight because he arrived in Iraq as the official authority of the Iranian government. It could have also reached Italy, for example, if Italy had asked for Iran's cooperation or help in anti-terrorism matters. Killing him, contrary to what the Americans claimed, did not need complicated intelligence information or great organizational skills. It is a cowardly and dastard action.

■ What do you answer to those in the West say that General Soleimani also died due to a settings of score within Iranian politics?

A) Pure fantasy.  
■ The situation that has arisen recalls with anguish the accident in Sarajevo, which led to the First World War. How much do we have to fear the future?

A) Iran will respond; it will definitely do it; but it will do so as it is worthy of its millenary culture. True, Americans are much stronger, but I think it is clear that Iranians are much smarter. The answer will be divided into two areas.

a) Strategic: this answer will be the most important. Trump does not know that he served on a silver plate to Iran the just cause for throwing Americans out of the whole Middle East. Iraq will throw the Americans out of its territory, by any means necessary. Losing Iraq once and for all will be the heaviest pledge the US will pay for the assassination of Soleimani and Abu Mahdi Al Muhandis.

b) Military: this answer will come but not immediately. It is difficult to understand how and when. If, as I think, the strategic part goes well, the Iranians will probably postpone the action to a remote time and could limit it in size.

So far Abbasi. However, I also want to bring back the thought of Senator Richard Black who, from the beginning of the Syrian carnage, was the only American politician to vigorously distance himself from official

American politics and to admit its disastrous drift. In a statement on January 3, Senator Black says:

"The death of General Soleimani is a great tragedy. We have killed one of the two generals most responsible for defeating ISIS and al Qaeda.

We are not genuinely fighting a war on terror. I fear that in a sense, we are becoming the terror.

His killing, coupled with rapidly growing troop movements, may presage a new war of aggression — this time, against the Iranian people. I pray that we draw back from the vast war that looms.

We've now begun the 30th year of war against Iraq. We've dropped a quarter million bombs on the country and its people. We've spent a trillion dollars there, yet never bothered to effectively rebuild the electrical grid we destroyed in the "shock and awe" bombings a generation ago. Has the war ever concerned democracy? I think not.

General Wesley Clark, former Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, told us how the Secretary of Defense, in 2002, ordered the preparation of plans to overthrow seven nations in five years. Iran was the final target. The schedule changed, but our objective did not. Neither our soldiers nor our people have a voice to stop it."

It is a statement which tasted desperate, of a man who fought for his country in a foreign land, Vietnam, and whose value, loyalty, patriotism cannot be questioned.

Many experts of these days forget, or ignore for convenience, that General Soleimani was a high-ranking officer of a legitimate army, not a rioter in bad shape and badly dressed. According to some sources, he was in Iraq to negotiate a new season with Saudi Arabia. How will Iranian negotiators, but also Russian and Chinese negotiators, now trust an American invitation?

Iran, a cohesive country of three thousand years old, does not have many choices. Soleimani's elimination, a figure already mythical and now handed over to the nobility of the Shiite martyrdom, occurs shortly after the failure of another Mайдan in an Iranian key: insurrection suppressed, insurgents stopped, foreign espionage network compromised. This means that even if Iran does not respond to this provocation, the Americans would do another in a few weeks, in a crescendo impossible to accept.

The next few days are crucial: if Tehran falls, then it will be up to Moscow and Beijing.

## Sarah Abed: U.S. Assassination of Gen. Soleimani another chapter in Washington's book of lies

**TEHRAN (FNA)** — Sarah Abed, writer and political commentator, says the White House's claim that the terror attempt on the life of Lieutenant General Qasem Soleimani would increase the US security is another indication that the US "war on terror" is entirely "facade".

"Trump campaigned on ending wars and advocated an America first policy. However, after unilaterally pulling out of the JCPOA in 2018 and reinstating harsh sanctions, tensions with Iran have increased... If we do go to war with Iran, the election will be the least of our worries," Abed told FNA in an exclusive interview.

Sarah Abed is an independent journalist and analyst who writes on a broad range of issues relating to the Syrian war, Kurdish issues in Iraq and Syria, as well as US policy in the Middle East. She appears frequently in international media and speaks at universities.

Below is the full text of the interview:

■ Washington says the presence of the US troops in Iraq and Syria is to fight against Daesh (ISIL or ISIS). If that is the case, why did the US forces target General Qasem Soleimani who was an iconic anti-Daesh figure?

A: Fighting against Daesh and the entire "war on terrorism" façade are just the latest in a long list of lies and false pretenses used by the American government and corrupt corporate media to manipulate the general public into supporting yet another illegal and totally unnecessary war on an undeserving sovereign nation. If the truth were to get out that the United States created and supported terrorists, the American public would be less likely to blindly support another war where innocent people are killed, resources pillaged and plundered, infrastructure destroyed, historical monuments leveled, and entire cities turned to rubble. The assassination of IIRCG Major General Qasem Soleimani a key figure in the fight against Daesh and subsequent claims by the Trump administration that his death will increase US security, is just another chapter in Washington's bloody book of lies and manipulation, where terrorists are revered and those who defeat them are vilified.

■ How did you find Iraqi people's reaction to the assassination?

A: Some people will ignorantly cheer on the destruction of their own nation because they have been sold a dream that the United States will bring them "democracy and liberty", but if history is any indication that's not how this works. It's hard to believe that people can forget about the hundreds of thousands of deaths that resulted from the Iraq war, not to mention the devastating destruction because of the nonexistent weapons of mass destruction pretext. Even if a few dozen people went out yesterday and "danced in the streets" like Mike Pompeo mentioned in a tweet, that does not represent the entire Iraqi people. Iraqi Prime Minister Adil Abdul-Mahdi said that the assassination of an Iraqi military commander is act of aggression against Iraq and the Iraqi people, and assassinating Iraqi and foreign figures on Iraqi soil is a flagrant violation of Iraqi sovereignty and a dangerous escalation.

■ How would Americans react? Will that help Trump get re-elected in November?

A: An individual's global political knowledge or lack thereof and their preferred news sources are easily ascertained by their reaction to this assassination operation. Some welcomed the news, rejoiced, and praised President Trump's grave mistake. In their distorted view, the United States is the world police, protector of the planet (maybe even the galaxy), and the good guys. Critical thinkers however, question and read independent media, reject propagandists that garnered public support for all of the previous wars, and do not support Trump's provocations. Trump campaigned on ending wars and advocated an America first policy. However, after unilaterally pulling out of the JCPOA in 2018 and reinstating harsh sanctions, tensions with Iran have increased. The only blessing in disguise could be quick deterioration in the upcoming days forcing US troops to leave Iraq and Syria, which could help his election. If we do go to war with Iran, the election will be the least of our worries.



## U.S., allies unsafe in region after Iranian Commander's Assassination: analyst

**TEHRAN (Tasnim)** — A senior political commentator based in London deplored the US move to assassinate Iran's revered commander, Major General Qasem Soleimani, as "an act of war" and said the American imperialists and their allies are now unsafe in the region.

"It is impossible to see the US maintain troop levels in Iraq unless they occupy Iraq again and that requires a bloodbath," Riaz Karim told Tasnim in an interview.

"In a nutshell, the imperialists and their allies are unsafe in the region from the Levant to the Persian Gulf and beyond," he added.

Dr. Riaz Karim holds a Ph.D. from Harvard University. He is the Director of the Veritas Centre for Strategic Studies in London. He is also an analyst and commentator for a number of media outlets around the world.

Following is the full text of the interview:

■ The White House and the Pentagon claimed responsibility for the assassination of General Qasem Soleimani in Iraq, saying the attack was carried out at the direction of US President Donald Trump. As you know, the revered commander was an international figure representing the Axis of Resistance. Given the latest regional developments, how do you interpret the assassination?

A: As they say, when you think you have killed a lion, you better pray it doesn't get back up. We all know nothing about Iran is being done without Israel's involvement and this was no exception, the coordinates were provided by Israel for the assassination of General Qasem Soleimani, but Israel wanted to avoid the repercussions of taking the assassination upon themselves so they did the next best thing, put the gun on Trump's shoulder and fire it, and we all know that Trump will take the bragging rights any day in order to appease his base. This is a case of Trump being cornered by impeachment and Bibi Netanyahu is being indicted in such a case. Nothing fits in like an external threat to rally the internal troops, only this time it's a blunder of seismic proportions and there is no plan B.

Ultimately, it does not matter where the intelligence came from, the fact is that the targeted assassination of Major General Qasem Soleimani and the Hashd al-Sha'abi second in command Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis qualifies as an act of war that was unprovoked, unilateral and illegal by any stretch of the imagination.

There cannot be a more blatant provocation of Iran than what we have just witnessed in a long list of provocations and sanctions, this tops it all and the repercussions and the blowback could be bloody and far-fetching.



■ According to many military experts, General Soleimani had a major role in fighting terrorist groups, particularly Daesh (ISIS or ISIL), in Iraq and Syria. How do you think about the top generals' success in combating US-backed terrorism and its effect on his assassination?

A: Let's get one thing straight. The Legendary Late Major General Qasem Soleimani is not a name the world takes lightly, he was revered but more than that, he was a military strategist like no other, he could eat most Generals and strategists for breakfast. It was Soleimani who defeated ISIS in Iraq, this had nothing to do with Americans bombing countries to rubble. Soleimani has attained the legendary status almost mythical for legions of Hezbollah supporters, the Houthis in Yemen, thousands of resistance fighters in Iraq, Syria, Palestine, Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

It is impossible to see the US maintain troop levels in Iraq unless they occupy Iraq again and that requires a bloodbath. In a nutshell, the imperialists and their allies are unsafe in the region from the Levant to the Persian Gulf and beyond.

Tehran will, however, be very careful in how they retaliate, they are very savvy and will hit back where it hurts and at the most opportune time.

■ In a statement on Friday, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei warned that harsh revenge awaits the criminals behind the martyrdom of General Soleimani. Many believe that if Iran does not take revenge, it will lead to more attacks from the US. In your opinion, how severe would Tehran respond to the "terrorist act" by Washington and how can the response create deterrence against the US and its future moves in the region?

A: This is a two-part question on its own, Leader of the

Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei is aware of the complexities of the issue and he has a complete handle on the leadership, I am not surprised that he came out with a stern warning, there will be revenge: "A forceful revenge awaits the criminals who have his blood and the blood of other Martyrs last night on their hands." This is not a light statement there will be blowback and it will be very painful.

The one thing Donald Trump has been able to singlehandedly do is unite the political Parties in Iran under one banner. All parties are now behind the government in demanding revenge, this may be construed as a very minor thing in the West but this is absolutely huge to have all parties on the same page calling for the same thing and that means the blowback will be nothing to laugh about.

Part two is the Assassination of Abu Mahdi Al Muhandis. He led the Hashd al-Sha'abi (Popular Mobilization Force) a grassroots organization that is on its way to become the new Hezbollah and as powerful as Hezbollah.

Grand Ayatollah Sistani, the Supreme Religious Authority in Iraq who is universally respected, fully supports them. So the US strikes at Sistani supporters as well because Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis was very revered and very influential plus Hashd al-Sha'abi operated under the guidelines of the Iraqi prime minister, so now we have a problem in Iraq as well.

This makes the strike in Iraq a complete strategic blunder which can only be pulled off by an amateur and Donald Trump fits the bill like a glove, for a few minutes of accolades from the evangelicals in Florida, he has put his men and women in uniform in completely uncharted territory.

## Letter on behalf of Resistance Youths

1 → Tribute to the son of Palestine, the believer in its imminent liberation; the son of Beirut and Damascus, who safeguarded their nobility and sovereignty; the son of Baghdad, Mosul and Basra, the cool-headed genie who had exhausted the Takfiris and frustrated the American dream of dividing Iraq into dissonant warring federations; the son of Sa' dah and Sana'a and every barefoot Yemeni families.

We would like you to know that no matter the sacrifice we would have to give, it would definitely grow greater once we give it away for the sake of our

Ummah, just as your heroic conquests have granted us freedom. We owe you, your brave companions and all those who have elevated before. Now, it is our duty to honour your unparalleled legend, gracious values and historic accomplishments, in reverence of your righteous martyrdom. You are forever in our hearts and minds and in those of our upcoming generations who owe you everlasting love and gratitude.

We are all soldiers in the Supreme Leader's army and we will stand firm by him. Your martyrdom has indeed awakened our consciousness and will

certainly bring dark days for the arrogant Zionist and American criminals. We vow to humiliate them and to release our helpless peoples from the American and Zionist murderous supremacy. You have shown us how to be fearless fighters; you have ingrained in us how to thwart all sorts of hegemonic colonial terrorism and you have taught us not to stray from the path of holy resistance with the same vigour and devotion you had. We pledge Leader to carry our arms at all fronts and to step up decisive historic victories.

