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## Attack on U.S. airbase start of more operations in the region, says IRGC

**TEHRAN** — Tens of U.S. soldiers killed or wounded in Iran's missile attacks on the U.S. airbase in western Iraq were transferred to Israel and Jordan, the commander of the Aerospace Force of the IRGC said on Thursday, noting that it was only "the starting point of a great operation," which will increase to cover the entire region.

"We were not after killing anyone although tens of U.S. troops have likely been

killed and wounded and transferred to Israel and Jordan on 9 sorties of C-130 flights," Brigadier General Amir Ali Hajizadeh stated.

Iran's missile attacks on the Ain Al-Assad airbase housing American troops on Wednesday morning were in response to the assassination of top Iranian military commander Qassem Soleimani in Baghdad on January 3. Iran's senior political and military figures had vowed "harsh revenge" for the martyrdom of General Soleimani. **→2**

## Anti-war protests break out across U.S.

In front of Trump Tower in Midtown, protesters made their way from Columbus Circle to show their opposition to war with Iran.

After a tense week between the United States and Iran, about a hundred people rallied at Dilworth Plaza and marched through Center City streets Thursday evening, decrying any war or continued violence with Iran.

The "No War With Iran" protest, or-

ganized through MoveOn.org, was one of more than 370 demonstrations nationwide sparked by the recent assassination of Iranian Maj. Gen. Qassem Soleimani and his country's vow for revenge.

Three blue peace-sign flags flew amid the freezing temperatures as demonstrators held homemade signs that read, "Give peace a chance," and "Trump: This is your fault." Others contained Jimi Hendrix-inspired quotes. **→10**

## Industry sector's 9-month production up 10%

**TEHRAN** — Production of major industrial products in Iran during the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-December 21, 2019) increased by 10 percent year on year, IRNA reported on Thursday, quoting the industry minister.

"According to available statistics, during this period exports surpassed imports, the country's trade balance was positive, and

we had an exports growth of nearly 20 percent in terms of weight," Reza Rahmani said in an expert desk on promotion of domestic production.

Stressing the importance of domestic production in the country's economic growth, the minister said relying on domestic production will save \$10 billion for the country by the end of the Iranian calendar year of 1400 (March 2022). **→4**



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## Similar behavior of Israel and U.S. against Iran's hard revenge

**F**ollowing the Israeli operation against Syria's T4 airbase, in which some Iranian military advisors were martyred, the forces of the axis of resistance attacked ten targets in the occupied territories in an unprecedented operation.

Israeli officials at the time stated that none of their troops were killed in the retaliatory action by the resistance movement, while detailed information reveals that about 60 Zionist regime's forces were killed.

After the retaliatory operation by the forces of the resistance movement at 3:10 local time, CNN television channel reported that the casualties were significant. Only after ten minutes all radio and telecommunication networks and even the power of the targeted areas were cut off, then the Western media outlets insisted that there were no casualties by shifting their approach in all news fields. To understand why such approach was adopted the following statements should be considered.

The vow of retaliatory operation was fulfilled in a situation that the Zionist regime and its affiliated media outlets were trying to describe Iran's claim about the "end of hit-and-run period" as a bluff and question the Iranian ability to take revenge.

This hard revenge revealed several facts for the Zionist regime, including Iran's military capability and the will to use it against any aggression.

Benjamin Netanyahu, who had been in Sochi, Russia to meet Vladimir Putin at that time, sent a message by Russians declaring his lack of will to respond to the attack and calling for mediation to persuade Iran to halt its retaliatory attacks.

Reviewing the Israeli military and media reaction to the Iranian retaliatory response shows that the U.S. government has taken exactly the same approach in the early hours after a strong slap by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).

The Americans, on the one hand, refuse to report the casualties of their troops or facilities in Ein Al-Assad base, and even suspended the Israeli journalist's Twitter account because of an unreliable tweet about the casualties. **→2**

## A letter from Iran penned to Michael Moore, De Niro and American nation

*Due to shameful speeches of the U.S. officials in justifying the assassination of Lt. Gen. Qassem Soleimani and his companions*

*Messrs. Michael Moore, Robert De Niro and the American nation*

With regards,  
Without any introduction, you are cordially requested to think about this issue that your statesmen and officials [American officials] actually call Lt. Gen. Qassem Soleimani as leader of terrorists in Iraq like Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi al-Qurashi [an Iraqi-born leader of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS)] that he should have assassinated long ago in order to prevent outbreak of any probable risk and danger for the people of that country [Iraq], region and espe-

cially American people but if the entire nation of America was thinking a bit like you [Messrs. Michael Moore and Robert De Niro], undoubtedly, there would surely remain questions that your statesmen and politicians would have to answer.

For example, why is it so strange in the world that, firstly, according to American politicians and statesmen who believe Gen. Soleimani is a terrorist, Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi participates in the funeral procession of Gen. Soleimani in Iraq with crying eyes and instead of expressing happiness and joy, he announces three days of public mourning for him [Gen. Soleimani] in Iraq and issues message of condolences.

Why legislators and deputies in the Iraqi Parliament, ranging from any party, race and ethnic, (All

Representatives in Iraqi Parliament) suspend their official meeting in the Parliament on Saturday to another time in order to participate in the funeral procession of Gen. Soleimani who American statesmen and politicians believe him [Gen. Soleimani] as a terrorist. More importantly, the next day of the assassination of Gen. Soleimani, (despite \$1 trillion worth of fine set by the U.S. government), a bylaw is ratified in Iraqi Parliament demanding for the expulsion American forces from Iraq and announces it to U.S. Envoy to Iraq immediately.

Your statesmen and politicians [American officials] can tell you [Robert De Niro, Michael Moore and American people] why Gen. Soleimani is a popular figure among a nation that he has assassinated them? **→12**

## U.S. House votes to restrain Trump's actions against Iran

The United States House of Representatives on Thursday approved a nonbinding resolution aimed at reining in the president's ability to attack Iran in the future without congressional approval.

The resolution comes as criticism over U.S. President Donald Trump's decision to order the killing of Iranian military leader Qassem Soleimani in Iraq intensifies. Congress was not consulted prior to the assassination, angering Democrats who fear Trump's actions could trigger a cycle of escalation leading to war.

The House's War Powers resolution directs Trump to terminate military operations against Iran except for self-defence and clarifies that the president presently does not have congressional authority to engage in war with Iran. A similar version is expected to be debated in the Senate.

Thursday's House vote 224-194 fell along party lines and followed days of frustration by Democrats over Trump actions regarding Iran. Three Republicans and one Independent sided with the Democrats. Eight Democrats voted with Republicans against the resolution.

Congress was not consulted prior to the assassination of Soleimani, angering many Democrats who fear Trump's actions could trigger a cycle of escalation leading to war.

Trump's decision to order the drone attack on Soleimani was "provocative and disproportionate", Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said.

The lead sponsor of the House resolution was Democrat Elissa Slotkin, a former CIA analyst who served three tours in Iraq and specialised in tracking Iranian-backed Shia militia groups.

"I have followed Iran's destabilising activity in Iraq up close for my entire professional career," Slotkin said during floor debate.

"I have watched friends and colleagues hurt or killed by Iranian rockets, mortars and explosive devices," she added. "If our loved ones are going to be sent to fight in any protracted war, the president owes the American public a conversation."

Under the U.S. Constitution, the authority to direct military action is divided between Congress and the president. Congress has the power to declare war while the president, as commander-in-chief, has the power to use the military to defend the US.

The War Powers Act of 1973 provides that Congress may direct the president to withdraw US forces from hostilities by passing a resolution in both the House and Senate. **→10**



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## "Resistance Alleys" opens at Sacred Defense Museum

Senior military commanders visit an exhibition showcasing Iran's achievements in various fields over the past 40 years at the Sacred Defense Museum in Tehran on January 9, 2020. The exhibit titled "Resistance Alleys" will run until January 16.



**ARTICLE**  
**Martin Love**  
Political analyst from North Carolina

## Dignity, smarts and grace: that's Iran's performance of late

**W**ho does Donald Trump and his gang of incompetents think they are kidding? One might suppose, or at least hope, that the only people are the "whites only" Bubba crowd who wear red hats with "MAGA" printed above the brim. These are the folks who show up at Trump rallies and get to hear the embarrassing 45th President blather like Robert DeNiro in his first big film hit, "Taxi Driver".

DeNiro played a young, disgruntled, lonely psychopath preparing to do some mayhem and psyching himself up in a narcissistic swoon while he stood in front of a mirror. Like the acting DeNiro, Trump likes to hear himself talk unsubstantially, he thinks he's still handsome assuming he ever was, claims he's a genius, etc. Joke of the century, maybe, but now that the immediate "crisis" is sort of over between the U.S. and Iran, it's time to survey the residual landscape.

One need not go over exactly what happened, what Iran did or did not do, what the U.S. did or not. Everyone in the world knows who was to blame, who started a close call with regional war if not worse, and it was not Iran.

In fact, Iran conducted itself with tremendous intelligence, thoughtfulness, dignity and sophistication under dire threat... whereas Trump and gang did exactly the opposite, in particular threatening to bomb Iran's plethora of cultural and historical sites (which to many ranks first in the world for quality, significance and often sheer exquisite beauty – part of the heritage of all of humanity).

By January 7th, it was over and at least in America, it felt like nothing had happened: the stock and bond market futures after a deep fall were blasting higher, Trump was blathering to a national audience and claiming he was going to impose yet MORE sanctions on Iran and somehow get NATO involved in the pressure on the Islamic Republic.

As for Iran, aside from the tragic plane crash that took scores of lives at Tehran, much actually had changed and no wider war had developed. In fact, one could argue that Iran handled itself so well that it got exactly what many Iranians, and particularly the government, wanted. **→2**



## Rouhani, EU's Michel confer on recent developments in region

**POLITICAL d e s k** **TEHRAN** — In a phone conversation on Thursday, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani and European Council President Charles Michel conferred on the recent developments in West Asia, including the U.S. assassination of Iranian Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani and new sanctions on the Islamic Republic by Washington. General Soleimani was assassinated in a U.S. air raid near the Baghdad international airport on January 3 upon direct order by Donald Trump. In retaliation on January 8, on the dead of the night, the Aerospace Force of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) fired several ballistic missiles at the U.S. Ain al-Assad airbase in southwestern Iraq.



In the phone conversation, Rouhani said, “The European Union is a major power in the world with a heavy responsibility and if it wants to contribute to regional peace and stability, Tehran is ready to cooperate with it.”

“Iran and Europe want stability in the region and strengthening of the JCPOA (the official name for the 2015 nuclear deal), and it is very important for us that Europe, China, and Russia play their important role in preserving the JCPOA in order to secure Iran’s interests,” Rouhani remarked.

Rouhani said the five steps by Iran to reduce its JCPOA commitments are intended to create a balanced situation, adding, “Iran will continue to cooperate with the (the International Atomic Energy) Agency”.

Under the JCPOA, Iran agreed to put limits on its nuclear activities in exchange for termination of economic and financial sanctions.