Your Committed Soldiers

**First Announcement** 1398.6260

  
N.I.S.O.C  
**NATIONAL IRANIAN SOUTH OILFIELDS COMPANY AHVAZ-IRAN**  
**TENDER NO. : 02-30-9350029**

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

items	Material Description	Quantity
22	PARTS FOR "BACKER CAC" SINGEL WELLCONTROL PANEL	158

Vendors who intend to participate in aforesaid tenders are requested to send their "Intention to participate" letter via Fax to the following number along with their resume according to Qualitative Assessment Form no. 1, available at: WWW.nisoc.ir , not later than 14 days after the second announcement, otherwise, their requests for participation in the tender will be disregarded

The applicants should have relevant background in supplying the required goods and capability to provide and submit a bid bond of 5,137 EURO or 638,828,446 RIAL, in favor of NISOC

Tender documents including the materials thorough technical specifications and Qualitative Assessment Forms can be accessed via: WWW.nisoc.ir-material procurement management tab

ONLY ACCEPTABLE DELIVERY TERM IS D.D.P. NISOC'S WAREHOUSE, AGHAJARI.IRAN PAYMENT TERM IS C.O.D. SUBSEQUENT TO NISOC'S MATERIAL APPROVAL NO ADVANCE PAYMENT WILL BE PAID

**FOREIGN PURCHASING DEPARTMENT**  
**Bldg. No. 104, Material Procurement Management Complex**  
**Kouy-e-Fadaeian Islam (New Site), Ahvaz, Iran**  
**E.MAIL: KALA.F.P@nisoc.ir Tel. No.: 061 341 24644 Fax No.: 061 3445 7437**  
Public Relations [www.shana.ir](http://www.shana.ir) [www.nisoc.ir](http://www.nisoc.ir)  
تهران تایمز : نوبت اول ۹۸/۱۰/۱۸ نوبت دوم ۹۸/۱۰/۲۱

# Iran bids farewell to war hero Qassem Soleimani

Pictured below are Iranian people attending a funeral procession that began in Ahvaz on Saturday to bid farewell to their national hero Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, who was martyred in Iraq in a U.S. airstrike last Friday. The procession continued in Mashhad, Tehran and Qom as he will be buried in his hometown Kerman yesterday.



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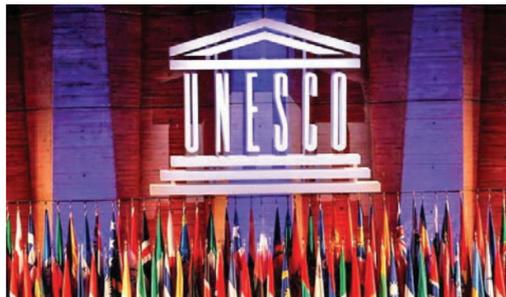
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© ISNA/Hadi Zand/ Kerman

## UNESCO raps Trump, reminding U.S. committed not to harm cultural heritage

**TOURISM** TEHRAN — The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on Monday rebuked U.S. President Donald Trump's recent threats to target Iranian cultural sites, saying the United States has signed treaties committing it not to harm cultural heritage.



The UNESCO logo is seen during the opening of the 39th session of the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) at their headquarters in Paris, France, October 30, 2017. (REUTERS/Philippe Wojazer)

The UN body reminded that under provisions of the 1954 and 1972 conventions - which have been ratified by both the United States and Iran - signatory states must not damage cultural and natural heritage, Reuters reported.

Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, the IRGC Quds Force commander, was martyred in a U.S. terrorist assault in Baghdad on January 3.

In a tweet on Saturday, Trump warned that the U.S. will hit important cultural sites in Iran "very fast and very hard" should the Iranians kill any Americans or attack American assets.

Trump on Sunday stood by his threat to go after Iranian cultural sites, warning of a "major retaliation" if Iran strikes back for the assassination of Soleimani.

Meanwhile, the director of the Iranian National Commission for UNESCO, Hojjatollah Ayyubi, in a letter to UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay, called for the UN body to both condemn the U.S. president's threats and inform the public of dangers of such behavior.

The official also reminded a 2017 UN Security Council resolution condemning the destruction of heritage sites, prompted by the actions of ISIS and other armed factions in Syria and Iraq.

"Threatening cultural heritage is a war crime," Iran's tourism minister Ali-Asghar Mounesan announced on Sunday in a reaction to the hostile message from the U.S. president.

Iran is home to two dozen UNESCO World Heritage Sites, including Persepolis with its ancient ruins that date back to 518 BC, the 17th century grand mosque of Isfahan located in a teeming bazaar, and the Golestan Palace in the heart of Tehran.

The country's cultural sites reflect the expanse of Iran's history: Geological and archaeological sites date back several thousand years, while 1,000-year-old sites reflect Iran's contributions to the Golden Age of Islam. In Qom, the Feizieh Religious Science School and the holy shrine of Masoumeh (S), attract Muslim pilgrims from around the world.

More recently, though, some of the most iconic cultural sites have come to embody the nation's defiance in the face of the United States. For example, the iconic Azadi Tower, or Freedom Tower, with its famed white marble arch is where hundreds of thousands gather in Tehran each year and chant slogans against the U.S. to mark the anniversary of the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

# Intl. museums, archeologist condemn Trump's threat to hit Iranian cultural sites

→ 1 Trump has threatened to target major cultural sites in Iran if the country retaliates after he ordered the assassination of Qasem Soleimani, a top Iranian military commander, by drone strike.

In a tweet on Saturday night, Trump warned that the U.S. will hit important cultural sites in Iran "very fast and very hard" should the Iranians kill any Americans or attack American assets.

Iran and the U.S. have been in a tense standoff ever since a U.S. drone strike killed the top commander shortly after he had arrived at Baghdad airport in Iraq on Friday.

Trump tweeted on Saturday that the U.S. has 52 Iranian locations within its sights. The president said that some of these sites are "at a very high level & important to Iran & the Iranian culture." The number is symbolic. Fifty-two diplomats were seized in the U.S. embassy in Tehran in 1979 and held hostage during the Islamic Revolution.

While the U.S. has not named the targets on its radar, Iran has 22 cultural sites on the UNESCO World Heritage list, including the ruins of the ancient city of Persepolis, as well as the site of Imam Square, and its royal mosque in Isfahan, and the Chogha Zanbil complex. The country has numerous other important cultural sites, such as the historic Nasir al-Mulk in Shiraz.

Iran's foreign minister Mohammad Javad Zarif responded to Trump on Sunday, also arguing that targeting cultural sites is a war crime, and writing that such a breach of international red lines is "a big(ly) 'no no.'"

### ■ Pentagon rules out striking cultural sites

The Pentagon has distanced itself from Trump's threat to target Iranian cultural sites.



Japanese tourists visit Iran's Persepolis, 460 miles south of Tehran (Copyrightfile/AP-VAHID SALEMI)

Defence Secretary Mark Esper said on Monday the U.S. will "follow the laws of armed conflict." When asked if that ruled out targeting cultural sites, Esper said pointedly: "That's the laws of armed conflict."

Esper acknowledged that striking cultural sites with no military value would be a war crime, putting him at odds with the president, who insisted such places would

be legitimate targets, the New York Times reported.

"We will follow the laws of armed conflict," Mr. Esper said at a news briefing at the Pentagon when asked if cultural sites would be targeted as the president had suggested over the weekend. When a reporter asked if that meant "no" because the laws of war prohibit targeting cultural sites, Mr. Esper agreed. "That's the laws of armed conflict."

## Beijing envoy slams Trump for threatening Iran's cultural sites, saying they belong to all humanity

**HERITAGE** TEHRAN — China's ambassador to Iran has censured U.S. President Donald Trump for threatening to launch attacks on Iran's cultural sites, saying the Iranian cultural heritage belongs to the entire global community.

"World cultural heritage belongs to all humanity!" Chang Hua wrote in a tweet which was decorated with pictures of notable historical monuments in Iran, Press TV reported.

Posted on Sunday, the tweet came a day after Trump said he would hit 52 Iranian targets, including very important cultural sites, if Iran decides to retaliate an assassination ordered by the U.S. president of a senior Iranian military commander last week.

Trump's threats on Iranian cultural sites sparked widespread criticism inside the United States and even caused U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to claim on Sunday that the president would not make such a move in case of an escalation with Iran, the report said.

However, Trump himself defended the



China's ambassador to Iran Chang Hua in an undated photo

threats when asked about the issue on Sunday and said he had meant them.

Trump has claimed that the U.S. military would hit "very important" targets

related to Iran.

This comes as Trump's administration has endorsed a United Nations Security Council resolution in 2017 which bans any use of military force to target cultural sites. Such actions are also strongly prohibited under the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property.

The threats came in response to statements by Iran that the country would take a harsh revenge against the United States for the assassination of Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, the former commander of Iran's elite Quds military force, an incident that took place last week in the Iraqi capital Baghdad.

Iranian authorities also summoned Swiss ambassador to Tehran on Sunday to relay the country's note of protest to Washington, which is not directly represented in Iran, over Trump's threats on Iran's cultural sites.

Iran embraces hundreds of historical sites such as bazaars, museums, mosques, bridges, bathhouses, madrasas, mausoleums, churches, towers, and mansions, of which 22 being inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list.

## ICOM, ICOMOS dismiss Trump's comments on targeting Iranian culture sites

**TOURISM** TEHRAN — Since Saturday night, U.S. President Donald Trump has come under fire for threatening to target Iranian cultural sites by many international cultural figures, organizations, scholars, artists and politicians, and recently by the International Council of Museums (ICOM) and the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS).

ICOM and ICOMOS have issued a joint statement reiterating that both the United States and Iran are signatories to the 1954 Hague Convention for the protection of cultural property in armed conflict, U.S. News reported on Monday.

This follows Trump's threat, made on Twitter on Saturday, to target 52 Iranian cultural sites, should there be any Iranian retaliation for the U.S. assassination of General Qassem Soleimani.

Andrea Prascow, the acting Washington director of Human Rights Watch, called on Trump on Sunday to "publicly reverse his threats against Iran's cultural property and make clear that he will not authorize nor order war crimes".

ICOM is the international organization of museums and museum professionals which is committed to the conservation, continuation and communication to society of the world's natural and cultural heritage, present and future, tangible and intangible.

ICOMOS works for the conservation and protection of cultural heritage places. It is the only global non-government organization of this kind, which is dedicated to promoting the application of theory, methodology, and scientific techniques to the conservation of the architectural and archaeological heritage.



## ROUND THE GLOBE

### Defense Line of Amsterdam

The Stelling van Amsterdam (Defense Line of Amsterdam) is a complete ring of fortifications extending more than 135 km around the city of Amsterdam.

Built between 1883 and 1920, the ring consists of an ingenious network of 45 forts, acting in concert with an intricate system of dikes, sluices, canals and inundation polders, and is a major example of a fortification based on the principle of temporary flooding of the land.



Since the 16th century, the people in the Netherlands have used their special knowledge of hydraulic engineering for defense purposes. The area around the fortifications is divided into polders, each at a different level and surrounded by dikes.

Each polder has its own flooding facilities. The depth of flooding was a critical factor in the Stelling's success; the water had to be too deep to wade and too shallow for boats to sail over. Water levels were maintained by means of inlet sluices and barrage sluices. Forts were built at strategic locations where roads or railroads cut through the defense line (accesses). They were carefully situated at intervals of no more than 3500 m, the spacing being determined by the range of the artillery in the forts. The earlier ones were built of brick, the later of massed concrete.

The land forts have an important place in the development of military engineering worldwide.

(Source: UNESCO)

## How to travel by train - and ditch the plane

A string of horrifying climate-related disasters has brought a distinctly environmental theme to many people's New Year resolutions.

Many have chosen to reduce their carbon footprint by flying less, or cutting out planes completely. Flygskam - the Swedish word for "flight-shame" - has become commonplace.

In August, Swedish climate change campaigner Greta Thunberg set an example by crossing the Atlantic in a zero-emissions yacht.

If she had made the return journey from the UK to New York by air, she would have emitted 11% of the average annual emissions for someone in the UK, or the total caused by someone living in Ghana for a year.

The aviation industry contributes about 2% of the world's carbon emissions, according to the International Air Transport Association (IATA), and this is predicted to rise, with air passenger numbers expected to double by 2037. More than 22,500 people have pledged to go flight-free in 2020, but in Europe,

where cheap air travel reigns supreme, it's not an easy decision to make.

Some governments are getting on board with flygskam and introducing measures to promote train travel.

Last week, Germany announced it would cut long distance rail fares by 10% - the first price decrease in 17 years.

Austria's new green/conservative coalition has promised to expand its rail network and increase the tax on flights - a step towards meeting its target to be carbon-neutral by 2040.

Many of Europe's night train services have gradually been phased out, but Sweden plans to reintroduce a sleeper service to the European mainland.

And this summer, Luxembourg will be the first country to make all public transport free, in a bid to reduce traffic congestion in cities.

### ■ Why take a long train journey when you can fly?

Train travel may take longer, but converts say it is a far more enriching experience than flying.

When Elias Bohun, who lives in Vi-

enna, Austria, finished school, he was desperate to travel around South-East Asia. However, his environmental conscience stopped him booking a flight.

Instead, the 19-year-old and his girlfriend travelled to Vietnam overland. "It was the most exciting experience I've ever had in my life", says Elias.

The couple travelled from Vienna to Poland, Russia, Kazakhstan and China before arriving in Hanoi. They slept on night trains, then in the mornings left their luggage at the station and spent the day wandering around whatever city they found themselves in, before returning to board another sleeper.

Elias said he met more local people during that 16-day journey than the whole four-and-a-half months he spent travelling around South-East Asia.

"In trains, people have time, they really want to get to know you," he said. "In hostels, you are always around tourists."

It's a romantic vision of a holiday, but surely only when you are young, with no commitments?

Not necessarily. Mary Penman, who

is British but lives in Austria, makes the train journey back to the UK at least once a year with her husband and two small children. She stopped flying several years ago as a result of flygskam.