“The U.S. committed economic terrorism by stepping up economic sanctions against Iran even on medicine and food and violated all international regulations by assassinating Iran’s major commander, and Europe must respond to these U.S. terrorist acts,” Rouhani pointed out.

For his part, Michel said, “Europe is making every effort to play a positive role in global and regional political dynamics, and has repeatedly called on the United States in recent days to avoid further escalation of tensions in the region.”

He added, “We are concerned about developments in the region and invite all parties to exercise restraint.”

Iran has threatened that any further “mischief” by the Trump administration will face a “harsher and more painful” response.

## Boeing suffers another major stroke

By Afshin Majlesi

**TEHRAN** — Accumulated problems still remains with Boeing following a number of tragic crashes, the latest of which happened early on Wednesday in Tehran, causing the giant company losing money and credibility more than ever.

The new blow to the company came after a Ukrainian airliner that was heading from Tehran to Kiev lost contact two minutes after takeoff at 6:12 a.m. local time and crashed. Having 167 passengers and nine crew members on board, the jet was 737-800, a predecessor to the 737 Max. Citizens from Iran, Canada, Sweden, Afghanistan, Germany, and the UK were all killed in the crash.

The aftershock in no time tumbled Boeing as much as 2.3%, erasing about \$4.3 billion of the firm’s market value in the wake of the fatal crash in Iran.

U.S. President Donald Trump claimed on Thursday that Iran accidentally shot down the airliner, noting the deadly crash could have been a mistake and he did not believe it was a mechanical issue. Trump’s remarks, however, caused Boeing shares rising 1.7% on Thursday.

The Ukrainian Embassy in Iran primarily linked the crash to a technical problem but later it announced that the cause was unknown. It seems that the latter statement by the embassy was somehow influenced by Trump’s remarks.

As of late 2019, shares of the U.S. aerospace manufacturer started shrinking due to the crisis engulfing the model 737 MAX, forcing its CEO to resign and suspending production of the popular jet, which has remained grounded since a second crash in March 2019.

The stock lost 5.6% over the first four sessions of December on worries that approval of the MAX would continue to be delayed. The stock’s worst day of the month then came on Dec. 16, with shares falling 4.3% as the company said it would suspend production of the 737 MAX planes, a reflection of the impact the plane’s grounding has had, according to the fool.com.

Seattle-based Boeing and its European rival Airbus completely dominate the commercial plane building business. The scale of their supremacy is eye watering. Between them, they’ve made 90% of the world’s passenger planes in the last five years. According to the Teal Group, an aerospace industry consultancy, the pair account for 99% of all large plane orders in the world.

It seems that this time Boeing cannot easily recover from the blow. Losing money and credibility seriously threaten the giant company’s place in the global aviation.

To shed light on the tragic incident, Iran has invited experts from Ukraine, Canada and the U.S. to visit the country to investigate the issue.

Some analysts argue such a claim that the plane was downed by an air defense missile is primarily intended to deflect global attention from the humiliation of the United States by the Iranian military, which on Wednesday morning fired more than ten missiles at a major U.S. airbase in Iraq in retaliation to the assassination of top Iranian general Qassem Soleimani in Baghdad on January 3.

# Iran dismisses claims Ukrainian plane hit by air defense missile

**POLITICAL d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Head of Iran Civil Aviation Organization Ali Abedzadeh has dismissed claims that the Ukrainian passenger plane that crashed near the capital Tehran with 179 on board on Wednesday morning was hit by an air defense missile fired by Iran.

“From a scientific viewpoint, it is impossible that a missile hit the Ukrainian plane,” he told Press TV in an exclusive interview published on Thursday.

“The plane caught fire three minutes into the flight, according to what the witnesses have reported and the data collected from the parts of the airplane,” Abedzadeh said.

“The pilot tried to return the airplane at the altitude of 8,000 ft., but due to the fire, the airplane crashed and exploded,” he explained.

“We can say that the airplane, considering the kind of the crash and the pilot’s efforts to return it to Imam Khomeini airport, didn’t explode in the air. So, the allegation that it was hit by missiles is totally ruled out,” the official insisted.

Asked if the cause of the crash is to be determined after a probe, Abedzadeh said, “According to international regulations, it is the responsibility of the country, where the incident happened, to probe the inci-



dent. So Iran Civil Aviation Organization is in charge.”

“But because the airplane was Ukrainian, Ukraine is obliged to cooperate with us, and has started cooperation. Their team of experts has arrived in Tehran, and we have coordinated the issue with them on different aspects. Iranian experts and the Ukrainian ones have had a meeting so that

we could determine the cause of the incident in cooperation with the Ukrainian side.”

The Iranian official said no comment can be made about the cause of the plane crash and the reason will be determined after opening the black box.

■ **Canadian team due in Iran to investigate plane crash**  
Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman

## Rouhani to Johnson: There had been no security in London without Gen. Soleimani’s efforts

**POLITICAL d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said on Thursday that London would not have been secure if it had not been for Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani’s relentless campaign against terrorists in Iraq and Syria. “Undoubtedly, if it was not for martyr Soleimani’s efforts, you would not have had security in London,” he told British Prime Minister Boris Johnson in a phone conversation.

Rouhani urged the British government to revise its stance on the assassination of Soleimani.

Soleimani was assassinated in a United States’ airstrike in Baghdad on January 3. Johnson has backed Soleimani’s assassination.

Iran has called the U.S. move against the top general a terrorist action and an act of war.

Calling Soleimani a “hero of fight against terrorism”, Rouhani said Soleimani always sought regional peace and stability.

The president also said, “The United

States and the White House know nothing about the region and they only realized what mistake they had committed by this terrorist action when they noticed the uprising of the regional people and their unity.”

Johnson expressed concerns over regional security and called for restraint by all sides.

■ **‘Soleimani Assassination originates from U.S. support for terrorism’**

In a phone conversation with Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte, Rouhani said that assassination of Soleimani is nurtured by the U.S. “support for terrorism and its anger over his (Soleimani’s) fight against terrorism.”

Rouhani said, “The regional people are very angry about the United States’ actions. We all should make efforts to prevent the United States causing tension and making strategic mistakes and make this country act within the framework of law.”

He added that all must respect law in order to maintain security.

He also said, “The European Union bears heavy responsibility toward international issues and must make efforts on the path of boosting peace and stability through adopting right stance and being independent from the United States’ wrong policies. Undoubtedly, Tehran will stand beside this union.”

For his part, Prime Minister Conte said Italy will make any efforts in line with helping maintain security and stability in the region.

■ **‘Friendly countries must make the U.S. respect law’**

In another telephone conversation with South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, Rouhani said that friendly countries must adopt right position and force the U.S. respect international law.

“We must announce to the United States that the world will not accept its criminal actions,” he said.

The South African president condemned

Abbas Mousavi announced on Friday that a 10-member Canadian delegation is heading to Iran to deal with the issues related to the Canadian victims of the plane crash.

“Based on the coordination between the Iranian Foreign Ministry and Canada, a 10-member Canadian delegation is heading to Iran to deal with the affairs of the Canadian victims of the tragic incident.”

“The Islamic Republic of Iran will not hesitate to facilitate the affairs of countries whose nationals have been affected by the tragedy,” he said.

The results of technical examinations and investigations by international experts, including representatives of Boeing, Ukraine and other affected countries will be released to the public after their completion, the spokesman added.

The remarks came as some U.S., Canadian, and British officials claimed Thursday the cause of the jet’s crash was a missile fired from Iran in the hours after the country had launched other missiles at bases housing U.S. troops in Iraq.

The victims of the crash included 82 Iranians, 63 Canadians, 11 Ukrainians, 10 Swedes, four Afghans, three Germans, and three British nationals.

assassination of Soleimani.

■ **‘Iran attaches great importance to regional security’**

In another phone conversation, Rouhani also told Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani that Iran attaches great importance to regional security.

Rouhani noted that the only way to maintain regional security is strengthening friendship and cooperation and prevent foreigners’ interference.

“In the present sensitive juncture, I hope all the countries which seek security will guide the United States towards law and humanity,” he said.

Sheikh Tamim said that Qatar opposes any tension against Iran.

Rouhani also held a phone conversation with President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky during which the top officials stressed the necessity of investigating the cause of a Ukrainian plane crash near the capital Tehran on Wednesday that killed all 176 people aboard.

## Attack on U.S. airbase start of more operations in the region, says IRGC

Hajizadeh says casualties of Iran’s missile attack on the U.S. base transferred to Israel, Jordan

1 → “We did not aim to kill (anybody)...we intended to hit the enemy’s military machine,” Hajizadeh said.

Hajizadeh added had Iran intended to kill the American forces, it could have planned high casualty operations to kill 500 U.S. servicemen in the first step and 4,000 to 5,000 others in the second and third steps within 48 hours.

“We could mount the operation in a way that 500 would be killed in the first step and, if they responded, in the second and third steps, their casualties would have reached 4,000 to 5,000,” Hajizadeh asserted.

General Soleimani was assassinated in a U.S. air raid near the Baghdad international airport on the morning of January 3. It was an act of war against Iran.

Soleimani had gone to Baghdad to deliver a message to the Iraqi prime minister who was acting as intermediary to deescalate tension between Iran and Saudi Arabia.

The U.S. airstrike also martyred Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the deputy commander of Iraqi Popular Mobilization Forces (PMU) and some other forces of the PMU along with their guests.



Ain Al-Assad, an airbase in al Anbar province, is the main and the largest U.S. airbase in Iraq.

This is the first direct attack on the U.S. army since the Second World War.

IRGC officials said none of the missiles had been in-

tercepted.

The missile attack operation was named after “Martyr Soleimani”.

“We fired 13 missiles at the base in Iraq, although we had prepared several hundred missiles for launching,” Tasnim quoted Hajizadeh as saying.

A few hours after Iran fired dozens of ballistic missiles at the U.S. military base, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said the U.S. was given a “slap” in the face and that the U.S. “corruptive presence” in the region must come to an end.

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said attacks on Ain Al-Assad was in accordance to the rules of the UN Charter, reminding that Iran hit the airbase that had been used as the launchpad for assassinating General Soleimani.

“Iran took and concluded proportionate measures in self-defense under Article 51 of UN Charter targeting [the] base from which cowardly armed attack against our citizens and senior officials were launched,” Zarif wrote on his tweeter page on Wednesday morning.

## Dignity, smarts and grace: that’s Iran’s performance of late

1 → It received the likelihood that American troops are going to have to leave Iraq given the vote in Iraq’s parliament. They will have to leave sooner or later There is no welcome any longer after the U.S. slaughtered Soleimani and al-Muhandis and others. (And if U.S. soldiers depart Iraq and the gargantuan U.S. embassy is forced to close, the U.S. troops in Syria are going to be awfully lonely in the oil fields east of the Euphrates. They will be forced to abandon Syria.)

Limits on Iran’s nuclear program, given the crisis, were mostly dropped. No one was really adhering to the mandates of the JCPOA

anyway, except Iran and the Europeans have been cowardly at best telling the Trump Administration to take a hike and also maintain their part of the quid pro quo for the deal.

After the protests resulting from the gas price hikes, the entire country, under grave threat and in the context of burying Soleimani with great honors, rallied behind the government and stopped for the time being worrying about whether women had to wear the hijab or who could attend sports contests in Azadi Stadium, and other issues. Given that Trump has just threatened yet more sanctions, it’s quite likely that the ‘ass-

abiya’ inside Iran and even with Iraqis, to use an Arabic word championed by the great Ibn Khaldun centuries ago, is not going to diminish anytime soon.

And no one is ever going to forget, in East or West, how Iran stood by its word and did exactly what it said it was going to do in retaliation. And it was done with such awesome precision and technical expertise that the missiles that hit at ‘Ain al-Asad military base in Anbar Province and at Erbil in the north of Iraq apparently took no lives, which is almost a miracle.

It would seem that the American defense

establishment over the past year now has some confirmed understanding about just what damage Iran could do around the Persian Gulf and out to the Mediterranean. And Iran barely used its most advanced defensive missiles.

The only disappointment remains with Trump: he should have dropped the sanctions and the threats and asked for renegotiation of the JCPOA...and apologized. He still claims his primary aim is no nukes for Iran, but this hardly is believable because he dropped the JCPOA and it had been a success because Iran had been faithful to it from the beginning.

## Similar behavior of Israel and U.S. against Iran’s hard revenge

1 → and on the other hand, they repeatedly claim that they have suffered no damage by the IRGC’s operation.

Meanwhile, Persian speaking mercenaries on social media are trying to derail public opinion inside the country about the broad and successful operation and portray the Iranian hard revenge as insignificant.

Interestingly, fake accounts on social media and opposition media outlets that circulated the huge lie of killing 1500 Iranian people in November events, said that the denial by Iran’s official resources is due to their desperation. Now, they confirm Trump’s claims over no damage of the attacks and believe that Iran should provide evidence for

the success of its operation.

It should be noted that in both cases, the enemy was sure of Iran’s hard and destructive response. Putting troops in highest alert in various areas and bases by the enemy proves this claim.

However, the following points should be noted regarding the missile strikes on Wednesday morning on U.S. base in Iraq:

A country that they believe is at a lower military level in comparison with the U.S., could undermine the reputation of the world’s greatest military power by dealing a hard and surprising blow to one of the main American bases and destroying its ultra-modern equipment.

In the short term, there will not be possible to report exact statistics on casualties and equipment damages due to the lack of direct access to the target area, and what some sources announced is minimal and approximate numbers.

The most important event that can happen in the process of hard revenge following commander Soleimani assassination is the withdrawal of the U.S. from the region, a matter that the Americans are well aware of its heavy cost.

Today, the American are faced with a dilemma. They have to release the exact number of casualties and resort to playing the innocent to remain in the region or continue their current game and witness their removal from the region.



# Soleimani became a general of security and peace, says cleric

**POLITICAL d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Martyr Qassem Soleimani became a general of building security and peace, said an interim Friday Prayer leader of Tehran.

“Hajj Qassem Soleimani rid the region from Daesh (ISIS) and boosted the security in the region and expanded the culture of resistance at regional level,” Mohammad Javad Haj Ali Akbari told worshippers.

His efforts guaranteed “Iran’s security and boosted world security and turned him into a general of building security and peace,” Haj Ali Akbari said.

He said that Iran’s security is an outcome of active resistance. “The security which comes from compromise and dialogue will not last, but the security which comes from active resistance is permanent.”

The United States assassinated Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, Iran’s top anti-terror commander, and his comrades-in-arms in an airstrike in Baghdad on Friday morning.

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

Soleimani is recognized internationally



as a legendary commander in the battle against terrorist 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 generals in the world have said the Soleimani

assassination amounts to an act of war against Iran.

On Wednesday morning, Iran carried out the Shahid (Martyr) Soleimani Operation against an American airbase in Iraq with more than ten missiles.

Iran had vowed to take a “tough revenge”

for Soleimani’s blood.

In a statement, the IRGC warned the United States that any more aggression or movement will receive more “painful and crushing” response.

In his remarks, Haj Ali Akbari said Iran’s promised “tough revenge” for the assassination of General Soleimani has just started.

He described the IRGC missile strikes as a “legitimate slap” in the face of the United States.

Those in the Axis of Resistance have promised to take revenge against the U.S. as well, he said, adding that all operations should be aimed at pushing the “criminal America” out of the region.

“From now on, U.S. interests across the world will be posed to extensive threats. This dominating regime has numerous military bases; from now on, having too many bases, especially in this region, will not act as an advantage for them,” the cleric said.

He also praised the Iranian and Iraqi nations for holding a historic funeral procession for General Soleimani last week, noting that the ceremonies were a referendum on the Resistance Movement.

## Epic Soleimani funeral turnout petrified enemy, says IRGC

**POLITICAL d e s k** **TEHRAN** — The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) has thanked the people for their huge turnout at Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani’s funeral processions, saying the people’s epic turnout petrified the enemy.

“This presence undoubtedly was effective in the enemy’s retreat,” the IRGC said in a statement, Mehr reported on Friday.

The statement said the enemy’s voice “shaking” and its face looked “petrified” after watching the huge turnout.

“The ocean of tears which came from the depth of your soul showed your pristine feelings, and deep and infinite affection toward the truth that removed all impurities from the Resistance Front,” the statement read.

The IRGC also vowed to end the “corruptive presence” of the American forces in the region.

“We ask God Almighty to bestow strength and honor upon you and disgrace, humiliation and defeat upon your enemies,” it added.

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 gen-

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

Millions of mourners took to the streets in Iran’s southwestern city of Kerman, Soleimani’s hometown, to attend the top general’s burial ceremony.

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.

## Iranian, Japanese defense chiefs hold phone talks



**POLITICAL d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Iranian Defense Minister Amir Hatami and his Japanese counterpart Taro Kono had a phone conversation on Friday, discussing the rising tension between Tehran and Washington.

To prevent tension in the region, the Iranian defense minister said, the United States must leave the region.

“It will be possible to end tension in the region if the United States’ occupying presence in the region comes to an end,” Hatami said.

Hatami said assassination of top Iranian military commander Qassem Soleimani in Baghdad on January 3 was a “big and unprecedented crime”.

“Based on the United Nations Security Council’s resolution, the United States’ action was a clear example of state terrorism,” he said.

He urged all countries to condemn the U.S. terrorist action.

He also noted that the U.S. regional presence is the main cause of tension and instability.

“The Islamic Republic of Iran, as the biggest littoral state in the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman, has always played its role in providing security and those who seek to help ease tension and create stability in the region must notify the United States to leave the region,” he said.

Kono said that Japan is ready to help de-escalation of tension in the region.

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said on Wednesday that the United States’ “corruptive presence” in the region must come to an end.

“This region does not accept presence of the United States. The people in the region and the regional governments rising from the people do not accept this issue,” the Leader said during a speech in Qom.

## Zarif to Trump: It is the people and not ‘beautiful arms’ that rule the world



**POLITICAL d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif wrote on his Twitter account on Thursday that U.S. President Donald Trump must know that it is the people and not “beautiful military equipment” that rule the world.

“Beautiful military equipment does not rule the world: people do,” Zarif said in response to Trump who had threatened to pound Iran forcefully if Iranians went ahead with their promise to take “harsh revenge” for the assassination of General Qassem Soleimani in a U.S. air raid in Baghdad on January 3.

Trump warned late on January 4 that the U.S. would hit Iran “harder than they have ever been hit before!” Trump followed up with another tweet, saying the U.S. would use its “brand new beautiful” military equipment “without hesitation” if the Iranians retaliate.

To restore its national pride, the IRGC

Aerospace Force fired 13 ballistic missiles early January 8 at the U.S. Ain al-Assad airbase in southwestern Iraq. It was the first direct attack on the U.S. military since the Second World War.

In relevant remarks at a speech at Tehran Dialogue Forum on January 7, Zarif 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 and proud land, heralds peace and quiet for the region,” Zarif added.

“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 at the time.

## Russia, France, UK reassure Iran about commitment to JCPOA

**POLITICAL d e s k** **TEHRAN** — The foreign ministries of the Russian Federation, France and Britain have said that their country will remain committed to obligations under the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

According to Tasnim, French Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Agnes von der Muhll said on Thursday that France will adhere to the nuclear agreement within the framework of the Vienna Agreement.



Russia said this week that it remains fully in compliance with the nuclear deal and is ready to continue working towards their achievement.

“The challenges which the international community has come across during the implementation of the comprehensive arrangements call for political will and a collective response, primarily by the main JCPOA signatories. We have no doubt that when these challenges are checked Iran will see no reason to avoid compliance with the agreed commitments. We urge all our partners to continue on the path set out in the JCPOA and to create conditions for the resumption of its sustainable implementation,” the Russian Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson disregarded U.S. President Donald Trump’s call to withdraw from the nuclear deal, telling Iran’s President Hassan Rouhani in a telephone conversation on Thursday morning that his country remains committed to the international agreement.

“The Prime Minister underlined the UK’s continued commitment to the JCPOA and to ongoing dialogue to avoid nuclear proliferation and reduce tensions,” Johnson’s office said in an official statement after his call with Rouhani.

Following Iran’s decision to take fifth and final step in reducing commitment under the nuclear deal, a German Foreign Ministry spokesman had said on Monday that Germany’s goal remains to save the agreement.

The United Nations nuclear watchdog monitors Iran’s actions, consistently reporting that the Persian Gulf nation remained in compliance with the treaty.

On Wednesday, Trump urged the remaining signatories to the deal - Britain, China, France, Germany and Russia - to seek a new agreement.

## Venezuelan defense minister condemns U.S. for Soleimani assassination

**POLITICAL d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Venezuelan Defense Minister Vladimir Padrino, in a phone conversation with his Iranian counterpart Amir Hatami on Thursday, voiced Caracas’ strong condemnation of the U.S. for assassinating Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani in an attack on his vehicle in Baghdad on January 3.

The Venezuelan minister hailed the brave Iranian general to for his fight against the terrorist groups.

Soleimani, the chief of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Quds Force, was considered a legendary commander in the fight against Daesh, the most savage terrorist group that the world has ever seen.



Soleimani had gone to Baghdad to deliver a message to the Iraqi prime minister who was seeking to reduce tension between Iran and Saudi Arabia.

The attack on Soleimani was an act of war against Iran.

The U.S. airstrike also martyred Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the deputy commander of Iraqi Popular Mobilization Forces (PMU) and some other forces of the PMU along with their guests.

Vowing “harsh revenge” for the martyrdom of General Soleimani, on Wednesday, on the dead of the night, the IRGC Aerospace Force fired dozens of ballistic missiles at the U.S. Ain al-Assad airbase in southwestern Iraq.

The missiles were launched at 1:45am, January 8, 2020.