From Vienna, the family gets the night train to Cologne and then to Brussels, where they change onto the Eurostar to London. Mary says it takes two days and costs about €117 (£100, \$130) one way if booked in advance - €200 at shorter notice.

She concedes that a long train journey with two toddlers in tow is "complicated, but with children, even going to the shops is complicated". She prefers it to the claustrophobic stress of an airport.

And in many countries, children aged under six travel for free.

Last year, the family went on holiday to Venice by train. Her older son spent the journey playing with children from other families on board.

"It's like a travelling village," says Mary. "There's a real camaraderie among the families on board."

(Source: BBC)

# LIGO detects its second neutron star collision, but gains few clues

For the second time, a collision between two neutron stars in another galaxy has rattled a gravitational-wave detector on Earth. But this duo is being much more coy than the first.

In 2017, astronomers announced with much fanfare that they had detected ripples in spacetime, from the merging of two neutron stars, the ultradense remains of massive stars. Observatories around the world and in space witnessed a simultaneous flash of radiant energy, light from all across the electromagnetic spectrum.

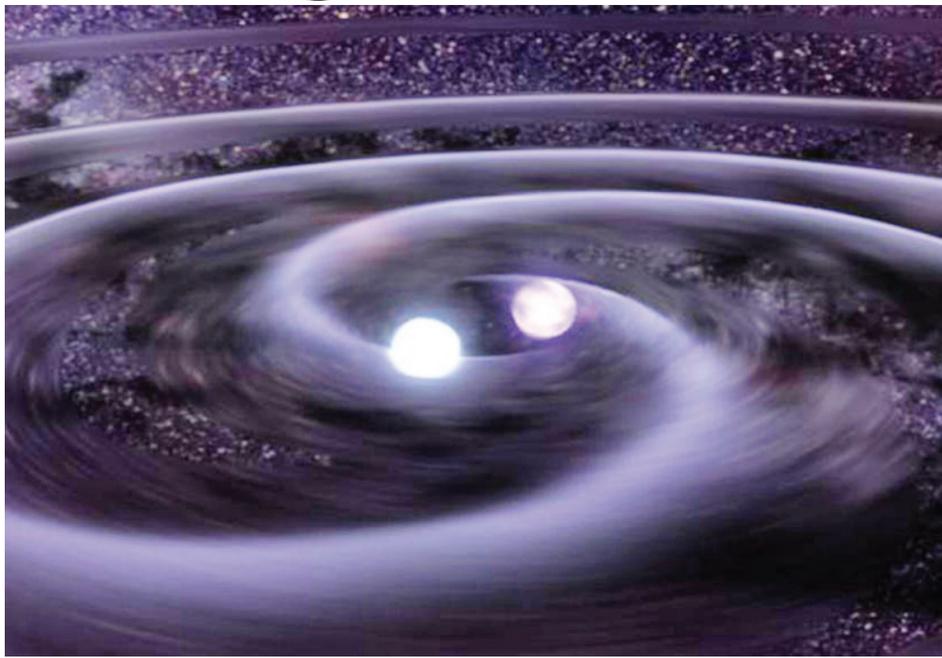
Now, gravitational waves from a second neutron star smashup have been detected. But unlike the first detection, researchers were not able to pinpoint the collision's location on the sky and did not see an accompanying burst of light. Katerina Chatziioannou, an astrophysicist at the Flatiron Institute in New York City, presented the results January 5 at meeting of the American Astronomical Society.

The event was picked up on April 25, 2019, during the third observing run of the LIGO and Virgo gravitational-wave observatories. However, only one of LIGO's two detectors registered the collision — the one in Livingston, La. The Advanced Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory facility in Hanford, Wash., was offline at the time — and the event was too weak for the Virgo observatory, which is in Italy, to detect.

Nevertheless, the team deduced that the most likely source of the gravitational waves was a collision between a pair of neutron stars with a combined mass 3.4 times as great as the Sun. The smashup occurred between 290 million and 720 million light-years away, Chatziioannou said.

While the lack of an electromagnetic counterpart is disappointing, it's not too surprising. "We do not expect a detectable counterpart from most mergers," says Avi Loeb, an astrophysicist at Harvard University who is not part of the LIGO-Virgo collaboration. The light from a neutron star collision, he says, comes from jets of gas that spew out from the crash. Those jets are so narrow, that a fortuitous alignment is needed to see the light from Earth.

However, it is surprising that there was a flash, but astronomers missed it. With a gravitational wave detection at only one facility,



researchers weren't able to narrow down where on the sky to look. "It was very poorly localized, to about one quarter of the entire sky," says Edo Berger, a Harvard astrophysicist who participated in one search for visible light from the collision. "No electromagnetic search could have covered the entire region of interest... The bottom line is that we can't actually state that this event had no [electromagnetic] counterpart."

Even if a telescope had been pointed in the right direction, there still might have been no light. The relatively high combined mass of the neutron stars means the final product likely collapsed immediately into a black hole, Chatziioannou says. If that's the case, then little material would have escaped to be seen.

(Source: Sciencenews.org)

## Heat energy leaps through empty space, thanks to quantum weirdness

If you use a vacuum-insulated thermos to help keep your coffee hot, you may know it's a good insulator because heat energy has a hard time moving through empty space. Vibrations of atoms or molecules, which carry thermal energy, simply can't travel if there are no atoms or molecules around.

But a new study by researchers at the University of California, Berkeley, shows how the weirdness of quantum mechanics can turn even this basic tenet of classical physics on its head.



The study, appearing in the journal *Nature*, shows that heat energy can leap across a few hundred nanometers of a complete vacuum, thanks to a quantum mechanical phenomenon called the Casimir interaction.

Though this interaction is only significant on very short length scales, it could have profound implications for the design of computer chips and other nanoscale electronic components where heat dissipation is key. It also upends what many of us learned about heat transfer in high school physics.

"Heat is usually conducted in a solid through the vibrations of atoms or molecules, or so-called phonons -- but in a vacuum, there is no physical medium. So, for many years, textbooks told us that phonons cannot travel through a vacuum," said Xiang Zhang, the professor of mechanical engineering at UC Berkeley who guided the study. "What we discovered, surprisingly, is that phonons can indeed be transferred across a vacuum by invisible quantum fluctuations."

In the experiment, Zhang's team placed two gold-coated silicon nitride membranes a few hundred nanometers apart inside a vacuum chamber. When they heated up one of the membranes, the other warmed up, too -- even though there was nothing connecting the two membranes and negligible light energy passing between them.

"This discovery of a new mechanism of heat transfer opens up unprecedented opportunities for thermal management at the nanoscale, which is important for high-speed computation and data storage," said Hao-Kun Li, a former Ph.D. student in Zhang's group and co-first author of the study. "Now, we can engineer the quantum vacuum to extract heat in integrated circuits."

The seemingly impossible feat of moving molecular vibrations across a vacuum can be accomplished because, according to quantum mechanics, there is no such thing as truly empty space, said King Yan Fong, a former postdoctoral scholar at UC Berkeley and the study's other first author.

"Even if you have empty space -- no matter, no light -- quantum mechanics says it cannot be truly empty. There are still some quantum field fluctuations in a vacuum," Fong said. "These fluctuations give rise to a force that connects two objects, which is called the Casimir interaction. So, when one object heats up and starts shaking and oscillating, that motion can actually be transmitted to the other object across the vacuum because of these quantum fluctuations."

Though theorists have long speculated that the Casimir interaction could help molecular vibrations travel through empty space, proving it experimentally has been a major challenge. To do so, the team engineered extremely thin silicon nitride membranes, which they fabricated in a dust-free clean room, and then devised a way to precisely control and monitor their temperature.

They found that, by carefully selecting the size and design of the membranes, they could transfer the heat energy over a few hundred nanometers of vacuum. This distance was far enough that other possible modes of heat transfer were negligible -- such as energy carried by electromagnetic radiation, which is how energy from the Sun heats up Earth.

Because molecular vibrations are also the basis of the sounds that we hear, this discovery hints that sounds can also travel through a vacuum, Zhang said.

"Twenty-five years ago, during my Ph.D. qualifying exam at Berkeley, one professor asked me 'Why can you hear my voice across this table?' I answered that, 'It is because your sound travels by vibrating molecules in the air.' He further asked, 'What if we suck all air molecules out of this room? Can you still hear me?' I said, 'No, because there is no medium to vibrate,'" Zhang said. "Today, what we discovered is a surprising new mode of heat conduction across a vacuum without a medium, which is achieved by the intriguing quantum vacuum fluctuations. So, I was wrong in my 1994 exam. Now, you can shout through a vacuum."

(Source: Science Daily)

## Climate oscillations were just illusions, scientists say

There is only one confirmed climate oscillation, the El Niño/Southern Oscillation, or ENSO, according to a new study.

Analysis by a team of meteorologists suggest another pair of atmospheric patterns, the Atlantic Multidecadal Oscillation and the Pacific Decadal Oscillation, or AMO and PDO, aren't real.

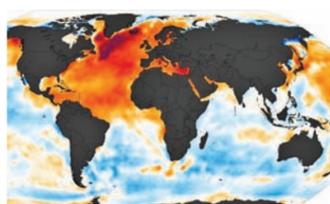
Scientists previously estimated that the AMO and PDO patterns, like ENSO, were defined by shifts in warming and cooling. But the latest research, published Friday in the journal *Nature Communications*, suggests these shifts in temperature -- mistaken as climate oscillations -- are best explained by human activities and natural variability.

"Our analysis throws cold water -- forgive the pun -- on the idea, advanced by some climate change contrarians, that certain aspects of climate change," study author Michael Mann, a climatologist and geophysicist at Pennsylvania State University, told UPI in an email. "For example, the increase in recent decades in North Atlantic hurricane activity can be dismissed as a part of a natural internal climate cycle."

Unfortunately, the latest findings mean climate modelers can't rely on the AMO or PDO patterns to help them predict climate shifts across smaller scales.

"When it comes to season and longer term climate forecasting, the only predictable signals may be the El Niño/Southern Oscillation phenomenon and human-caused climate change itself," Mann said.

To determine whether the AMO and PDO patterns were real, scientists used the best climate model simulations developed by researchers all over the world. For some models, the researchers supplied the simulations with external factors like volcanoes and human-induced greenhouse gas emissions. For the rest, the control models,



scientists removed the external drivers.

"In the case of the <control> experiments, there are no changes in external drivers -- no greenhouse gas increases, no sulphate aerosols, no volcanoes, no solar fluctuations," Mann said. "That means that any apparent <signals> that emerge in those simulations must be of internal origin."

While control models successfully produced periodic climate shifts matching the ENSO pattern, they failed to yield anything resembling the AMO and PDO patterns.

Instead of an internal climate pattern, a predictable oscillation, Mann claims the AMO pattern is best explained by the "changing nature of competing human influences."

In the 1950s, '60s and '70s, a buildup of sulfur aerosol pollutants in the atmosphere, caused primarily by coal power plants, had a cooling effect on Earth's atmosphere. In the 1970s, the Clean Air Act and other regulatory measures helped curb sulfur aerosol pollution. As a result, the influence of greenhouse gas emissions reasserted itself, and global warming began to accelerate.

"In the case of the PDO, I think it was simply a misidentification of an apparent 20-year cyclicity in the Pacific climate system based on one or two apparent 'cycles' that simply turned out to be a chance fluctuation of the broad-band <noise> of the Pacific climate system," Mann said.

(Source: UPI)

## New 'teenage' T-rex bones reveal how dinosaur became a monster

Bones belonging to two "teenage" *Tyrannosaurus rex* dinosaurs provide fresh clues as to how these predators grew up to become "plodding, crushing monsters", according to a new study.

The fossil skeletons indicate the juvenile *T rex* dinosaurs were slender, fleet-footed and had knife-like teeth for cutting food, unlike their lumbering, bone-crushing adult counterparts.

It was previously believed that the bones, which are preserved at the Burpee Museum of Natural History in Illinois, US, belonged to a different dinosaur species, a smaller pygmy relative known as *Nanotyrannus*.

But an examination of the tissue microstructures within the bones revealed they were part of the *T rex* family.

Dr. Holly Woodward, an associate professor of anatomy at the Oklahoma State University Centre for Health Sciences and lead author on the study, said: "Historically, many museums would collect the biggest, most impressive fossils of a dinosaur species for display and ignore the others."

"The problem is that those smaller fossils may be from younger animals."

"So, for a long while we've had large gaps in our understanding of how dinosaurs grew up, and *T-rex* is no exception."

According to the researchers, the juvenile *tyrannosaurs* would have been "slightly taller than a draft horse and twice as long" and were yet to experience a major growth spurt at the time of their death.

Adult *T rex*, on the other hand, would have been around 40ft long and 15ft to 20ft tall, making them one of the largest meat-eating dinosaurs that ever lived.

Scott Williams, a paleontology lab and field specialist at Museum of the Rockies in Montana, US, and study co-author, said their findings show these dinosaurs "go through a drastic change when they grow



up from these sleek, slender, fleet-footed *T rex*es with these wonderful knife-like teeth to these big, monster, plodding, crushing *tyrannosaurs* that we are familiar with.

"It also tells us these animals probably dominated their ecosystems at all ages."

To assess the age and growth rate of the *T rex* specimens, nicknamed "Jane" and "Petey", the researchers removed thin slices from the leg bones and examined them at high magnification.

They found that by counting the annual rings within the bone, much like counting tree rings, Jane and Petey were teenagers when they died, aged 13 and 15, respectively.