Ain Al-Assad, an airbase in al Anbar province, is the main and the largest U.S. airbase in Iraq.

This was the first direct attack on the U.S. army since the Second World War.

IRGC officials said none of the missiles had been intercepted. The missile attack operation was named after “Martyr Soleimani”.

A few hours after Iran fired dozens of ballistic missiles at the U.S. military base, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said that the United States was delivered a “slap” and noted that the “corruptive presence” of the U.S. in the region must come to an end.

Also, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said his country’s missile attacks fall under the rules of the UN Charter.

The targeted airbase was used as a launchpad for attack on General Soleimani.

“Iran took and concluded proportionate measures in self-defense under Article 51 of UN Charter targeting [the] base from which cowardly armed attack against our citizens and senior officials were launched,” Zarif wrote on his tweeter page on Wednesday morning.

## Iran: U.S. emulating Daesh as it threatens to destroy Iran’s cultural heritage

**POLITICAL d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has said that the United States is seeking to emulate the war crimes of Daesh by threatening to destroy the cultural heritage of Iran.

“It now even seeks to emulate the war crimes of DAESH, menacing the cultural heritage of the millennia-old civilization of Iran,” he said in a statement read by Iran’s envoy Majid Takhte-Ravanchi to the United Nations Security Council on Thursday.

The U.S. declined to issue Zarif a visa to attend the UN Security Council (UNSC) meeting.

Following is full text of his statement published by IRNA: We are meeting today to discuss a momentous imperative we are all confronted with.

The world is at a crossroads: with the end of monopolies on power, one unhinged regime is frantically clamoring to turn back time. This has meant more damaging American unilateralism in defiance of international norms and law: most recently a dastardly targeted assassination of the heroes who were the nightmare of groups such as ISIS. But since the regime’s inauguration, more and more threats and attacks against the people of Iran and other sovereign nations in utter disregard of the Charter. It now even seeks to emulate the war crimes of DAESH, menacing the cultural heritage of the millennia-old civilization of Iran.

Our January 8th action against an air base in Iraq from which the cowardly armed attack against Martyr Soleimani

was launched, was a measured and proportionate response to a terrorist attack, in the exercise of our inherent right to self-defense in accordance with Article 51 of the Charter.

This rogue U.S. regime has withdrawn from several landmark accords, including the Paris Agreement, the INF Treaty, and not least, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. That, in an open affront to this very Council, has involved unprecedented and unlawful U.S. punishment of anyone who attempts to comply with Resolution 2231, which unequivocally endorses the JCPOA.

It has also adopted mob tactics to expand or gain market share in the face of the increasing diversification of the sources of power. In the case of my own country, U.S. economic terrorism has involved the strangulation of access of ordinary Iranians to food and medicine as well as use of illegal unilateral sanctions to give American oil a foothold in Asia. No one is spared from this malign behavior, as evidenced by how the U.S. approaches global trade – including its targeting of European infrastructure to force the entry of its own natural gas.

The question amidst this rogue behavior is how to protect the UN Charter. For if other states become “passive unilateralists”; if they succumb to unilateralism in their bilateral relationships or compromise Charter principles for the sake of short-term gains or the avoidance of immediate harm, they inadvertently encourage the lawless unilateralist to bully them.



STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	353807.7
IFX	4559.86

Sources: tse.ir, ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	46,689 rials
GBP	55,053 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$65.50/b
WTI	\$59.63/b
OPEC Basket	\$69.60/b
Gold	\$1,550.75/oz
Silver	\$17.94/oz
Platinum	\$977.55/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

TEDPIX down 8% in a week

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE) dropped 30,292 points, or eight percent, to 353,807 points in the past Iranian calendar week (ended on Friday), IRNA reported.

As reported, the value of trades at TSE stood at 13.112 trillion rials (about \$312 million) in the past week, down four percent from its previous week.

Also, the worth of trades at Iran over-the-counter (OTC) market, known as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB), dropped four percent to 3.917 trillion rials (about \$93 million) in the past week, the same report confirmed.

Industry sector’s 9-month production up 10%

**1 →** The official pointed to quality, on-time delivery, and pricing as three major factors for competition in the global markets, adding that the time factor is the most important one and should be taken into serious consideration by Iranian traders and producers.

Since the U.S. reimposed sanctions on Iran to pressure the country’s economy, Iran has been taking all necessary measures to mitigate the impact of the sanctions and counter the U.S. actions.



Improving and boosting domestic production has been one of the major strategies that Iran has been following in the past two years in order to increase its independence.

To this end, Iranian government has put supporting domestic producers atop agenda in the current year.

Providing the required working capital for the production units and offering them facilities is one of the major measures being pursued by the government to support these units.

Jump in German industrial output tempered by export dip

German industrial output rose more than expected in November, registering its biggest monthly increase in a year and a half, though declining exports made for mixed signals on Europe’s largest economy.

Industrial production jumped by 1.1% from October, beating expectations for a 0.7% gain, figures from the statistics office showed on Thursday, thanks to manufacturing growth and booming construction.

The October reading was revised upwards to a 1% decline from a previously reported 1.7% decrease.

“That’s two pieces of good news for the price of one,” said LBBW analyst Jens-Oliver Niklasch, adding that the data should help to dispel any remaining fears of a recession, though the outlook for industrial companies remains clouded.

Germany’s export-dependent manufacturers are contending with sluggish demand from abroad as well as business uncertainty linked to trade disputes and Britain’s decision to leave the European Union. The automobile sector is also struggling to adjust to stricter emissions regulation and a shift to electric vehicles.

Trade figures also published on Thursday underlined the difficult outlook, with data from the statistics office showing November’s exports were down 2.3% month on month while imports edged down 0.5%, narrowing the trade surplus to 18.3 billion euros (15.59 billion pounds).

The DIHK Chambers of Industry and Commerce, which expects exports to shrink this year for the first time since the world financial crisis more than a decade ago, pointed to persistent headwinds from abroad.

“Global uncertainties will remain in 2020 due to trade conflicts, sanctions or Brexit,” said DIHK economist Volker Treier.

The recent military escalation between the United States and Iran poses an additional risk.

The “escalation in the region means another factor of uncertainty for companies,” said Holger Bingmann, head of the BGA trade association.

Data released on Wednesday showed that industrial orders fell unexpectedly in November on weak foreign demand and a lack of big contracts, suggesting that the manufacturing slump will continue to curtail growth.

(Source: nytimes.com)

Steel ingot production up 4% in 9 months on year

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Production of steel ingot rose four percent in Iran during the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-Decembr 21, 2019) from the same period of time in the previous year, IRNA reported on Friday.

Some 15.398 million tons of steel ingots were reportedly produced during the nine-month period of the present year.

Also, production of steel products in the country has increased six percent to

stand at 10.141 million tons in the first nine months of this year.

According to the Iranian deputy industry, mining, and trade minister, the country’s steel products output is going to reach 28 million tons by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 19, 2020).

Jafar Sarqini has also announced that the Industry Ministry is planning to increase the exports of steel products to 12 million tons by the end of the year.

The value of the exports of such



commodities is expected to reach \$9 billion by yearend, the official has said.

Iran’s annual steel production is planned

to reach 45 million tons by the Iranian calendar year 1400 (March 2021-March 2022).

Iranian banks sell over \$3b of assets

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Iranian banks have, so far, managed to sell 150 trillion rials (about \$3.57 billion) worth of their excess properties following a government plan for pruning the country’s banking system, ILNA reported, quoting a banking official.

According to the deputy economy minister for banking and insurance, Abbas Memarnejad, based on the mentioned plan, banks are obliged to sell 400 trillion rials (about \$9.5 billion) of their assets in order to reform the banking sector.

The mentioned assets are highly diverse and include a variety of items like lands, companies, firms and shares, each group of which is being sold on its own terms and conditions, Memarnejad said.

“Banks which do not comply with the program for selling their excess assets will be subject to tax penalties,” he stressed.

Back in October, Iranian Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Farhad Dejpasand announced that a one-year program is underway for 10 government-owned banks (including the biggest lenders) to relinquish the excess assets—mostly real estate— and increase their cash reserves.

The ministry unveiled a website designed for this purpose in early December 2019, on which over 170 trillion rials (about \$4.04 billion) worth of Iranian banks’ excess properties were put for sale.



Speaking in the unveiling ceremony, Dejpasand said the plan is a step toward liberalizing the banks’ resources to provide facilities for the country’s productive sector and to create more jobs.

Mentioning the fact that the excess assets of the country’s banks are much more than what has currently been offered for sale, the official noted that in the first phase only 170 trillion rials of such properties were offered for sale.

Iran’s banking industry is suffering, among other things, from issues such as poor balance sheets, capital inadequacy, inability to recover non-performing loans to the tune of billions of dollars, arcane rules, and dubious operations of illegal credit institutions that have been punishing the economy for years.

In late August, Governor of Central Bank of Iran (CBI) Abdolnasser Hemmati said the bank has been working hard to reform the banking system long grappling with mismanagement and financial indiscipline.

TPO holds 1st meeting of Commodity-Country Desk on trade with Oman

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Iran’s Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) held the first meeting of its Commodity-Country Desk on trade with Oman presided by Farzad Piltan, the director general of TPO’s Office of Arabian and African Countries.

As reported by the website of TPO, the meeting was held on January 8 mainly aiming at investigating the ways for increasing exports of constructional materials to Oman and removing the barriers related to transporting these materials to the Arab country, and was participated by the related state-run and private sectors officials including representatives of some exporting and marine transport companies.

Despite the U.S. reimposition of sanc-

tions against the Islamic Republic, Oman is getting closer to Iran both politically and economically. There is also the same approach adopted by Iran, as Iranian companies now prefer to conduct trade with Oman rather than the United Arab Emirates (UAE), given that the UAE is highly complying with the sanctions.

Iran is somehow replacing some of its previous strategic trade partners such as UAE with Oman, considering the Sultanate as an economic-trade hub.

Over the past year there have been many meetings and negotiations between trade and economic officials from the state-run and private sectors of the two sides with the aim of strengthening and expanding bilateral

trade ties.

Last month, during the 18th meeting of Iran-Oman Joint Economic Committee in Tehran, Omani minister of commerce and industry said his country is trying to boost its trade and economic ties with Iran, stressing that this goal can be achieved through more cooperation between the two sides’ private sectors.

Ali bin Masoud al Sunaidy also said, “We will make the most efforts to provide incentives for joint investment and also promote bilateral trade cooperation between the two countries.”

Stressing that a very proper condition is available for invigorating the bilateral trade, the Omani official said the two sides can also

take the advantage of bartering to expand their trade ties.

Addressing the same meeting, Iranian Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Reza Rahmani said while there are potential capabilities for boosting the trade turnover between Iran and Oman to \$5 billion, the figure is currently \$1 billion.

The International NorthSouth Transit Corridor (INSTC) can help the two countries elevate their bilateral trade to this level, the minister noted.