Based on their analysis of the bones, the researchers believe it took the *T rex* up to 20 years to reach adult size, undergoing drastic changes as it matured.

And based on the spacing in the rings, the team believe the *T rex*'s growth was dependent on its food source.

For instance, if food was plentiful, the dinosaurs would bulk up, and if food was scarce it would not grow as much.

Dr. Woodward said: "The spacing between annual growth rings record how much an individual grows from one year to the next."

"The spacing between the rings within Jane, Petey, and even older individuals is inconsistent -- some years the spacing is close together, and other years it's spread apart."

(Source: The Independent)

## Nightside barrier gently brakes 'bursty' plasma bubbles

The solar wind that pummels the Earth's dayside magnetosphere causes turbulence, like air over a wing. Physicists at Rice University have developed new methods to characterize how that influences space weather on the nightside.

It's rarely quiet up there. The solar wind streams around the Earth and cruises off into the night, but closer to the planet, parcels of plasma get caught in the turbulence and sink back toward Earth. That turbulence causes big ripples in the plasma.

With the help of several spacecraft and computational tools developed over the past decade, Rice scientists led by space plasma physicist Frank Toffoletto can now assess the ripples, called buoyancy waves, caused by the turbulence.

These waves, or oscillations, have been observed in the thin layer of magnetic flux along the base of the plasma sheet that tails away from the planet's nightside. The Rice theory is the first to quantify their motion.

The theory adds another element to the Rice Convection Model, an established, decades-in-the-making algorithm that helps scientists calculate how the inner and middle magnetosphere will react to events like solar storms that threaten satellites, communications and power grids on Earth.

The new paper in *JGR Space Physics* by Toffoletto, emeritus professor Richard Wolf and former graduate student Aaron Schutza starts by describing the bubbles -- "bursty bulk flows" predicted by Wolf and Rice alumnus Duane Pontius in 1990 -- that fall back toward Earth through the plasma tail.

Functionally, they're the reverse of buoyant air bubbles that

bob up and down in the atmosphere because of gravity, but the plasma bubbles respond to magnetic fields instead. The plasma bubbles lose most of their momentum by the time they touch down at the theoretical, filamentlike boundary between the inner plasma sheet and the protective plasmasphere.

That sets the braking boundary into a gentle oscillation, which lasts mere minutes before stabilizing again. Toffoletto compared the motion to a plucked guitar string that quickly returns to equilibrium.

"The fancy name for this is the eigenmode," he said. "We're trying to figure out the low-frequency eigenmodes of the magnetosphere. They haven't been studied very much, though they appear to be associated with dynamic disruptions to the magnetosphere."

Toffoletto said the Rice team has in recent years discovered through simulations that the magnetosphere doesn't always respond in a linear fashion to the steady driving force of the solar wind.

"You get all kinds of wave modes in the system," he said, explaining that bursty bulk flows are one such mode. "Every time one of these things come flying in, when they hit the inner region, they basically reach their equilibrium point and oscillate with a certain frequency. Finding that frequency is what this paper is all about."

As measured by the THEMIS spacecraft, the periods of these waves are a few minutes and the amplitudes are often bigger than the Earth.

"Understanding the natural frequency of the system and

how it behaves can tell us a lot about the physical properties of plasma on the nightside, its transport and how it might be related to the aurora," he said. "A lot of these phenomena show up in the ionosphere as auroral structures, and we don't understand where these structures come from."

Toffoletto said the models suggest buoyant waves may play a role in the formation of the ring current that consists of charged particles that flow around Earth as well as magnetospheric substorms, all of which are connected to the aurora.

He said that no more than a decade ago, many magnetosphere simulations "would look very uniform, kind of boring." The Rice group is collaborating with the Applied Physics Laboratory to include the Rice Convection Model in a newly developed global magnetosphere code called "Gamera," named after the fictional Japanese monster. "Now, with such higher-resolution models and much better numerical methods, these structures are starting to show up in the simulations," Toffoletto said. "This paper is one little piece of the puzzle we're putting together of how the system behaves. All this plays a big role in understanding how space weather works and how that in turn impacts technology, satellites and ground-based systems."

The Rice Convection Model itself was refreshed this month in a paper led by recent Rice alumnus Jian Yang, now an associate professor of Earth and space sciences at the Southern University of Science and Technology, Shenzhen, China.

(Source: Science Daily)

## Scientists find one of world's largest flowers in Indonesian jungle

The *Rafflesia* plant is often referred to as a "monster flower" for its parasitic properties and repugnant stench. Indonesian wildlife officials might've found the most monstrous flower of them all.

A *Rafflesia* that recently bloomed in a West Sumatran forest is nearly 4 feet in diameter - that would make it the largest flower ever recorded, according to the Natural Resources and Conservation Center in West Sumatra.

Curiously, it was the same location (and host plant) that produced what was the largest *Rafflesia* ever recorded back in 2017. But this monster flower is 4 inches wider, CNN Indonesia reported.

The plant has no roots or leaves - it's parasitic. The *Rafflesia* feeds on a host plant to live, drinking its water and nutrients. It's only visible when it bursts through the host plant to reveal its flowers.

The flower's menacing open mouth emits a foul odor similar to rotting meat, earning it the nickname "corpse flower." That stench attracts the insects that pollinate it.

But for all its glory, the *Rafflesia*'s life is tragically short. Its mouth remains open for just one week before it rots and dies - so the largest flower on Earth is on borrowed time.

(Source: msn)

## Over 50 died, 200 injured in overcrowded funeral of Gen. Soleimani

**SOCIETY** TEHRAN — More than 50 people have died and 213 others injured in a stampede as huge crowds turned out for the funeral procession of Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani in his hometown of Kerman on Tuesday.



ISNA quoted head of the Medical Emergency Organization, Pir-Hossein Kolivand, as saying that the injured people were transferred to hospitals.

Soleimani was the IRGC Quds Force commander who was martyred in a U.S. terrorist assault in Baghdad on January 3.

His remains arrived at the Kerman airport, after massive funeral processions were held in the Iraqi cities of Baghdad, Karbala and Najaf, as well as the Iranian cities of Ahvaz, Mashhad, Tehran and Qom.

Soleimani was a popular figurehead in helping squelch an ominous rise of Daesh.

## Walrus shortage may have caused collapse of Norse Greenland

The mysterious disappearance of Greenland's medieval Norse society in the 15th century came after walrus were hunted almost to extinction, researchers have said.

Norse communities thrived for more than 400 years in the Arctic, hunting walrus for their tusks, a valuable medieval commodity.

But a mixture of overexploitation and economic pressure from a flood of elephant ivory into European markets in the 13th century contributed to their downfall, according to a study.

A team of researchers from the universities of Cambridge, Oslo and Trondheim examined pre-1400s walrus tusk artefacts from across Europe and found almost all of them came from walrus hunted in seas only accessible to Greenland Norse communities.

They also found later items were hunted from smaller animals — likely females and infants — signalling stocks were rapidly dwindling.

James Barrett from Cambridge University's archaeology department said: "Norse Greenlanders needed to trade with Europe for iron and timber, and mainly had walrus products to export in exchange.

"Norse hunters were forced to venture deeper into the Arctic Circle for increasingly meagre ivory harvests." As walrus populations declined, so did the Norse communities.

The authors of the study, published in the *Quaternary Science Reviews* journal, said there were likely to have been other factors that contributed to the eventual disappearance of Norse Greenlanders.

These include climate change as the northern hemisphere underwent a "little ice age", and unsustainable farming techniques.

Bastiaan Star of Oslo University said: "If both the population and price of walrus started to tumble, it must have badly undermined the resilience of the settlements. Our study suggests the writing was on the wall."

(Source: *The Guardian*)

## WORDS IN THE NEWS

### Australians in shock after Bali attack

(October 14, 2002)

In Australia, many people are asking why their countrymen appear to have been targeted in the Bali bomb attack. This report from Dominic Hughes.

Until now, distance has shielded Australia from violent attack. The last serious incident was in 1978, when three died after the Hilton Hotel in Sydney was bombed. But the Bali attack has brought violence to Australia's doorstep.

The perception is that Australia itself has been targeted, and now many are looking for reasons why.

Some point to lingering resentment in Indonesia over Australia's leadership of the international force in East Timor. But Australia has also strongly allied itself with the United States and the fight against terrorism. A relatively small number of Australian troops have served in Afghanistan and, in the Pacific region, Australia is a uniquely Western power.

In the last year, the Australian government has introduced legislation to tighten up the relatively relaxed domestic security, and Australia's external border is now much tighter following moves to stop boats carrying asylum seekers.

But it's the desire of Australia's young people to travel that is perhaps the most difficult thing to legislate for.

Each year, thousands of young backpackers leave Australia's shores heading for Asia, Europe and the Americas. There will be extra concern now for their safety.

#### Words

**shielded:** protected

**to Australia's doorstep:** very close to Australia

**point to:** suggest that this is the result of, a sign of

**lingering resentment:** continuing feelings of bitterness or anger

**strongly allied itself with:** made itself a strong supporter of

**tighten up:** increase, make stricter

**relatively relaxed domestic security:** security measures within Australia which, compared to other places, were not very strict

**moves:** actions

**legislate for:** pass laws for

**backpackers:** tourists, often students, who carry their luggage on their back in a large bag or backpack

(Source: *BBC*)

# Martyr Soleimani made efforts to bypass U.S. medicine sanctions: health minister

**SOCIETY** TEHRAN — Over the past year, martyr Qassem Soleimani supported and made efforts to bypass the sanctions imposed by the U.S. so that people do not feel lack of medicine and medical equipment, Health Minister Saeed Namaki said on Monday.

Soleimani, the IRGC Quds Force commander, was martyred in a U.S. terrorist assault in Baghdad on January 3.

After the U.S. government imposed new sanctions on Iran, despite their lies about not sanctioning medicine, food and medical equipment, they put the highest pressure on us to procure medicine and medical equipment, he lamented.

"I wrote two letters to the World Health Organization (WHO) Director-General Tedros Adhanom to inform him of the American crime against humanity.

However, General Soleimani was the one who helped greatly to import medicine in different ways," he explained.

Although food and medicine are claimed to be exempted from the U.S. sanctions, financial and banking sanctions have limited the life-saving medicine trade which harshly targeted the patients suffering from rare diseases.



Exemptions for humanitarian trade (such as food, medicine and medical equipment) have not been effective in protecting Iranian patients from access to imported

medicine, such as the bandages used for patients suffering Epidermolysis Bullosa (EB), a rare genetic disease that causes painful blistering of the skin.

With the return of sanctions, over a year (May 2018-May 2019), 15 patients covered by EB Health House lost their lives, including Ava, a two-year-old girl in Ahvaz city, who died of infection and lack of skin care.

Companies exclusively producing medicine for Mucopolysaccharidosis (MPS) patients, such as BioMarin Pharmaceutical Inc. of the U.S. and a South Korean company, have refused to export these drugs to Iran, threatening the lives of 335 patients in Iran.

Moreover, medicine needed for patients with spinal muscular atrophy (SMA) and certain rare diseases that are only made by American pharmaceutical companies, are not imported to the country.

On November 17, Namaki in separate letters to UN Secretary-General António Guterres, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Executive Director Henrietta H. Fore, and WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom, urged the international community to break the silence on inhumane sanctions imposed by the United States against the country.

But so far no action has been taken by the international community and it has remained silent on this cruel act of the U.S.

## U.S. censorship of Gen. Soleimani on social media is 'out of misery': telecom minister



**SOCIETY** TEHRAN — The U.S. government's move to put pressure on companies to censor Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani on social media is out of misery, Mohammad Javad Azari-Jahromi, Minister of Information and Communications Technology has said.

Soleimani, the IRGC Quds Force commander, was martyred in a U.S. terrorist assault in Baghdad on January 3.

"America's action shows its misfortune, as Iran is powerful on social media. The on-going presence of people on social networks with tens of millions of posts has echoed the U.S. terrorism in the world," Azari-Jahromi stated. After the cruel assassination of Iranian top commander,

people flooded the social networks, sharing posts commemorating the martyr, however, Instagram removed all their posts.

"In an undemocratic and scandalous move, Instagram has removed the voice of innocence of the nation," Government Spokesman Ali Rabiei wrote in a post on his Twitter account on Monday.

The U.S. airstrike also killed Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the deputy commander of the Iraqi Popular Mobilization Forces (PMU). Both Soleimani and Muhandis were popular figureheads in helping squelch an ominous rise of Daesh which once came as close as 30 km to Baghdad.

## A staggering 500 million animals are estimated dead in Australia's fires

As fires continue to rip through Australia, some devastating numbers are emerging: At least 24 people killed. More than 15.6 million acres torched. Over 1,400 homes destroyed. And, according to one biodiversity expert's count, an estimated 480 million animals killed.

That last number — nearly half a billion — is staggeringly huge, and has made the rounds on social media over the past few days. You might be wondering: How are so many animals dying? And how do we know the number of animals killed?

The bushfires, exacerbated by climate change, have since September swept through vast swathes of Australia — we're talking about an area bigger than Vermont and New Hampshire combined — affecting a mix of rural and suburban areas.

Many wild animals and farm animals have been killed directly by the flames. We can see the evidence with our own eyes: Distressing images of burned kangaroos and koalas, and videos of dead animals on the sides of the roads, have circulated online over the past week.

Other animals have not been burned alive but have faced death due to the destruction of their natural environment, which they rely on for food and shelter.

As for the 480 million figure, that estimate comes from Chris Dickman, a biodiversity expert at the University of Sydney. A statement from that institution explains how he arrived at the number.

In 2007, Dickman co-authored a report for the World Wild Fund for Nature (WWF) on how land-clearing affects Australian wildlife in the state of New South Wales (NSW). To calculate the impact, he and the other authors first mined previously published studies for estimates of mammal population density in NSW. Then they multiplied the density estimates by the areas of vegetation approved to be cleared.

Using this simple formula, Dickman can now calculate that approximately 480 million animals have been killed since the bushfires in NSW started in September.

Some experts have suggested that estimate is too high. Sadly, there are two reasons to believe that the true loss of animal life is actually much greater than the estimate.

First, the 480 million number applies to NSW alone, and the bushfires have since spread to the state of Victoria. Second, the authors of the 2007 report "deliberately employed highly conservative estimates in making their calculations," according to the statement.



It's also worth noting that the 480 million estimate includes mammals, birds, and reptiles, but does not include insects, bats, or frogs.

At this point, you might be asking yourself: Can't animals just run away from a raging fire? Can't birds just fly away?

In many cases, particularly for birds, the answer is yes. "Certainly, large animals, like kangaroos or emus — many birds, of course — will be able to move away from the fire as it approaches," Dickman told the BBC. But he added that "it's the less mobile species and the smaller ones that depend on the forest itself that are really in the firing line."

Koalas are a good example. An estimated 8,000 of them have died from the fires, ecologists say. That's almost one-third of all koalas in NSW, which forms their

main habitat.

"It may well be up to 30 percent of the population in that region [was killed], because up to 30 percent of their habitat has been destroyed," explained Sussan Ley, Australia's environment minister.

Other animals may have fared better. Reptiles, for example.

"Although it is hard to find estimates of how well reptiles survive fires, in similar areas of Australia the majority of these reptiles live in the soil," said Colin Beale, an ecologist from the University of York. "Soil is a very good thermal insulator and burrowing reptiles can certainly show very low mortality even during intense fires."

Some ecologists, including Beale, say the 480 million estimate may be inflated. Although it's plausible that many animals have been affected by the fires, the proportion of them that actually died may be smaller.

Let's hope so. The truth is, it's hard for anyone to know the precise impact of the fires at this stage, not least because many animals that survive the flames will likely die later due to lack of food, water, and shelter.

CAP: A kangaroo rushes past a burning house in Lake Conjola on Dec. 31, 2019. Matthew Abbott—The New York Times/Redux (Source: *vox.com*)

## ENGLISH IN USE

### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

### System to be set up for monitoring, forecasting agricultural drought

A system will be launched to monitor, forecast and report the agricultural lands being hit by drought. Amir Qaderi, an official with Disaster Management Organization has announced.

Over a meeting of a special working group for addressing drought and risks threatening agricultural sector, a plan for establishing a system for monitoring and forecasting agricultural drought in the country was approved and submitted to the Disaster Management Organization for review, he explained.

"Following the study of other countries' experiences and existing global methods, the necessity of establishing a domestic system to recognize the lands prone to agricultural drought was emphasized," he noted.

### سامانه پایش و پیش‌بینی خشکسالی کشاورزی ایران ایجاد می‌شود

معاون امور بازرسی و بازرسی سازمان مدیریت بحران کشور از ایجاد سامانه پایش و پیش‌بینی خشکسالی کشاورزی ایران خبر داد.

به گزارش پایگاه اطلاع‌رسانی سازمان مدیریت بحران کشور، امیر قادری روز یکشنبه با اعلام این خبر گفت: طرح ایجاد سامانه پایش و پیش‌بینی خشکسالی کشاورزی ایران طی جلسهای با حضور مدیران و کارشناسان سازمان مدیریت بحران و وزارت جهاد کشاورزی بررسی شد.

وی ادامه داد: پس از بررسی تجارب داخلی و روش‌های موجود جهانی، ضرورت استقرار نمونه بومی پایش و پیش‌بینی خشکسالی کشاورزی مورد تأکید قرار گرفت و با مشارکت مراکز پژوهشی سازمان هواشناسی کشور و پژوهشکده حفاظت خاک و آبخیزداری طرح ایجاد سامانه پایش و پیش‌بینی خشکسالی کشاورزی ایران پیشنهاد شد.

#### PREFIX/SUFFIX

"extra-"

■ **Meaning:** beyond

■ **For example:** We've made **extraordinary** progress as a society in that regard.

#### PHRASAL VERB

pencil somebody/something in

■ **Meaning:** to make an arrangement for a meeting or other event, knowing that it might have to be changed later

■ **For example:** Pickford has been penciled in as Robson's replacement.

#### IDIOM

Cut both ways

■ **Explanation:** Something that has both a positive and a negative effect at the same time

■ **For example:** Banning cars in the town center can cut both ways: less traffic congestion but fewer customers in the shops.

# Thousands mourn Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis in southern Iraq

Thousands of Iraqis packed the streets of the southern city of Basra Tuesday to mourn Jamal Jaafar Ibrahim, known by his nom de guerre Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, who was killed by a U.S. air strike last week.

His body arrived at his hometown of Basra following several funeral processions elsewhere in Iraq and Iran. It will be taken to the Shia holy city of Najaf for burial following this final procession.

A U.S. drone strike Friday at Baghdad airport killed Iranian general Qassem Soleimani, who oversaw Tehran's campaign to extend its influence across the region, and Muhandis in an attack that has raised concern of a wider conflict in the Middle East.

Muhandis was the top Iraqi adviser to Soleimani, commander of Iran's Quds Force which supports many Iraqi militia groups such as Kataib Hezbollah, which



was founded by Muhandis in 2003 after the U.S.-led invasion.

He was also de facto leader of Iraq's Popular Mobilisation Forces (PMF) umbrella

body of paramilitary groups, giving him wide reaching influence over the country's many powerful Shia militias.

Muhandis fought for decades with Soleimani and other prominent Iraqi militia leaders such as Badr Organization chief Hadi al-Amiri, now the most likely candidate to succeed him.

In a video will be left to be shared after his death, Muhandis called on his supporters to "perpetuate jihad".

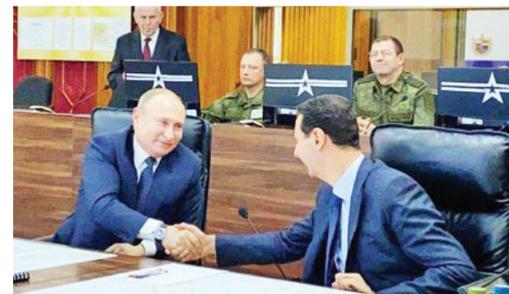
"I pray I spend the afterlife with...those I fought with, from Kuwait, to Iran, to Iraq. The Badr youth, and later the resistance against the occupation, and now the PMF youth."

"I command you to take care of the Shias in the region and in the world," he told his followers. "Obey the Imam of the Umma Sayyid Khamenei," he added, referring to Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

(Source: agencies)

## Putin visits Syria, meets Assad

Russian President Vladimir Putin visited Syria Tuesday and met officials including President Assad, state media



reported.

Putin's visit is the second to the war-torn country where his troops have been fighting alongside government forces since 2015.

The visit comes amid heightened tensions between Iran, a key Syrian ally, and the United States, following the killing of a top Iranian general in a U.S. airstrike in neighboring Iraq.

A funeral procession for Revolutionary Guard Gen. Qassem Soleimani was held Tuesday.

Soleimani's death has sparked calls across Iran for revenge against America for a slaying that's drastically raised tensions across the Middle East.

The U.S. government warned ships of an unspecified threat from Iran across all the Mideast's waterways, crucial routes for global energy supplies.

Meanwhile, the U.S. Air Force launched a drill with 52 fighter jets in Utah, just days after President Donald Trump threatened to hit 52 sites in Iran.

(Source: AP)

## Iraq will turn into new Vietnam for U.S. if its forces stay: Muqtada al-Sadr

U.S. drafting post-pullout sanctions against Iraq

Iraq's influential cleric, Muqtada al-Sadr, has released a statement saying that if U.S. troops do not leave the country, Iraq will turn into a new Vietnam for Washington.

Sadr, who leads the largest bloc in parliament, said in a letter to the assembly that a parliamentary resolution calling on the government to end foreign troop presence did not go far enough.

"I consider this a weak response insufficient against American violation of Iraqi sovereignty and regional escalation," the letter read.

Sadr said a security agreement with the United States should be cancelled immediately, the U.S. embassy should be closed down, U.S. troops must be expelled in a humiliating manner, and communication with the U.S. government should be criminalized.

"Finally, I call specifically on the Iraqi resistance groups and the groups outside Iraq more generally to meet immediately and announce the formation of the International Resistance Legions," he said.

Iraq's caretaker prime minister says his country and the United States should work together on implementing the withdrawal of all foreign troops from the country.

Adel Abdul-Mahdi made the remarks while talking to U.S. ambassador Matthew Tueller, after Iraqi lawmakers unanimously approved a bill demanding the withdrawal of all foreign military forces led by the United States from the country.

On Monday, Abdul-Mahdi also spoke to German Chancellor Angela Merkel about the Iraqi parliament resolution calling on all foreign troops to leave the country.

Sunday's parliamentary vote was held in response to

Washington's Friday airstrikes which assassinated Iran's Lt. Gen. Qassem Soleimani, and the second-in-command of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis.

**■ Trump administration drafting post-pullout sanctions**

The administration of U.S. President Donald Trump has reportedly started drafting possible economic sanctions against Iraq should the country expel American troops.

Three officials briefed on the situation told the Washington Post on Monday the talks regarding potential sanctions are in preliminary stages.

One of the officials said that the plan is to wait "at least a little while" to see if the Iraqi government would move forward with ousting American troops.

The officials said that the Treasury Department and the White House would coordinate the sanctions plan on Iraq.

Trump on Sunday vowed to impose sanctions on Iraq after the parliament voted to obligate Iraq's government "to work towards ending the presence of all foreign troops on Iraqi soil."

The Iraqi parliament's move came following the U.S. assassination of Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, the commander of the Quds Force of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), as well as Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the second-in-command of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units at Baghdad International Airport on Friday.

The U.S. president vowed to introduce Iraq sanctions, ones even harsher than those he imposed on Iran.

Trump asserted, "If they do ask us to leave, if we don't



do it in a very friendly basis, we will charge them sanctions like they've never seen before ever."

"It'll make Iranian sanctions look somewhat tame," he said.

Meanwhile, U.S. Defense Secretary Mark Esper has denied that the Pentagon has announced preparation for "movement out of Iraq."

Brigadier General William Seely, who oversees U.S. Task Force Iraq, sent a letter to the head of Iraq's joint operations command on Monday, various news agencies reported.

"In order to conduct this task, Coalition Forces are required to take certain measures to ensure that the movement out of Iraq is conducted in a safe and efficient manner," read the letter.

(Source: agencies)

## 'United front to be formed against U.S. military presence in Middle East'

The deputy secretary general of Iraq's al-Nujaba Movement slams the recent US assassination of Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, the commander of the Quds Force of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), and the second-in-command of Iraqi Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, saying a united front is going to be formed against U.S.'s military presence in the region.

"The leaders of Iraqi resistance groups

will convene a meeting either today or tomorrow to declare the formation of a united front against the US [military] presence. It is better for us (resistance factions) to join forces and deal with Washington, which classifies us in the same category," Nasr al-Shammari said in an exclusive interview with Lebanon-based Arabic-language al-Mayadeen television news network on Monday.

"The battle has now moved to the heart of Washington's allies in the

region, which are pushing for attacks targeting us. The term international terrorism applies to the United States once it came to our region and occupied it," Shammari added.

He noted that the blood of General Soleimani and Muhandis frustrated all US plots against Iraq, emphasizing that his group had always been skeptical about U.S. actions in the Arab country.

"The American presence in Iraq is

harmful to military operations against ISIL (Daesh) and the country itself... We will go to war against the American military presence wherever possible in the region," Shammari said.

He then referred to the recent US drone strike against the base of Hashd Shaabi's 45th Brigade near the border town of al-Qa'im in Iraq's western province of Anbar, describing it as the zero hour of the war against the resistance front.

(Source: Press TV)

## Haftar forces announce capture of large parts of Sirte

The forces of Libya's renegade general Khalifa Haftar said they have entered Sirte, taking control of large parts of the coastal city.

Khaled al-Mahjoub, a spokesman of Haftar's self-styled Libyan National Army (LNA), said the fighters captured "all the districts surrounding the city", including al-Qardabiya airbase, before moving towards the city centre.

However, Libya's internationally recognised Government of National Accord (GNA) rejected the information in a statement, referring to it as "rumors claiming gains of militias and mercenaries of war criminal Haftar".

GNA said the government forces repelled LNA's attack, destroying two armed vehicles near the east of Sirte.

"The situation inside Sirte is completely under control, and the clashes that took place on the eve of this day took place outside the city," the government said.

**■ Counter narrative**

Earlier on Monday, LNA sources said the takeover came after forces from the city of Misrata, a key source



of military power for GNA, retreated from Sirte.

A resident in Sirte city centre told Reuters News Agency by phone that they can see "convoys of LNA inside Sirte city ... they control large parts of the city now. We also hear gunfire".

Al Jazeera's Mahmoud Abdelwahed, reporting from the capital Tripoli, said that, according to the military sources in Sirte, "Haftar's forces took control of several parts of the city, including the port and the city center along with the military camps in the south of the city."