There are some problems regarding money transferring between the two sides’ traders which are hoped to be resolved through strategies to be adopted by the central banks of the two countries, Rahmani further said.

‘Tehran-Baghdad banking ties to improve after U.S. leaves Iraq’

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Head of Iran-Iraq Joint Chamber of Commerce says banking relations between the two countries will get much better if the Americans leave the Arab country and their interference ends.

“Americans are disrupting Iran-Iraq business relations. They are interfering with the Iraqi Central Bank and not allowing the Iraqi private sector to have normal relations [with Iran],” Seyed Hamid Hosseini told IRNA on Thursday.

In an extraordinary session on January 5, the Iraqi parliament voted for a resolution requiring the government to order the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq.

The session came two days after a U.S. drone strike on a convoy at Baghdad airport which killed Iranian military commander Qassem Soleimani and Iraqi Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) deputy chief Abu Mahdi al-



Muhandis.

Mentioning the recent unrests in Iraq, Hosseini said

the trade relations between the two countries are running smoothly and normally.

“However, exports to the central Iraq have witnessed a small decrease while exports to the Iraqi Kurdistan region have increased,” he added.

The economic and political relations between Iran and Iraq has increased significantly in the past few years and the two neighbors are seeking ways to facilitate financial transactions and boost their trade ties.

The number of the exchanged trade delegations between the two countries has increased drastically in the past two years and they have held several business forums and joint committee meetings.

The two country’s officials have constantly stated that the two sides have it on agenda to boost their mutual trade to \$20 billion by 2021.

The outlook for Latin America: An ‘asset management revolution’?

Asset and wealth management in Latin America is coming of age, with assets under management (AUM) forecast to rise by an 11.8% compound annual growth rate between 2018 and 2025.

Favorable trends are pushing this growth forwards, from the rise of the middle class to the search for yield in a low-return world.

In many ways, the Latin American market has begun to resemble some more mature asset and wealth management markets and similar challenges have started to arise, including regulatory pressure and rising costs.

However, growth still resembles that of emerging markets, and this creates huge opportunities for asset and wealth managers.

Furthermore, there are some obstacles to growth that are specific to the region, such as

economic and political uncertainty and a low savings rate.

Put simply, not everyone will be a winner as this market expands. Those that come out on top will need to have adopted several strategies.

If we had to name just two, they would be, first, the effective and rapid adoption of digital technologies and, second, a relentless focus on getting the best outcomes for the investor.

Before elaborating on this, let’s look at some of the figures that graphically illustrate the growth story. AUM totalled \$2.4trn in 2018 and are forecast to increase to \$5.3trn by 2025.

The market is dominated by Brazil, Mexico and Chile, which, together, comprised 87.5% of total AUM in 2018 and accounted for 83% of total pension assets in the region.

The bedrock of this expansion has been the solid economic performance of the region between 2015 and 2018. Since 2017, the economic outlook has improved, and we expect overall modest growth by 2025, with a strong showing from the so-called Andean countries, Colombia, Peru and Chile.

■ The foundation for growth

But if Latin America’s economy has provided the foundation for growth, it is the rise of the region’s middle class that has supplied the motive power.

It would, however, be a mistake not to recognize that the rising generation of millennial investors has a very different set of priorities compared with those who went before.

These priorities are a blend of the contem-

porary, with a major stress on both the embrace of new technology and on environmental, social and governance (ESG) investing on one hand, and a cautious, risk-averse investment approach on the other, which can be traced to the life of low wages and high debts in which many will find themselves.

As the region develops, Latin America’s need for significant levels of infrastructure spending supplies a considerable proportion of the investment opportunities.

Infrastructure has emerged in recent years as a very popular alternative asset class. For the region’s governments, institutional investors can help fill the funding gap caused by the retreat of bank finance in the post-crisis era.

(Source: investmentweek.co.uk)



# NPC to conduct Iran’s 1st natural gas polymerization project

**E N E R G Y** **TEHRAN** — Head of Iran’s National Petrochemical Company (NPC) says a project for producing polymer from natural gas is going to be conducted in the country for the first time in the next Iranian calendar year (March 2020-March 2021).

Speaking in an expert desk on promotion of domestic production on Wednesday, Behzad Mohammadi said two major leaps have been provisioned for the country’s petrochemical industry by the Iranian calendar year of 1400 (starts in March 2021), based on which 27 projects will be completed and another 28 projects worth \$18 billion are planned to be started across the country.

According to Mohammadi, the country’s petrochemical production capacity is going to double by the end of Iranian calendar year of 1404 (March 2026).

“So far, \$53 billion has been invested in the country’s petrochemical industry, and with the third leap in this sector, the number is going to increase to \$93 billion by



the [Iranian calendar] year of 1404, which means a 75-percent growth,” he said in a conference on oil and energy in Tehran in October 2019.

In early November 2019, the official had said that Iran’s petrochemical industry will be accounting for 6.2 percent of the total global petrochemical output by 2025.

Iranian petrochemical industry is strongly moving forward despite the pressures that the U.S. sanctions have imposed on the industry, the NPC head said.

The deputy oil minister furthered noted that there are currently 56 active petrochemical complexes across the country which receive 33 million tons of feedstock annually (equivalent to 650,000 barrels of crude oil per day).

The official further said that Iran’s annual petrochemical revenue had reached \$17 billion from only \$200,000 back in 1979, the year the Islamic Revolution became victorious. He also said the sector’s revenues would cross 37 billion dollars per year by 2025.

In late September, Director of NPC’s Projects Ali-Mohammad Bosaqzadeh had said that Iran’s annual petrochemical output is planned to reach more than 100 million tons by the Iranian calendar year of 1400 and to 130 million tons or nearly doubled by 1404.

## Oil slips towards \$65 as Middle East war concerns ease

Oil slipped towards \$65 a barrel on Friday as the threat of war in the Middle East receded and investors focused on rising U.S. inventories and other signs of ample supply.

Crude is now below where it was before a U.S. drone strike killed Iranian general Qassem Soleimani on Jan. 3. Iran responded with a missile attack on Iraqi air bases hosting U.S. forces this week that left no casualties.

“Immediate escalation has been avoided,” said Olivier Jakob, oil analyst at Petromatrix. “There has been some de-escalation, but the return of risk is still there.”

Brent crude LCOc1, the global benchmark, was down 20 cents at \$65.17 by 0928 GMT, and was heading for its first weekly decline in six weeks, down about 5%. U.S. West Texas Intermediate crude CLc1 was 25 cents lower at \$59.31.

“Tensions between the U.S. and Iran appear to have eased almost as quickly as they escalated,” said Craig Erlam, an analyst at OANDA, a brokerage.

“Brent is trading back around \$65 and is looking pretty stable at this point. Barring any further escalation in the Middle East, we could see oil prices stabilize around these levels in the near term.”

With Middle East tensions easing for now, investors are focusing on areas away from the conflict.

Crude inventories in the United States rose last week by 1.2 million barrels, the U.S. Energy Information Administration said on Wednesday.

That compared with analysts’ expectations in a Reuters poll for a 3.6 million-barrel drop.

“There’s too much supply out there,” a Japan-based based oil executive told Reuters.

In a bid to tackle any build-up of excess supply, the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries plus allies including Russia are embarking on a further cut in production as of Jan. 1 this year.

Industry surveys, including from Reuters, showed that



OPEC output declined in December ahead of the new pact. Still, production remains higher than the forecast demand for early 2020, according to some analysts.

The “oversupply on the oil market is sizeable,” said Carsten Fritsch, analyst at Commerzbank.

(Source: reuters.com)

## Positive outlook for firms in drilling, fabrication and vessel provision going into 2020: MIDF

Malaysian Industrial Development Finance Berhad (MIDF) Research has maintained ‘Neutral’ on the upstream and ‘Positive’ on the downstream subsectors of the oil and gas (O&G) sector, and said it reiterated its view that local O&G services companies that are involved in drilling, fabrication and vessel providers continue to benefit from the upbeat offshore activities going into 2020.

In a sector note on Friday, the research house said that higher crude oil price is generally favorable to encourage the continued spending of O&G exploration and production (E&P) producers; it opines that a stable and sustainable oil price will be even more favorable to the O&G companies in the current operating climate.

“It is to enable a proper planning for future capital expenditure (CAPEX) to be conducted using predictable parameters rather than projecting numbers in an extreme environment.

“That said, we understand that most E&P producers are comfortable at the current \$60-70pb oil price level as current production costs ranges from \$30-40pb for off-shore production whilst for onshore productions,” it said.

Moving forward, it said while both the U.S. and Iran seemed to have come to a stand-off following the U.S.-Iran tension, many are unconvinced that the crisis will end there.

### ■ At this juncture

MIDF research said it does not believe that at this juncture further escalation will take place. However, it said it opines that should any escalation resulting from the attacks or rise in internal pressure happens, it will potentially result in a target placed on U.S.-related assets and oil-related assets.

It also said that this could lead to a temporary disruption



in oil supply and rise in oil price.

“We believe there will be a temporary knee-jerk reaction towards the oil price - should there be an escalation of attack. It will be similar to that of the recent attack on Saudi Aramco’s oil facilities – the Abqaiq and Khurais oil facilities, back in September 2019 which wiped out 5.7mbpd of crude supply from the market,” it added.

The research house said it opines the current stand-off between U.S. and Iran will lead to a more sustainable oil price movement and a more stable outlook for the oil and gas industry.

“Some 20% of the world’s oil supply originates from the Middle East. Therefore, any tensions surrounding the region and Strait of Hormuz will disrupt world trade and oil supply.

“Members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) in recent interviews with various news agencies stated that they are vulnerable to regional conflicts,” it said.

## Renewables replace fossil fuels as Europe’s main power source

By Kelvin Ross

Renewables overtook fossil fuels as Europe’s primary electricity source for the first time in 2019, while gas also outpaced coal and lignite.

That’s the key findings of a new report from energy market data analytics firm EnAppSys.

While hydropower remained the largest provider of renewable power, the biggest gains in clean energy generation was in wind.

The latest report on the EU power market from EnAppSys reveals that fossil fuels generated 941.3TWh last year, compared with the 1029.1TWh produced by renewables and 777.0TWh from nuclear plants.

Some 37.5 percent of generation came from renewables, 34.3 percent from fossil fuels (18.2 from gas and 15.3 from coal/ lignite) and 28.3 percent from nuclear plants.

Of the renewables, 15.5 percent was from hydro, 13.9 from wind, with the rest coming from solar, biomass and waste.

EnAppSys BV director Jean-Paul Harreman said that “one of the major changes seen in Europe in recent years – and in 2019 in particular – has

been the transition from coal and lignite sources to gas. This trend has been driven largely by low gas prices and the increase in carbon prices, which makes generation from so-called ‘dirty’ fuels less attractive.”

Although overall levels of renewable generation dipped by 1 percent in 2019, they have risen 24 percent since 2015, outstripping the increases in fossil fuel and nuclear generation (4 and 5 percent respectively) in the same period.