"The city is very strategic because it is very close to the oil fields and oil ports in central Libya and the coast," he said.

"We are also getting news from the military sources in Misrata that they are sending troops to Sirte to repel the attacks of Haftar's forces."

Capturing Sirte would be an important gain for Haftar, who since April has been waging a military offensive on Tripoli which is home to the GNA.

Sirte lies in the center of Libya's Mediterranean coast, and has been controlled by GNA-aligned forces since they ejected the ISIL (ISIS) armed group from the city with the help of US air raids in late 2016.

(Source: al Jazeera)

## More than 61,000 missing in Mexico amid spiraling drug violence

The Mexican government said more than 61,000 people had gone missing as a result of the increasingly violent drug war with powerful cartels, 50 percent more than the government previously estimated.

The new figure from the one-year-old administration of Mexico's President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, popularly known as AMLO, compares with about 40,000 missing cited by the government as recently as June.

"The official data of missing persons is 61,637," Karla Quintana, head

of the National Registry of Missing or Missing Persons (RNPE), told a news conference.

She said about a quarter of the missing were women.

More than 97.4 percent of the total have gone missing since 2006, when then-President Felipe Calderon sent the army to the streets to fight drug traffickers, fragmenting the cartels and leading to vicious internal fighting.

AMLO has adopted a policy of "hugs, not bullets" in dealing with violent crime, focusing on addressing

inequality and tackling corruption, but the death toll has continued to climb.

The country suffered a record number of homicides in 2019.

Separately, officials said efforts to find the missing had so far uncovered 1,124 corpses in 873 clandestine burial pits.

The country's National Search Commission said in its first 13 months of work, only about one-third of the bodies found were identified and less than a quarter of the total had been returned to relatives.

The government has set up DNA

databases to help identify bodies, but the majority of those found still go unidentified.

Drug and kidnapping gangs often use unmarked pits to dispose of the bodies of their victims or rivals.

The commission said about a third of the corpses it had found were located in just three of the country's 31 states: the northern state of Sinaloa, the Gulf coast state of Veracruz and the Pacific coast state of Colima.

(Source: al Jazeera)

## EU and dealing with Iran

ANSA — "Everything is fine but hypocrisy is not. I firmly believe that the European Union is the only credible actor in dealing with Iran in this historical moment but, really the high representative of the EU, Josep Borrell, thinks he can "deplore" Iran's decision to exit from the nuclear agreement? ". Italian Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs Manlio Di Stefano writes on Fb. "How can we continue today to pretend that the agreement still makes sense and demand respect from Iran especially after having suffered such a hard blow? Come on, let's be serious" he wrote.

## Chelsea run a loss despite Abramovich input

Chelsea made a loss of almost £100 million (\$130 million) last year despite owner Roman Abramovich pouring nearly a quarter of a billion pounds into the Premier League club, their figures for 2018/19 released on Tuesday show.

Amongst their expenditure was yet another payout to a sacked manager -- this time £26.6 million to Italian Antonio Conte.

The 50-year-old -- who is now at Inter Milan -- had a year left on his contract when he was fired just a season after guiding them to the Premier League title.

"Exceptional items in the current year of £26.6million relate to changes in respect of the men's team management and coaching staff, together with associated legal costs," read Chelsea's latest set of published accounts, for the year ending June 30, 2019.

The club has spent £90 million in compensation to Conte and his predecessors since Abramovich took over in 2004.

Conte was replaced by compatriot Maurizio Sarri, who left the club for Juventus in the summer of 2019, one year into a three-year contract.

The club also invested £280.6m in their playing squad during 2018-19, with the acquisitions of Kepa Arrizabalaga, Christian Pulisic, Mateo Kovacic and Jorginho all included in their latest figures.

In all Abramovich, who has at times been rumored to be disenchanted and looking to sell, put in £247 million of his own money over the course of the year -- ending in June 2019 -- with the club still ending £96.6m in the red.

However, their sale of Belgian playmaker Eden Hazard to Real Madrid for 100 million euros last summer should make the next set of accounts happier reading, especially as the outgoings of the club in the most recent close season were zero thanks to a transfer ban.

That has since been lifted allowing manager Frank Lampard to invest in the transfer market in January.

(Source: Mirror)

## Hothead Kahn promises to keep cool on Bayern board

Former goalkeeper Oliver Kahn promised Tuesday that he will tone down his notorious temper in his new boardroom role at Bayern Munich.

Kahn was known as a hothead in his 14 years as Bayern number one, but at a press conference on Tuesday he said there would be "no slide tackles in the meeting room".

"Emotionality was important for me as a player, but in business it is not necessarily so helpful," grinned Kahn.

The 50-year-old joined the board at the German champions officially last week, and will succeed Karl-Heinz Rummenigge as Bayern CEO in January 2022.

In the meantime, he will work closely alongside both Rummenigge and sporting director Hasan Salihamidzic in a two-year "acclimatisation period".

At his official presentation on Tuesday, Kahn promised to be "100 percent Bayern Munich from this day forth".

The club legend will be charged with building a new era at Bayern, following the departure of Rummenigge and long-term club patriarch Uli Hoeness, who stepped down as president last year.

Kahn said he was aware of the high expectations at Bayern, adding that the challenge "suits my character".

"A great Bayern coach once said that if you sign a contract here, you have to know what you are letting yourself in for," he said.

"At Bayern, it is about being the number one in every area. We want to give the fans excellent football, and for that we need to create the economic conditions."

Kahn added that reinvigorating Bayern's youth system would be "one of the most important topics" of his tenure.

New president Herbert Hainer said that Kahn had been hired for his "football expertise, business expertise and Bayern DNA".

The legendary goalkeeper won the Champions League, the UEFA Cup and eight Bundesliga titles with Bayern before his retirement in 2008.

(Source: Eurosport)

## Paul Pogba undergoes ankle surgery

Paul Pogba underwent surgery on his ankle injury on Tuesday, reporting that "everything went well" during the operation in a social media post.

The Manchester United midfielder initially posted a video on Instagram in which he looked groggy and admitted: "I don't even know if I'm OK or if I'm high or if I'm sober, just don't ask me if it went well, I don't know."

He later deleted that post and replaced it with a shorter video. "Everything went well," Pogba said. "We have to keep the positive energy."

Pogba, 26, is expected to be out for another four weeks after suffering his second ankle injury of the season.

The France international, who has been linked with a move away from Old Trafford, has made only eight appearances this season in a campaign blighted by injury.

(Source: soccernet)

## Aubameyang: Media talk 'does my head in!'

Arsenal captain Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang said he is "committed" to the club, following rumours he is seeking a transfer away from the Emirates in January.

Reports had suggested the former Borussia Dortmund forward wanted to leave Arsenal but, speaking ahead of their 1-0 victory over Leeds in the FA Cup third round, Aubameyang told supporters he wants to stay.

After praising the home supporters for the atmosphere created in the 2-0 win over Manchester United, Aubameyang addressed the recent transfer rumours.

"I would also like to react to some of the rumours that are going around about me in the media," Aubameyang wrote in the matchday programme. "People like making up stories and they should focus on what's happening on the pitch."

"They talk too much and it does my head in! I am the Arsenal captain. I love this club. I am committed to it and desperate to bring it back to the top, where it belongs."

Victory over Leeds made it back-to-back wins for Arteta but France forward Alexandre Lacazette said the Spaniard made it clear he was not happy with performance against the Championship side.

"The manager shouted a lot. He was not happy because we knew they'd play like this and we didn't respect what he had said," Lacazette told the BBC.

(Source: ESPN)

# Controversy lingers as Saudi Arabia gets set to welcome Spanish Super Cup

Real Madrid and Barcelona will be among those tussling for the Spanish Super Cup in Saudi Arabia this week, amid controversy over a tournament held faraway from home in a country long-condemned for its record on human rights.

Spain's two most decorated clubs could face off in a Clasicos final in Jeddah on Sunday if Real Madrid beat in-form Valencia and Barca can overcome Atletico Madrid in the semis.

Yet the prospect of another showdown between La Liga's leading pair has been overshadowed by criticism, with lingering concerns about a Spanish competition being played on a different continent, more than 4,000 miles (6,400 km) away.

The financial incentives on offer, both to the Spanish Football Federation (RFEF), who run the competition, and the four clubs taking part are bound to have been persuasive.

For agreeing to participate alone, Barcelona and Real Madrid will receive six million euros (\$6.72 million) while Atletico and Valencia will pocket around three million euros each. If Barca and Real Madrid reach the final, it is expected they will earn around 10 million euros for the week.

The RFEF, meanwhile, has an agreement for the tournament to be held in Saudi Arabia for three years, for which it will earn a total of 120 million euros, an amount it claims will be put back into the women's game and lower leagues.

President Luis Rubiales has also said the old format, involving a final in August between the league champions and cup winners, was



no longer capturing the imagination of fans. "The Super Cup was doomed to death," said Rubiales in November.

"The money we will get is not for building a villa. It will go to women's football and the clubs in Segunda B and Tercera. Of course money is important, who can deny that? Money is very important but the money will go where it is needed."

### 'Heinous human rights record'

But in exchange for bigger cheques, the RFEF is facing accusations of betraying Spanish supporters and turning a blind eye to Saudi

Arabia's "heinous human rights record", as it was described by Amnesty International in November.

Saudi Arabia has followed the lead of Qatar and the United Arab Emirates by accelerating its investment in sports events to exert soft power and cast a more positive image of the country across the world.

"There is a very offensive policy to host major sporting events... to spread a different image of Saudi Arabia," Carole Gomez, a researcher at the Institute of International and Strategic Relations, told AFP.

But Rubiales believes the Spanish Super Cup can be used as a force for good.

"In the world there are food, economic, social inequalities," he said. "We can avoid it or we can try to contribute to change."

Amid criticism of Saudi Arabia's treatment of women, agreements have been reached between the RFEF and the Spanish authorities to ensure women will have free access to the King Abdullah Stadium, where all three fixtures will be played.

In January 2018, women were allowed to enter a stadium to watch football in Saudi Arabia for the first time.

"Women can enter all these events," the Saudi ambassador to Spain, Mansour Bin Khalid Al Farhan Al-Saud, told Marca last month. "That is what I mean when I say there is ignorance. You have false ideas about our country. There is no limitation for women in our country."

Fans from Spain appear unlikely to make the 10-hour trip to Jeddah, which would cost them close to 1,000 euros in flights and accommodation combined.

According to Spanish newspaper El Mundo on Monday, only 1,076 of 12,000 tickets had been sold, with Valencia selling just 26. "Nobody wants to go to the Spanish Super Cup," read El Mundo's headline.

Supporters might also have weighed up the importance of the tournament, which is considered far less prestigious even than the Copa del Rey, Spain's domestic cup competition, and pales into insignificance alongside La Liga and the Champions League.

(Source: AFP)

## Smoke delays unlikely at Australian Open, say organizers



Smoke from bushfires is unlikely to delay the Australian Open tennis Grand Slam, organizers said on Tuesday, insisting they have pulled out all the stops to protect the health and safety of players.

With the opening major of 2020 due to start at January 20, Melbourne has been blanketed by haze in recent days from blazes burning to the east -- part of Australia's bushfire crisis that has left 25 people dead.

Novak Djokovic, president of the ATP players council, said organizers should consider delaying the tournament, as a last resort, if conditions did not improve.

But Tennis Australia chief Craig Tiley said he did not see this as likely.

"There has been a lot of speculation about whether the smoke from the bushfires will affect the Australian Open," he said.

"All the information we have at the moment, with qualifying coming up next week, is that the forecast is good, we don't expect any delays and we've implemented additional measures to ensure the Australian Open will be able to run as scheduled."

Tiley said that while images of the fires, which have destroyed hundreds of properties, were distressing, there was no danger to people in Melbourne.

"The closest fires are several hundred kilometres (miles) from the city," he said, while stressing that the health and safety of players, staff and fans was a priority.

"We've committed substantial extra resources to analysis, monitoring and logistics to ensure this throughout the tournament," he said.

(Source: AFP)

"There will be meteorological and air quality experts on site to analyze all available live data and assess in real-time the air quality at Melbourne Park, and we always work closely with our medical personnel and other local experts."

### 'Super-sad'

Any smoke hazards would be treated in a similar way to extreme heat and rain, with umpires able to stop play if air monitoring shows it is too dangerous to continue.

But as Melbourne Park has three roofed stadiums and eight other indoor courts, the chances of major delays appear minimal.

The fires have been a key talking point at the ongoing ATP Cup in Sydney, Brisbane and Perth with tennis stars and other sports personalities getting behind a drive to raise money to help.

Every ace hit at the tournament will see Aus\$100 (\$69) donated to victims, while several players have individually pledged more.

Tennis Australia has also arranged a fund-raising exhibition match at Melbourne's Rod Laver Arena on January 15, ahead of the Australian Open, with "the world's top players" taking part.

World number one Rafael Nadal indicated he would be one of them, calling the bushfire devastation "a super-sad situation".

"From my side we will do things to try to raise money for this terrible thing... so I am here to help in any way that is possible and I'm sure we will be able to, together with the rest of the players," Nadal said.

(Source: AFP)

## Liverpool sign bumper kit deal with Nike



Liverpool on Tuesday announced they had struck a huge new kit deal with Nike to replace New Balance from the 2020-21 season, underlining the Premier League club's growing strength on and off the pitch.

The US sportswear giant will supply playing, training and travel wear for Liverpool's men's, women's and academy teams and the coaching and Liverpool FC Foundation staff from June 1.