### ■ Coal/lignite-fired generation

EnAppSys highlights that power produced from fossil fuels has become cleaner in recent years, with gas-fired generation climbing by 88 percent since 2015 while coal/lignite-fired generation has fallen by 32 percent.

In 2019, gas-fired plants produced 500.5TWh (up from 265.7TWh in 2015), versus 419.6TWh from coal/lignite (down from 617.6TWh in 2015). This was a notable shift from the previous year when gas-fired plants generated less power than coal/lignite plants.

Of the power produced from renewables, EnAppSys found that the majority continues to come from hydro plants, which generated 425.8TWh last year – an increase on the 402.6TWh produced

in 2015 but down on the previous three years.

While recent growth in hydro generation has been very limited across Europe, wind farms have seen significant changes since 2015, and generated 382.5TWh last year compared with 272.7TWh four years previously.

EnAppSys found solar has also seen growth, though less significant than wind. It saw generation climb from 81.0TWh in 2015 to 113.5TWh last year. In contrast, biomass has seen more significant growth, climbing from 65.7TWh to 92.6TWh over the same period.

Harreman said: The continued rise in renewables output meant that this power source overtook the combined output from fossil fuels for the very first time in 2019.

“Since 2015 several countries across Europe have seen significant growth in renewable generation at the expense of fossil fuels, while other countries already had a high share of generation from renewable sources due to a large hydro resource – with hydro remaining the largest source of renewable generation in Europe by some margin in 2019.”

(Source: powerengineeringint.com)

## New coal-killing energy storage challenge also dings natural gas

It’s no secret that the Trump Administration has presided over the collapse of the U.S. coal industry, but do they have to rub it in? The answer appears to be yes. On Wednesday, newly minted Energy Secretary Dan Brouillette announced an all-hands-on-deck initiative to push the energy storage envelope farther into coal-killing territory. For good measure, the new \$153 million “Energy Storage Grand Challenge” will probably bump off natural gas, too. And all this under a President\* who pledged to save coal jobs!

This sodium-based battery is just one of many advanced energy storage technologies in the Energy Department’s R&D portfolio (screenshot, via Pacific Northwest National Laboratory).

Considering all the promises Trump made to coal miners, their families, and their communities, one would think that a major coal-killing announcement would get buried in a Friday evening news dump. After all, energy storage is the key that accelerates the renewable energy revolution.

Nope. Secretary Brouillette made the announcement in the brilliant light of day exactly in the middle of the week, on Wednesday afternoon at CES 2020 in Las Vegas. The annual event, which is owned and produced by the US Consumer Technology Association, bills itself as “the world’s gathering place for all those who thrive on the business of consumer technologies.”

“It has served as the proving ground for innovators and breakthrough technologies for 50 years — the global stage where next-generation innovations are introduced to the marketplace,” CES continues.

### ■ High-profile venue

You couldn’t ask for a more high profile venue than that — oh wait, you can.

CES has been especially like honey to media flies this year, because a very high profile White House official — Trump advisor Ivanka Trump — was scheduled to deliver a rare main stage keynote address at the event. That’s rare as in, female main stage keynoters are like unicorns at CES, so between the Trump name and the female angle, all eyes have been on CES for weeks leading up to the event.

“Today, U.S. Energy Secretary Dan Brouillette announced the launch of the Energy Storage Grand Challenge, a comprehensive program to accelerate the development, commercialization, and utilization of next-generation energy storage technologies and sustain American global leadership in energy storage.”

At \$153 million, funding for the new energy storage program is relatively small. However, it adds to a \$158 million pot that was carved into the fiscal year 2020 federal budget.

That’s still peanuts compared to other Energy Department efforts (FutureGen, anyone?), but there’s an interesting twist to this one.

The effort will come under the new Research and Technology Investment Committee in the Energy Department. RTIC was established by a 2018 Act of Congress — the Department of Energy Research and Innovation Act — so they are not kidding around when it comes to major new initiatives.

RTIC pulls all the brainpower of the sprawling agency into collaborative efforts just like this one.

That’s sprawling, as in sprawling with thousands of researchers on staff and thousands more in academic and private sector partnerships.

The Energy Storage Subcommittee of RTIC is co-chaired jointly by the Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy and Office of Electricity. The Office of Science, Office of Technology Transitions, ARPA-E (yep, it’s still alive and kicking), Office of Policy, the Loan Programs Office despite efforts to kill it), and the Office of the Chief Financial Officer are all on board as committee members.

The Office of Fossil Energy and Office of Nuclear Energy also get a seat at the table, which makes sense from the perspective of accelerating research on heat-tolerant materials and other broad areas that cut across different ways to generate and store electricity.

### ■ Promoting renewable energy

However, with EERE and OE as a co-chairs it sure looks like the whole thing is designed to promote renewable energy at the expense of other sources.

The Energy Department is not just trying to keep up with the Joneses here. It is aiming for the US to dominate the global energy storage marketplace. In the process, it will steamroll all over the prospects for future growth in both coal and natural gas for power generation in the US.

The agency has already dropped a couple of huge hints about its intentions. For starters, it is launching a series of stakeholder workshops with the goal of developing a “coordinated R&D roadmap to 2030 for a broad suite of storage and flexibility technologies.”

(Source: cleantechnica.com)

First Announcement



N.I.S.O.C

NATIONAL IRANIAN SOUTH OILFIELDS COMPANY AHVAZ-IRAN

TENDER NO.: 08-21-9840003

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

items	Material Description	Quantity
01	CASING, API GRADE L-80, SEAMLESS,"VAM", "N.VAM" OR "SEC" THREAD, RANGE 3 (MAX LEN: 40.5 FT), AS PER API 5CT/ISO 11960, SIZE (OD),WEIGHT (PPF), AS SPECIFIED, MARKING: COLD DIE STAMPED IN ACCORDANCE WITH API 5CT, NOTE: LEVEL OF INSPECTION: 1 (L.O.I: 1) "QCP/MP5 DOCUMENTS ARE ESSENTIAL TO REVIEW & CONFORM" "ITP DOCUMENTS IS ESSENTIAL FOR TECHNICAL EVALUATION" 5-1/2 IN. 20 PPF	2400 LE

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. 2, 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 78,731 EURO or 9,868,000,000 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

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# Taiwan’s citizens battle pro-China fake news campaigns as election nears

Contest is in effect a referendum on the future of the self-governed island’s relationship with China

By Lily Kuo in Beijing and Lilian Yang

Citizen groups in Taiwan are fighting a Russian-style influence and misinformation campaign that is believed to originate across the strait in mainland China with just weeks to go before it votes for its next president,

Taiwan goes to the polls on 11 January to decide between two main candidates, incumbent president Tsai Ing-Wen of the Democratic Progressive party (DPP) under whom ties with Beijing have become fraught, and Han Kuoyu of the Kuomintang party (KMT), which advocates closer engagement with China.

The contest is in large part a referendum on the future of Taiwan’s relationship with Beijing, which sees the self-governed island as a renegade province that one day must return to the fold. Han is Beijing’s favored candidate while Tsai’s party has been campaigning on the slogan: “Resist China, Defend Taiwan”. In a televised debate with her rivals for the job on Sunday, Tsai said China’s “expanding ambitions” were the biggest threat to its democracy.

Citizen groups in Taiwan say the openness of one of the freest societies in Asia is being used against it by groups in China to wage an online disinformation campaign, made more potent by their shared language, Mandarin. A recent study by the V-Dem Institute at the University of Gothenburg in Sweden found that Taiwan was the most exposed to foreign dissemination of false information.

False reports include claims Tsai’s doctorate degree was fake or that Hong Kong democracy activist Joshua Wong kicked an elderly man when he visited Taiwan in October and met members of the DPP.

“China has multiple ways of pushing misinformation. We’ve found that content mills are no longer simply producing fake information. More and more, they are manipulating opinions,” said Jarvis Chiu, senior manager for the Institute for Information Industry, which has been assisting government efforts to prevent disinformation.



Taiwan’s President Tsai Ing-wen Photograph: Sam Yeh/AFP via Getty Images

According to Chiu, an army of trolls will leave thousands of comments under a candidate’s post or a news article, shifting the focus of the debate. Fake social media accounts also share pro-Beijing content or inflate the number of likes such content gets. “Subliminal attacks” include repeatedly searching for one candidate’s name to influence search algorithm results.

“China won’t give up this practice. It will only increase and because it is non-military, it won’t get much global attention,” Chiu said.

The uncertain status of Taiwan, functionally independent but not internationally recognised, has been an issue in every campaign since direct elections were introduced in the 1990s following decades of martial law under the KMT.

This year, the question of how Taiwan should deal with Beijing looms even larger after years of increasingly strident rhetoric from China. On Thursday, China sailed its new aircraft carrier, Shandong, through the Taiwan Strait in a move critics described an effort to intimidate voters. Months of witnessing Beijing’s inflexible response to protesters

in Hong Kong have cast even more doubt on the city’s “one country, two systems” framework, once touted as a possible model for Taiwan.

“There’s a sword hanging over everyone all the time,” said Shelley Rigger, a professor of east Asian politics with a focus on Taiwan at Davidson College. “It’s exhausting to know that you’re being threatened and that the entity that is threatening you is getting more and more powerful all the time.”

In an attempt to push back against the campaign, citizen watchdog groups are manning social media, debunking rumours and trying to trace questionable content back to its source. Prosecutors have been charging those who spread disinformation. The party in office is trying to pass a law that would prohibit support from foreign “infiltration sources” to a political party.

“Taiwanese people have only just started understanding what is happening. It’s still the very beginning,” said Summer Chen, of Taiwan FactCheck Center which works on debunking disinformation on Facebook. “It is a crisis and all of Taiwan needs to be researching this.”

A series of snappy Youtube tutorials educate viewers on the nature and methods of disinformation warfare. “Taiwan has become the main laboratory for information warfare from China. If China wants to practice its methods, Taiwan is the starting point,” Puma Shen, who runs DoubleThink Labs, which monitors how false information, explains in one of the videos.

Those working on the issue say it is difficult to definitely say these attacks originated in China or link them to Chinese state actors, which makes the work of raising awareness harder.

“I believe that there is cooperation with China, but how much China knows, how much of this is from the Chinese government or people in Taiwan who are pro-China, we don’t know,” said Vivian Chen, a recent graduate studying medicine from Taipei.

China’s efforts to influence events in Taiwan stretch a long way back and go beyond online information warfare, to include traditional media, incentives for citizens or businesses who cooperate with China, group trips and donations to temples and other grassroots organisations.

Last month when Chinese defector Wang Liqiang detailed ways he had been instructed to interfere in Taiwan’s midterm elections in 2018 as well as the upcoming race, few in Taiwan were surprised.

“The story was not as shocking in Taiwan as it was in other parts of the world,” said Lev Nachman, a PhD candidate at the University of California, Irvine, studying social movements and focusing on Taiwan. “It is not news to Taiwanese people that China has been co-opting local organisations for political influence.”