The club did not give a figure for the "multi-year partnership" but The Athletic reported in October that it would earn Liverpool up to £70 million (\$92 million, 82.2 million euros) a year.

It was made possible after the European champions and runaway Premier League leaders won a court battle with New Balance in October.

"Our iconic kit is a key part of our history and identity," said Liverpool managing director and chief commercial officer Billy Hogan.

"We welcome Nike into the LFC family as our new official kit supplier and expect them to be an incredible partner for the club, both at home and globally as we continue to expand our fanbase."

Bert Hoyt, vice-president and general manager of Nike Europe, Middle East and Africa, said: "Liverpool Football Club has such a proud heritage and strong identity."

"The partnership with Liverpool FC underscores our leadership in global football and with the club's passionate worldwide fanbase and strong legacy of success -- they have a very bright future ahead."

### Man United eclipsed

New Balance had argued it had triggered a clause in the current deal that would allow it to maintain the contract for another five years if it matched the terms of any competitor's offer.

The Athletic reported that Nike would pay Liverpool a flat fee of £30 million per season, well short of the reported £40 million New Balance currently pays.

But with royalties of 20 percent on net sales of merchandise -- reduced to five percent for footwear -- plus bonuses for winning the Champions League and Premier League, Liverpool will be earning substantially more under the new deal.

A judge ruled in favor of Liverpool's case that New Balance, which had been supplying the club's kit since 2015, could not match Nike's enormous distribution network and promise to market the club via "superstar athletes and influencers".

These include LeBron James, Serena Williams and Canadian rapper Drake.

Reports in the British press on Tuesday said the Nike deal would net the club £80 million per year, eclipsing Manchester United's Adidas contract, worth an annual £75 million.

Spanish giants Real Madrid and Barcelona have the biggest kit sponsorship deals, with La Liga champions Barca bringing in at least 150 million euros a season from Nike.

Liverpool are currently 13 points clear at the top of the Premier League and are closing in on their first English top-flight title since 1990.

Jürgen Klopp's men are also through to the last 16 of the Champions League.

(Source: AFP)

## We are not a VAR police, say football lawmakers

Football's rule-making-body IFAB will not police the way VAR (video assistant referees) is implemented in different leagues, despite continued controversy over the use of the technology in the Premier League.

Speaking to Reuters, IFAB secretary Lukas Brud said the organization is working on current or future VAR usage with over 100 competitions and is not focused on the Premier League.

However, Brud repeated his view that VAR should only be used in cases where a "clear and obvious" error has been identified and should not "try to find something that might not be there".

Brud also said the organization has no plans to change the offside law, a change which some pundits have called for in response to the con-

troversy over marginal offside decisions which have been a feature in the first season of VAR use in the Premier League.

Zurich-based IFAB, the International Football Association Board, is made up of five members: the four British football associations: England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales as well as FIFA which represents other federations.

IFAB will hold its Annual General Meeting in Belfast on Feb. 29 which has led to speculation that it may act over the use of VAR in the Premier League. But Brud said the body was constantly working with different competitions through its Implementation Assistance and Approval Programme (IAAP) and was not in the business of "punishing" bodies.

IFAB can withdraw permission to use the system but Brud said that there was leeway for competitions to have different interpretations of the guidelines over the use of VARs.

"Of course it is a requirement to follow the laws of the game and the VAR protocol. Competitions may apply some elements of it in a slightly different way but still within the Laws and protocol framework. We work together to try to make it work better," Brud said.

### Offside law

"We are not the police, we cannot be the police. We will be issuing guidelines on the use of VAR as we do on a regular basis."

"That has nothing to do with the Premier League. In cooperation with FIFA, we are currently working with around 90 countries, over

100 competitions around the globe, our focus is certainly not on the Premier League, just because there are some media debates about VAR in the Premier League."

While acknowledging that the technology used to determine offside decisions by VAR is not accurate enough to identify millimetre calls, Brud said that did not mean the offside law needed to be changed.

"We don't think it is time (to change the law). What we need to do is focus on the training and education and ensure that the consistency and application of the VAR/offside law is being done properly," he said, rejecting the suggestions for the law to reflect 'clear daylight' or other changes.

(Source: Reuters)

# Nation commemorates legendary wrestler Takhti

**S P O R T S** TEHRAN — It's been 52 years since the death of Iranian legendary wrestler Gholamreza Takhti, and each year, a group of advocates commemorate the day.

Head of Iran's National Olympic Committee (NOC) Reza Salehi Amiri, director general of federations' common affairs at Iranian Ministry of Sports Mohammad Shervin Asbaghian, former president of Iran Wrestling Federation Mohammadreza Taleghani, and a large number of sportspersons and his supporters attended the ceremony.

Takhti was born in Tehran on August 27, 1930 and was found dead in a hotel room on January 7, 1968.

He was laid to rest at Ibn-e Babouyeh cemetery in southern Tehran, near Shahr-e Ray, where he is commemorated every year by the Iranians.

When the news of Takhti's death spread, the Iranian nation went into mourning. At least seven people killed themselves due to their sadness. One, a butcher in Kermanshah, left a note saying, "A world without the world's champion is not a place to live."

Takhti won the gold medal in the 1956 Olympic Games in Melbourne, defeating Boris Kulayev from Soviet Union in the final match.

He also claimed two Olympics silver medals in 1952 Helsinki and 1960 Rome.

Takhti won two World Championships gold medals in 1959 Tehran and 1961 Yokohama.

The freestyle wrestler has also seized a gold medal in the 1958 Asian Games held in Tokyo, Japan.

He is the most famous wrestler in Iranian history. The legend was known for his chivalry and sportsmanship and continues to symbolize the essence of sports to the Iranian people.

In 1961, a terrible earthquake occurred in Boein Zahra in western Iran, killing 45,000. Takhti was deeply touched by the suffering. Already one of Iran's biggest stars, he began to walk one of the main avenues of Tehran, asking for assistance for the victims. He inspired other champions to follow in his footsteps, and thousands gave donations to alleviate the suffering.



Another example of his character comes from a match in Moscow. After defeating the then-world champion Anatoli Albul, Takhti saw the sorrow on the face of Albul's mother. Takhti went to her and said, "I'm sorry about the result, but your son is a great wrestler." She smiled and kissed him.

There is another memory that sheds more light on

his character. Once he had a match with Russian wrestler Alexander Medved, who had an injured right knee. When Takhti found out that he was injured, he never attacked that leg. Instead, he tried to attack the other leg. Takhti finally lost the match.

Alexander Medved has come to Iran many times over the years to pay respect to the champion at his grave.

## Iran's women volleyball team fall short against Kazakhstan in Olympics Qualification



**S P O R T S** TEHRAN — Iran lost to Kazakhstan in straight sets (25-14, 25-16, 25-14) in Nakhon Ratchasima, Thailand at the Asian Volleyball Confederation (AVC) 2020 Olympic Qualification Tournament on Tuesday.

Team Melli have been drawn in Pool B along with Indonesia, South Korea and Kazakhstan.

Mitra Shabanian's girls will meet South Korea and Indonesia on Wednesday and Thursday, respectively.

"With regards to experience of Kazakhstan volleyball team, our team played not

bad. Our players have problems with receiving the ball. They are young and have participated in the competition to gain experience," Shabanian said.

Pool A consists of Chinese Taipei, Australia and Thailand.

After the three-day pool plays, January 10 will be a rest day, with teams finishing 3rd and 4th places from each pool clashing out of the competition and returning home.

The top two of each pool advance to cross-wise semifinals, followed by the deciding match and the winners will qualify to the 2020 women's Olympic volleyball tournament.

## Iran start Olympic Qualification Tournament on high



**S P O R T S** TEHRAN — Iran's men's volleyball team eased past Chinese Taipei 3-0 (25-16, 25-17, 25-14) at the Asian Volleyball Confederation (AVC) 2020 Olympic Qualification Tournament in Jiangmen, China on Tuesday.

Porya Yali led Iran with match-high 14 points and Ming-Chun Wang scored six points for Chinese Taipei.

A total of eight teams, divided into two round-robin pools leading up to crossed semifinals and a final – to stamp one Olympic visa on January 12.

In Pool A, hosts China, most recently finishing fifth at home at Beijing 2008, are targeting their third Olympic appearance, in the company of reigning 2019 Asian champions Iran, who finished fifth at Rio 2016, their only Olympic participation so far, as well as Kazakhstan and Chinese Taipei, who have never made it to the Games as such.

Iran will meet Kazakhstan and China on Wednesday and Thursday.

Australia, Qatar, India and South Korea are in Pool B.

## Continental glory and Olympics qualification up for grabs at Thailand 2020

Asia's rising stars will look to clinch both Continental glory and qualification for the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games when the AFC U23 Championship begins in Thailand on Wednesday.

A total of 16 teams will look to succeed Uzbekistan following their 2-1 triumph over Vietnam two years ago and Shaikh Salman bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa, the AFC President, has sent his best wishes to the Continent's future stars.

The AFC President said: "Asia is home to some outstanding emerging talent and the AFC U23 Championship underlines our ambitions to provide a world-class platform for our players and teams to shine."

"The tournament offers a chance to see stars in the making - the players who will be looking to earn their places in the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 and the AFC Asian Cup China 2023, as well as this summer's Olympic Games, which returns to our great Continent in Japan."

"On behalf of the Asian football family, I wish all our teams the very best of luck and we also convey our heartfelt appreciation to FA Thailand for their dedication in providing the best possible environment for the teams and players."

The action starts on Wednesday in Group A where Thailand, with former Japan head coach Akira Nishino in charge, will look to make the most of the home

AFC U23 CHAMPIONSHIP THAILAND 2020			
<b>GROUP A</b>	<b>GROUP B</b>	<b>GROUP C</b>	<b>GROUP D</b>
A1 THAILAND	B1 QATAR	C1 UZBEKISTAN	D1 VIETNAM
A2 IRAQ	B2 JAPAN	C2 KOREA REPUBLIC	D2 DPR KOREA
A3 AUSTRALIA	B3 SAUDI ARABIA	C3 CHINA PR	D3 JORDAN
A4 SAUDI ARABIA	B4 SYRIA	C4 IRAN	D4 UAE

support as they bid to progress. Thailand have been drawn alongside Australia, Bahrain and U23 heavyweights Iraq, who claimed the title in 2013 and finished third three years later.

Group B features a Qatar side – under the guidance of 2019 AFC Asian Cup winner Felix Sanchez – who are eager to improve on their U23 2018 performance when, with Almoez Ali and Akram Afif to the fore, beat Korea Republic to finish third. Al Annabi will have 2016 title

winners Japan and the West Asian duo of Saudi Arabia and Syria for company.

Ljubinko Drulovic's reigning champions Uzbekistan begin their title defense in Group C where, alongside 2016 runners-up Korea Republic, China PR and the Islamic Republic of Iran, they will attempt to become the first team to retain the title.

In the other action, Vietnam, whose journey to the 2018 final was no less than remarkable, feature in a tough looking

Group D that will also have DPR Korea, Jordan and the United Arab Emirates vying to go through to the quarter-finals.

The competition runs from January 8 until 26, 2020 with the Video Assistant Referee system (VAR) being used throughout, the teams finishing first and second in each of the four groups will progress into the knockout phase from where the top three sides are guaranteed spots at this year's Olympic Games.

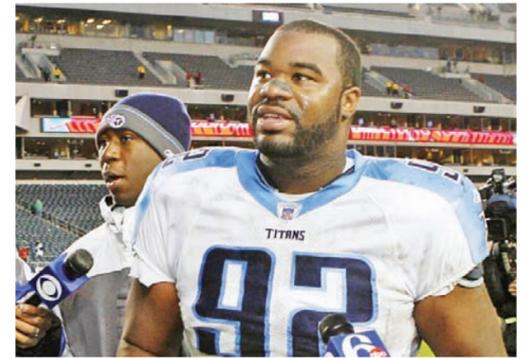
The matches are scheduled to be played at four venues in Thailand, namely Bangkok's iconic Rajamangala Stadium – which will play host to the final – the Thammasat Stadium in Pathum Thani, Songkhla's Tinsulanon Stadium and the Buriram Stadium.

The three previous editions of the tournament have all featured players who have subsequently developed into key performers for both club and country. Players such as Japanese ace Shoya Nakajima, Iranian goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand and Thai dynamo Chanathip Songkrasin have all gone on to become superstars of Asian football after gracing the AFC U23 Championship.

This time, and with dual targets in their sights, there promises to be yet more drama in store for Asia's next generation of stars as they seek to etch their own names in the history books. (Source: the-afc)

## Former NFL player Albert Haynesworth suggests Iran should target the White House

On Sunday, the former University of Tennessee and NFL player kicked off the new year by sharing a series of memes about President Trump on Facebook and Instagram, angering some of his followers.



In July, Haynesworth gained national attention and support after opening up about his health problems and need for a kidney in an Instagram post.

After his series of political posts this weekend, though, some are questioning if his views will affect his chances of getting a kidney.

Haynesworth's posts were made as tensions with Iran escalate. President Trump said that if Iran responds to America's killing of an Iranian military leader with any attacks on U.S. interests, Trump would hit Iranian targets, including cultural sites, "very fast and very hard."

Haynesworth's posts suggest that Iran should target the White House.

Many were quick to criticize Haynesworth, who spent seven seasons with the Titans during his 10-year NFL career. He retired in 2011.