Observers say it is unlikely efforts to influence voters will affect the outcome of the race, where voters will also choose representatives for the legislature. According to polls, Tsai is ahead of her rival, helped by months of protests in Hong Kong and concerns about Beijing, and an improved economy.

(Source: The Guardian)

## China: did everything go according to five-year plan?

Beijing’s 2020 targets provide insight into its priorities, but not all have been met

By Tom Hancock in Shanghai

In recent decades the Chinese Communist party has relaxed its control over swaths of the country’s economy and society. Despite that, Beijing’s penchant for setting long-term targets on everything from grain output to carbon emissions is as fervent as ever.

This year is particularly important for such goals, because 2020 will mark the end of China’s current five-year development plan. The government also wants to achieve several economic milestones in time for the 2021 centenary of the party’s establishment.

Outside observers have long taken China’s official data with a big pinch of salt. One 2019 study said that government figures may have overstated inflation-adjusted GDP by 2 percentage points every year from 2008 to 2016.

Still, experts say government targets — which range from headline economic growth to availability of toilets for tourists — provide invaluable insight into Beijing’s priorities.

### ■ GDP: Doubling in a decade

Xi Jinping, China’s most powerful leader in more than a generation, has downplayed the importance of GDP growth, instead emphasizing environmental protection and financial stability. Even so, Mr Xi inherited a hard growth target from his predecessor.

Former president Hu Jintao in 2012 decreed that China’s national GDP would double between 2010 and 2020. To meet that, China’s economy needed to grow 7.5 per cent on average every year.

The decade got off to a great start, with growth hitting 10.3 per cent in 2010. But economic expansion has since slowed markedly — at 6 per cent, it was the weakest in 30 years in the third quarter of 2019.

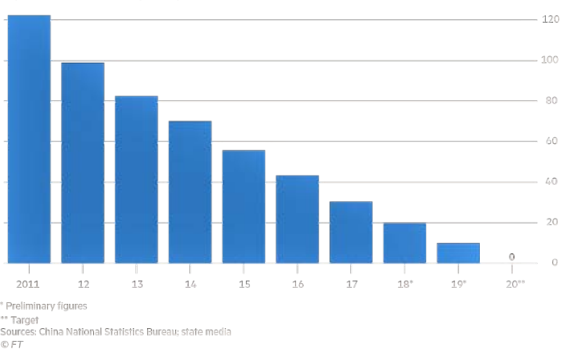
China is set to announce its full-year 2019 GDP growth on January 17 and it is expected to come in at 6 to 6.5 per cent. If it does, the economy will in 2020 be able to grow at below 6 per cent and still achieve Mr Hu’s 2020 goal.

### ■ Poverty elimination

One of Mr Xi’s main policies has been to tackle poverty. He pledged in 2015 to cut the number of people with a yearly income of less than Rmb2,300 (\$335) from more than 50m to zero by 2020.

China to declare elimination of extreme poverty by 2020

Population below official poverty line (m)



As part of that process the government planned to move 10m people from remote villages to urban areas for better-paying jobs in industries such as tourism and manufacturing.

What is less clear is how successful the five-year campaign has been. “Top Chinese officials will claim total victory and the [official] statistics will back this claim. Nevertheless, the poor will always be among us,” John Donaldson, a professor at Singapore Management University wrote in an assessment of the campaign last year.

### ■ Environment: limiting coal use

China is by far the world’s largest coal consumer and efforts to wean itself off the energy source have big ramifications on global efforts to slow climate change.

Beijing wants to cut the proportion of coal in its mix of energy sources to below 58 per cent by the end of 2020, replacing it with renewable energy. Coal’s share has fallen from nearly 70 per cent to less than 60 per cent over the past decade.

But some sources claim that China’s use of coal is still rising in absolute terms. A report published in November by Global Energy Monitor, a non-profit group, found that China was still opening new coal plants at a faster pace than the rest of the world was closing them.

Beijing has yet to set an absolute target for cutting carbon emissions, only pledging that they will peak by around

2030. By then about one-fifth of the country’s energy will come from non-fossil fuel sources, the Chinese government has claimed.

### ■ Urban housing

China’s property market makes a huge contribution to the world’s second-biggest economy and it has the potential to lift or decimate global prices for commodities like cement and steel. In 2018, the value of residential sales alone in the country hit almost \$2tn, according to official data.

An important recent catalyst for the market has been a government initiative to demolish and redevelop tens of millions of dilapidated residences labelled as slums.

The scheme has so far seen about 100m people rehoused and the government has said that the renovation of all urban slum areas will be complete by the end of this year.

Officials had originally pledged to build or renovate a further 15m homes between 2018-20, but that target has since been slashed to around 10m after a surge in construction has left local governments saddled with debt.

### ■ Toilet revolution

Mr Xi proclaimed a “toilet revolution” in 2015 when he vowed to improve facilities in rural regions and at tourist sites. Authorities splashed Rmb1.8bn (\$260m) on new toilets between 2015-17.

China’s National Tourism Administration has said it will rebuild or refurbish 64,000 toilets at tourism attractions between 2018 and 2020. The administration has said it is already more than two-thirds of the way toward this target.

(Source: Financial Times)

## U.S. House votes to restrict Trump’s War Powers

TEHRAN (Tasnim) — The U.S. House of Representatives approved a nonbinding resolution aimed at reining in the president’s ability to attack Iran in the future without congressional approval.

The resolution, passed on Thursday, comes as criticism over U.S. President Donald Trump’s decision to order the assassination of Iranian military commander Lt. General Qassem Soleimani in Iraq intensifies. Congress was not consulted prior to the assassination, angering Democrats who fear Trump’s actions could trigger a cycle of escalation leading to war.

The House’s War Powers resolution directs Trump to terminate military operations against Iran except for self-defense and clarifies that the president presently does not have congressional authority to engage in war with Iran. A similar version is expected to be debated in the Senate.

Thursday’s House vote 224-194 fell along party lines and followed days of frustration by Democrats over Trump actions regarding Iran. Three Republicans and one Independent sided with the Democrats. Eight Democrats voted with Republicans against the resolution, Al Jazeera reported.

Trump’s decision to order the drone attack on General Soleimani was “provocative and disproportionate”, Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said.

Under the U.S. Constitution, the authority to direct military action is divided between Congress and the president. Congress has the power to declare war while the president, as commander-in-chief, has the power to use the military to defend the U.S.

The War Powers Act of 1973 provides that Congress may direct the president to withdraw U.S. forces from hostilities by passing a resolution in both the House and Senate.

## Australia urges quarter of a million to flee as winds fan huge bushfires

SYDNEY — Australia urged nearly a quarter of a million people to evacuate their homes on Friday and prepared military backup as authorities said the next few hours could be “very, very challenging” even as rain poured down in some parts.

Defense personnel stood ready to move to bushfire grounds if conditions became extreme, Prime Minister Scott Morrison told reporters, as soaring temperatures and erratic winds create dangerous conditions.

“Even with rain in Melbourne, even with forecast better conditions next week, there is a long way to go in what has been an unprecedented fire event...and, of course, we know that we have many weeks of the fire season to run,” Daniel Andrews, the premier of Victoria, told a televised briefing.

“The next few hours are going to be very, very challenging.” While the winds are expected to move through by Saturday morning, Andrews urged residents to stay on high alert and leave the community “if you are told to”.

Authorities sent emergency texts to 240,000 people in Victoria, telling them to leave. People in high-risk regions in New South Wales and South Australia were also urged to think about leaving, but officials did not say how many.

Since October, 27 people have been killed and thousands subjected to repeat evacuations as huge and unpredictable fires scorched more than 10.3 million hectares (25.5 million acres) of land, an area roughly the size of South Korea.

In the coastal town of Eden in New South Wales, where the alert status was upgraded to ‘watch and act’ on Friday evening, smoke filled the horizon as winds blew smoke and ash.

Shereen and Kim Green, who live on a farm with three houses and 50 cattle just outside Eden, were racing to fill two 1,000-litre tanks of water.

“This is to put out the spot fires and we’ll be staying up all night to defend our property,” said Shereen, as the wind shook her utility vehicle. “We’re taking the opportunity while we can.”

Sitting under the town’s watchtower, another resident Robyn Malcolm said: “If it all goes wrong, we’ll dash down to the wharf and get on a tugboat.”

Here are key events in the crisis:

\* Of 160 fires ablaze across New South Wales (NSW), about 46 were uncontained. Two were burning at an ‘emergency level’, eight blazes were in the “watch and act” category, with the rest at the “advice” level, the lowest alert rating.

\* Neighboring Victoria had 36 fires, with more than 1.3 million hectares burned. Nine fires were at an emergency level.

\* In the alpine region on the border of the southeastern states of Victoria and New South Wales, two fires were poised to merge and create a blaze over almost 600,000 hectares (1.5 million acres).

\* Victoria emergency services minister Lisa Neville said some communities had been provided with large containers of satellite phones, baby formula, food, nappies, and torches in case they are cut off.

(Source: Reuters)

## JCPOA ‘An Important Diplomatic Victory’: UN Chief

TEHRAN (Tasnim) — United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres warned against scrapping the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), describing it as an important diplomatic that needs to be preserved.

“I believe the JCPOA was an important diplomatic victory and I think it will be important to preserve it,” he said on Thursday in an interview with BBC Radio 4.

US President Donald Trump has been threatening to pull out of the agreement, leading to diplomatic tensions with Iran as well as with US allies keen to preserve the agreement.

“If one day there is a better agreement to replace it it’s fine, but we should not scrap it unless we have a good alternative,”



Guterres said.

“I... believe there are areas in which it will be very important to have a meaningful dialogue because I see the region in a very dangerous position,” he added.

The UN chief went to say that he understands the concerns of some countries

in relation to what he called “the Iranian influence in other countries of the region.”

“So I think we should separate things.” Iran and the Group 5+1 (Russia, China, the US, Britain, France and Germany) reached the 159-page nuclear agreement in July 2015 and started to implement it in January 2016.

Ever since the deal took effect, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has confirmed Iran’s compliance with the JCPOA in all quarterly reports, but some other parties, especially the US, have failed to live up to their undertakings.

Trump in January set a 120-day deadline for US lawmakers and European allies to “fix” his predecessor Barack Obama’s main foreign policy achievement or face a US exit.



## Paternal house of martyr Soleimani to be turned into museum

**TOURISM d e s k** **TEHRAN** – Paternal house of Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, who was assassinated in a U.S. terrorist attack on January 3, will be turned into a museum.

The paternal house of martyr Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani in Kerman province was recognized as a place of historical and cultural values on January 5 by the national council for registration of immovable cultural monuments, deputy tourism minister Mohammad-Hassan Talebian said on Wednesday, ISNA reported.



The house has been suggested to showcase personal belongings of martyr Soleimani, his documents especially related to the sacred defense (1980-88 Iran-Iraq War) and his operations in Syria, Lebanon and Iraq, the report said.