A user named Atlas Hampton commented, "He is acting just like the rest! But when he was really sick and everyone supported him what if we all wished he was dead he wouldn't like it but he's saying (expletive) it kill them all in the Whitehouse!"

Other users came to Haynesworth's defense.

In a post shared to his timeline, a user named Coffee M. McCoy commented, "Bless the ignorant people who are on your friends list. Now these people really have shown you who they are. My suggestion to you is to take heed!!!"

Haynesworth suggested in some of his replies that angry fans should unfriend him since only his Facebook friends could see the posts. His Instagram account is public. (Source: Foxnews)

## Iran must continue winning way: Igor Kolakovic

Iran national volleyball team head coach Igor Kolakovic says that his team must continue the winning way at the AVC Men's Tokyo Volleyball Qualification tournament.

Team Melli defeated Chinese Taipei 3-0 (25-16, 25-17, 25-14) at Jiangmen Sports Center Gymnasium, China on Tuesday.

"Today we respected our opponent as we played one game several months ago in the Asian Championship and they played good volleyball. Today I am so happy because it was an important victory for us," Kolakovic said in the post-match news conference.

"We must continue in this way when we face Kazakhstan on Wednesday," he added.

Iran captain Saeid Marouf also is happy with Team Melli's performance in the first match.

"It was a good start. The first set was tough but later it became much easier for us. We were happy to lead all the sets and played quite comfortably," Marouf said.

(Source: FIVB)

## Iranian teams call off winter training camps

**PLDC** — Iranian football teams have canceled their winter training camps.

Inspection Organization of Iran has ordered the Iranian football clubs to hold training camp in the country. Sepahan were scheduled to hold camp in Turkey but the team will travel to Tehran for training camp.

Persepolis have also called off its training camp in Qatar and it's while the team's Argentinean coach is supposed to join them in Doha.

The Iranian football team had already announced that it will meet Al Shahanian on January 17.

Padideh, headed by Yahya Golmohammadi, were also going to hold training camp in the UAE but has called off the camp.

## Lebanon's goalkeeper Khalil reaches agreement with Zob Ahan

**TASNIM** — Lebanon national football team goalkeeper Mehdi Salim Khalil has reached an agreement to join Iranian football club Zob Ahan.

Khalil, who currently plays for Lebanese team Ahed, will pen a six-month contract with Zob Ahan for an undisclosed fee.

The 28-year-old goalie helped Ahed win the 2019 AFC Cup, the first in Lebanese history.

Khalil is known as "the Mountain" due to his height. He was the fifth tallest goalkeeper at the 2019 AFC Asian Cup.

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GUIDE TO  
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

If God had not set a punishment for a sin, then committing no sin would require gratitude for His gifts.  
Imam Ali (AS)

## Culture minister responds to Trump's threat to destroy Iran's cultural sites

**CULTURE** TEHRAN — Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance Seyyed Abbas Salehi has commented on President Donald Trump's threat to target Iranian cultural sites in case Iran's retaliation for the assassination of Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani.

"Trump once again has threatened Iran's cultural sites," Salehi wrote on his Twitter on Monday.

"All of Iran is culture, the compass of the several-thousand-year-old history and multiregional geography of Iran. Which spot would he target? Iran is not America," he added.

Trump's threat to destroy Iranian cultural sites was officially censured in Iran and abroad.

Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said that military attacks targeting cultural sites are considered war crimes under international law.

The Conversation, a network of not-for-profit media outlets, said that UNESCO also reminded the U.S. that it is bound by two conventions, one of which stipulates that signatories must not embark on "deliberate measures which might damage directly or indirectly the cultural and natural heritage" of another party.

According to BBC, U.S. Democratic senators Elizabeth Warren and Chris Murphy also made similar statements, and said Trump was "threatening to commit war crimes."

In addition, UK Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said cultural sites were protected by international law, and Britain expected that to be respected.

In a joint statement, Metropolitan Museum of Art director Max Hollein, and its CEO, Daniel H. Weiss, criticized Trump's threat and wrote, "The targeting of sites of global cultural heritage is abhorrent to the collective values of our society. Our world knows precisely what is gained from protecting cultural sites, and, tragically, what is lost when destruction and chaos prevail. At this challenging time, we must remind ourselves of the global importance of protecting cultural sites—the objects and places by which individuals, communities, and nations connect to their history and heritage."

The American Alliance of Museums, another leading museum trade organization, also joined the chorus of dissent by a statement condemning the targeting of cultural sites for destruction.

"We expect the United States government to comply with international law and urge the U.S. government to reaffirm its commitment to its longstanding practice of not targeting cultural sites during peace or wartime," the group wrote.

Following the assassination of Quds Force chief Lieutenant General Soleimani, who was one of Iran's most powerful figures, in a U.S. airstrike in Baghdad on Friday, Iran threatened "severe revenge".

## Awkwafina, "Dunkirk" star Lowden among nominees for BAFTA Rising Star

**LONDON (Reuters)** — Golden Globe winner Awkwafina and "Dunkirk" actor Jack Lowden are among the nominees for this year's EE Rising Star Award, the British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) said on Monday.

The award, voted for by the public at Britain's top movie honors, recognizes upcoming actors "who have each shown exceptional talent on the big screen over the past 12 months and captured the imagination of both the British public and experts from across the film industry".

The nominations, announced a day before the complete list of competitors at the February ceremony is revealed, also include "Booksmart" actress Kaitlyn Dever, "Waves" actor Kelvin Harrison Jr. as well as "Blue Story" actor Micheal Ward.

Fellow nominee Awkwafina, known for "Ocean's 8" and "Crazy Rich Asians", on Sunday picked up the prize for best actress in a comedy or musical for "The Farewell" at the Golden Globes, the first major ceremony in the 2020 awards season.

Lowden, who is known for "Dunkirk" and "Mary Queen of Scots", was most recently seen in "Fighting with My Family".

Past winners of the rising star award include "Black Panther" actors Letitia Wright and Daniel Kaluuya, "Spider-Man" star Tom Holland, Oscar nominee Tom Hardy and "Star Wars" actor John Boyega.

The BAFTAs will be held in London on Feb. 2.

# Book of Qajar-era calligrapher Mirza Gholamreza Isfahani's works published

**A R T** TEHRAN — A book presenting a wonderful collection by Qajar-era calligrapher Mirza Gholamreza Isfahani was unveiled during a ceremony at the House of Humanities Thinkers in Tehran on Monday.

Collected by scholar Mozaffar Bakhtiar (1943-2015), the book entitled "Collection of Works by Calligrapher Mirza Gholamreza Isfahani" has been released by the Ketabsaraye Nik publishing company.

Organized by the Persian literary monthly Bokhara, the unveiling ceremony was attended by painter and art critic Aidin Aghdashlu, Bakhtiar's son Zarvan, calligrapher Karamali Shirazi and Bokhara managing director Ali Dehbashi, the Persian service of IRNA reported on Tuesday.

Mirza Gholamreza Isfahani (1868-1926) was born in Tehran and buried in the Safaieh district of the city of Rey near Tehran.

The book also containing articles about Mirza Gholamreza Isfahani has been completed after 40 years of continuous research by Bakhtiar.

The works have been selected from 30 private collections, as well as from museums and the library of the University of Tehran.

In his brief words at the ceremony, Dehbashi expressed regrets that Bakhtiar was not alive to see the results of his lifetime endeavors in collecting the precious documents.

Aghdashlu also said that he had been waiting for the book for more than 40 years, and added, "This book is very valuable for the artists and calligraphers, because Mirza Gholamreza was an influential artist in the history of Iranian art and Bakhtiar



A copy of the book "Collection of Works by Calligrapher Mirza Gholamreza Isfahani".

was a respected art scholar." "The book contains rare copies of manuscripts, a part of which I collected between the ages of 18 to 25, and I had a good feeling by seeing them again,"

Aghdashlu added. He also said that he liked the style of writing in the book as well as its divisions. Bakhtiar's son Zarvan also said that the book shows the deep love of his father

to Mirza Gholamreza, and noted, "My father used to carry two copies of Mirza Gholamreza's calligraphy works with him in his long trips to China and South Korea and would enjoy looking at them for hours."

## Fajr theater festival to commemorate Martyr Soleimani



A poster for the 38th Fajr International Theater Festival.

**A R T** TEHRAN — Quds Force commander Lieutenant General Martyr Qassem Soleimani will be commemorated during the opening and closing ceremonies of the 38th edition of the Fajr International Theater Festival, the director of Iran's Dramatic Arts Center, Shahram Karami, announced on Tuesday. He also noted that some street theater is

scheduled to be performed during the 40th day of mourning for the martyrdom of the commander in Tehran and other Iranian cities.

Lieutenant General Soleimani and his companions were assassinated in a U.S. airstrike in Baghdad on Friday.

The 38th Fajr International Theater Festival will take place in Tehran from January 30 to February 9.

## Saba institute producing animation on commander Soleimani



A scene from the Saba animated movie on Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani.

**A R T** TEHRAN — The Saba Art and Cultural Institute in Tehran announced on Tuesday that it is producing a mid-length animated movie on the life of Quds Force chief Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani.

The movie will cover the life of the commander from his childhood

to his martyrdom in a U.S. airstrike in Baghdad, producer Mohammad-Ali Safura said.

The movie is a part of the animated series "40 Martyrs", which recounts the life stories of 40 Iranian martyrs who lost their lives during Iran's Islamic Revolution in 1979 or the 1980s Iran-Iraq war.



Solo tenor Esfandiar Qarabaghi in an undated photo.

## Solo tenor Esfandiar Qarabaghi to record song in honor of martyr Soleimani

**A R T** TEHRAN — Solo tenor Esfandiar Qarabaghi has said that he will record a song in honor of Quds Force chief Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, the Persian service of MNA reported on Tuesday.

"I myself have done this song, and have also told its composer that there is no need to show oppression. Instead, we need to compose pieces in honor of the martyr's bravery and dignity, so that when they are heard, all the people of Iran will be filled with pride," said Qarabaghi, who sang the

1980s protest song "USA, USA, Shame on Your Deceits!" that was composed by poet Hamid Sabzevari.

"The assassination of the commander was the stupidest decision Trump has yet made, since this brutal act will draw the entire region into a war, and if Iran does not stay on the alert, a series of adverse events will occur," he added.

"In any case, a fire has been ignited in the hearts of Iranians that will not let an American walk in the street with ease," he noted.

## Acclaimed conceptual artist John Baldessari dies at 88

**LOS ANGELES (AP)** — John Baldessari, who pioneered a new genre of art in the 1970s and in the process helped elevate Los Angeles' status in the art world from that of back-water berg to a center of the Conceptual movement, has died at age 88.

Baldessari died Thursday at his home in Los Angeles, the artist's representatives at New York's Marian Goodman Gallery confirmed Monday.

"It is with immense sadness that I write to let you know of the death of the intelligent, loving and incomparable John Baldessari," Goodman said in a statement. "The loss to his family, his fellow artists, his studio staff, friends and devoted former students is beyond measure."

A giant in the world of art both literally and figuratively — he stood 6-feet-7-inches tall — the bearded, shaggy-haired Baldessari produced thousands of works, many of which have been exhibited all over the world and are in the collections of major museums from Los Angeles to New York.

He also influenced dozens of other artists, both with his work and as a teacher at the prestigious California Institute of the Arts and the University of California, Los Angeles.

"His legendary class in Post-Studio Art bestowed on those of us with enough brains to notice a feeling of unbelievable luck of being in exactly the right place at the right time for the new freedoms in art," fellow artist David Salle wrote in the 2013 introduction to a lengthy interview he conducted with Baldessari, his CalArts professor in the early 1970s.

Student met teacher at a time not long after Baldessari, having grown frustrated with his own abstract expressionist paintings, loaded them into 10 boxes, took them to a San Diego funeral home and burned them.

Bored with an art movement he believed had grown old and stale, Baldessari set out to create something new, creating multimedia works that among other things merged photographs with painting, sometimes included pieces of recognizable objects or body parts but in unimaginable ways and often con-

tained perfectly formed block letters placed as captions on the paintings.

It was a style that prompted Los Angeles Times arts critic Christopher Knight to declare Baldessari "arguably America's most influential Conceptual artist."

Over the course of his career, which continued into his 80s, Baldessari worked in such forms as prints, sculpture, text-based art, paintings and photographs, often mixing two or more of them together.

Although he may not have deliberately intended his work to be humorous, Salle told The Associated Press on Monday, humor, irony and humanity were so imbued in Baldessari's personality that they became "almost like the delivery system of his work."

"And then later on, at some point he added to that visual glamour, which was very much apart from other Conceptual artists who were much more restrained," Salle added. "That was a winning combination that made his work accessible and pleasurable and complex and dense all at the same time."

John Anthony Baldessari was born on June 17, 1931, in National City, California, a small town on both the edge of San Diego and the Mexican city of Tijuana. His father, a salvage dealer, was from Austria and his mother from Denmark.

Showing artistic talent from an early age, he was often chosen by teachers to create murals or other art projects. After high school, he decided to study art at San Diego State University despite his father's concerns that it could be something he'd struggle at to earn a living.

After earning a master's degree, he went on to teach art at his alma mater, at local public schools and, for one summer, at a camp for teenage juvenile delinquents. He would joke in later years that it was likely his imposing size as much as his artistic skills that earned him that latter job.

He was also painting and showing his work, although by the late 1960s he'd begun to grow bored with what he and others were producing.