Soleimani was born on March 11, 1957 and grew up in a farmer's family. In 1979, he joined the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC). During the sacred defense, he bravely participated in many operations. He was later involved in extraterritorial operations, providing military assistance to the Hezbollah movement in Lebanon.

From 1998 until his martyrdom, he was commander of the IRGC Quds Force.

In 2012, Soleimani helped the Syrian government in the war against terrorist groups, particularly in its operations against the ISIL (Daesh) and al-Qaeda.

In November 2017, Soleimani issued a statement declaring the end of ISIL, as the Iraqi and Syrian armies, backed by popular forces and Iranian military advisors, managed to flush ISIL militants out of their last strongholds in both countries.

## Sweden’s air travel drops in year when ‘flight shaming’ took off

The number of passengers that flew through Swedish airports dropped 4% in 2019, Swedish state-owned airport operator Swedavia said on Friday, with the drop led by a decline in domestic traffic.

The Swedish-born movement of “flight shaming”, which calls for curbs to air travel due to its environmental impact, has gained prominence over the past year and the aviation industry is watching closely travel trends in countries, such as Germany and Sweden, where the campaign has begun to have an impact.

“We see a number of reasons concurring, such as the Swedish aviation tax, weak Swedish crown, softening economy worries. But also the climate debate,” Swedavia spokesman Robert Pletzin said. He added the drop followed a record 2018 and several years of strong growth.

More than 40 million passengers traveled through 10 Swedavia airports, down from previous year's all-time high above 42 million, with domestic travel down 9%, the airport operator said in a statement. Domestic travel fell for a second year in a row.

In December, domestic travel fell by 7% and overall traffic was down 4%.

Germany has seen similar trends, with ADV industry group predicting a 2.9% fall in take-offs and landings at German airports in 2020.

(Source: Reuters)



## ROUND THE GLOBE

### Colonial City of Santo Domingo

First permanent establishment of the “New World” and capital of the West Indies, the Colonial City of Santo Domingo – the only one of the 15th century in the Americas – was the place of departure for the spread of European culture and the conquest of the continent.



From its port conquerors such as Ponce de Leon, Juan de Esquivel, Herman Cortes, Vasco Nunez de Balboa, Alonso de Ojeda and many others departed in search of new lands.

Located at the mouth of the Ozama, on the south coast of Hispaniola Island, the Colonial City of Santo Domingo is the core from which Santo Domingo de Guzman, capital of the Dominican Republic, was founded.

Originally established on the east side of the Ozama in 1496, it was founded by Bartholomew Columbus in 1498, by order of the Catholic kings.

In 1502, the Governor Nicolas de Ovando transferred its institutions to the west bank and decided to provide the city with a grid pattern from the Grand Place (Plaza Mayor). This checkerboard layout later became a reference for almost all the town planners of the New World.

City of « firsts », Santo Domingo was the headquarters for the first institutions in the Americas : Saint Mary of the Incarnation Cathedral, Saint Francois Monastery, Saint Thomas Aquinas University, Nicholas de Bari Hospital, and the Casa de Contratacion. It is also the first fortified city (fortress of Santo Domingo and its Torre del Homenaje) and the first headquarters of Spanish power in the New World.

(Source: UNESCO)

# Russian travelers, airlines not canceling Iran trips, flights

**TOURISM d e s k** **TEHRAN** – Neither Russian travelers are calling off their Iran trips nor airlines the flights passing through Iranian airspace following a deadly Ukrainian plane crash in Tehran on Wednesday.

Russian airlines are continuing to operate flights to Tehran and fly over Iranian airspace following the crash of a Boeing 737 Ukrainian International Airlines flight that killed 176 passengers and crew, the Moscow Times reported on Thursday.

Russia's national airline Aeroflot completed a round trip from Moscow's Sheremetyevo airport to the Iranian capital just hours after a handful of other international airlines canceled or diverted flights to avoid Iranian airspace.

On January 8, the Association of Tour Operators of Russia (ATOR), advised Russian carriers against flying over Iran and Iraq, as well as over the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman. Moreover, the Russian Federal Agency for Tourism asked travel agencies to inform tourists promptly about changes in the timetable of flights.

Data from FlightRadar 24 shows Aeroflot flight SU512 from Moscow to Tehran departed from Moscow on schedule at 10:15 p.m. Wednesday, landed in Tehran early Thursday morning and returned to Moscow as planned.

Russia's Federal Air Transport Agency, however, on Wednesday recommended Russian airlines avoid airspace around the region, but fell short of issuing a blanket ban on Russian airlines operating flights in the region, stressing that the ultimate decision over flight routes is taken by individual carriers.

Russian flights to Dubai, which fly for more than 1,000 kilometers (620 miles) over Iranian airspace, also continued following the crash, which came as Iran launched a dozen missile strikes on U.S. and coalition military bases in Iraq in response to the American assassination of top Iranian general Qassem Soleimani.

Aeroflot operated three flights from Moscow to Dubai Wednesday, while the airline's low-cost subsidiary Pobeda also flew to Dubai across Iranian airspace as scheduled. Regional airline S7 operated a regular flight from Russia's third largest city Novosibirsk to Dubai, also across Iran,



Aeroflot completed a round trip from Moscow to Tehran hours after other airlines canceled or diverted flights. (Hans Johnson / Flickr)

flight data shows.

Flights between Moscow and Dubai Thursday were also continuing to fly across Iranian airspace as normal. Airline representatives told Russian daily Kommersant they had prepared alternative flight plans avoiding Iran which can be implemented if necessary.

U.S. regulators have banned American airlines from flying over Iraq, Iran, the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman and other major airlines including Air France, Air Canada, KLM, Lufthansa, and Qantas have confirmed

they are avoiding parts of the region.

Government ministers and Russia's transport and tourism agencies are scheduled to meet Friday, Kommersant reported, to discuss the situation and potentially take further measures regarding the operation of Russian flights around the region.

Iran announced last month that it is considering to allow Russian tourists visa-free entry into the country to boost tourism, after it granted same privilege for some other nationals including Chinese and Omani passport holders.

## Some 2,000 eco-lodges operating across Iran

**TOURISM d e s k** **TEHRAN** – Iran has been constructing hundreds of eco-lodge guesthouses over the past couple of years to meet demands of rising eco-travelers and sightseers and now about 2,000 eco-lodges are in operation across the country.

Currently, there are 2,000 eco-lodges active across Iran compared to 400 before President Hassan Rouhani took office in 2013, Research Institute for Cultural Heritage and Tourism Director Behrouz Omrani announced on Thursday, IRNA reported.

“At present, issuing guidelines for eco-tourism development is on the agenda. Historical villages are amongst target destinations for eco-tourism development,” the official said.

Iran's tourism body said in 2018 that 2,000 eco-lodges



will be constructed nationwide until 2021. Experts say each eco-lodge unit generates jobs for seven to eight people on the average so that the scheme could create 160,000 jobs.

Having a very diverse natural setting, Iran offers varied excursions to nature lovers. Sightseers may live with a nomad or rural family or enjoy an independent stay. The country is home to abundant historical mansions, caravanserais, bathhouses, madrasas, and other massive monuments, which can buttress its budding tourism and hospitality sectors if managed appropriately and refurbished properly

Experts say each eco-lodge unit generates jobs for seven to eight people on the average so that the scheme could create 160,000 jobs.

## Ancient Egypt breakthrough: Scientists stunned as 4,000-year-old book find creates history

AN intricate map believed to be the first illustrated book in history has been discovered in Egypt.

The book is essentially a guidebook which shows the way to the realm of Osiris, the god of death. Rita Lucarelli said via the New York Times: “The ancient Egyptians were

obsessed with life in all its forms.

The discovered book could be up to 4,000 years old, possibly the oldest version ever found. The book is a copy of the “Book of Two Ways. Ancient texts were never a standalone volumes.

The inscriptions of this book clearly ex-

pressed the narrative of the Book of Two Ways, while other artefacts inside the grave it was found date to be as being that of Pharaoh Mentuhotep II, who was at the throne until 2010 BC.

The images include are many illustrated gates, as well as two looping lines, which

indicate the two roads to the afterlife.

Dr. Willems investigated a shaft which was one of five in the tomb of Nomarch Ahanakht. When they dug further, some twenty feet below, experts found remains of a sarcophagus.

(Source: express.co.uk)

## How to protect yourself from air pollution while traveling

**By Hahna Yoon**

Poor air quality is a growing problem for travelers headed abroad. Here's how to read up before you go, and protect yourself once you're there.

When Yondje Choi was told she would need a face mask for an upcoming trip to South Korea, Ms. Choi, a 31-year-old New Yorker, was shocked.

“I knew air pollution is a major problem in Beijing, but I didn't know it was this bad here,” she said last month in Seoul.

While China takes a bulk of the heat when it comes to unhealthy levels of air quality, air pollution is a major issue throughout Asia and beyond, even to Europe and North America. Without research and self-care, even short-term visitors may feel the effects. Here are some precautions you can take to help you breathe easier.

■ **Look up the air quality before you go**

You can find a given city's Air Quality Index, or A.Q.I., on air-monitoring websites like aqicn.org. This index indicates how polluted or dirty the air is (typically measuring particulate matter in the air) and explains the possible health implications of that level. While A.Q.I. levels are often referenced to in the United States during allergy season or at times of dust storms or wildfires, the index is commonplace throughout Asia. The U.S. Department of Agriculture has a complete explanation of what makes “good” or “bad” air quality on its website.

When it comes to travel, researching air-quality websites can help inform where you want to go and when you want to be there. Heavily polluted cities have bad A.Q.I. measures all year, but some destinations have only a few months of daily, unhealthy air pollution. East Asian



countries, for instance, are affected by Asian Dust (yellow dust particles carried on the wind from the Gobi Desert) in the spring, and many savvy travelers opt for visiting during the fall instead.

■ **Learn face mask basics**

A proper air-filtering face mask can be your best friend when air quality is low. Although you can find disposable face masks at pharmacies in most cities, the type of masks recommended by medical professionals are rarely found in drugstores or department stores. You're better off ordering quality ones online in advance of your trip instead of scrambling to find them in a new city.

Not sure which kind to get? Based on her research on the effectiveness of face masks in Beijing, Dr. Miranda Loh at the Institute of Occupational Medicine in Edinburgh recommends looking for masks rated to at least N95 (meaning the mask removes 95 percent of all particles in the air that are at least 0.3 microns in diameter

or larger) or FFP3 (meaning the mask may only leak a maximum of 5 percent or air and it must filter 99 percent of all particles measuring up to 0.6 microns), both standards that indicate a high ability to filter out fine dust.

Of the masks she studied, Dr. Loh said she found 3M's Aura Disposable Respirator 9322+ mask most effective at consistently reducing exposure to their study volunteers. In addition to buying a proper mask, she recommends limiting a mask's use and wearing the mask strictly as its package instructs.

When you should wear your mask depends on your age and health, and there's no strict guideline that everyone everywhere agrees on. In China, for instance, the government suggests wearing a mask when the A.Q.I. is over 200, but many people choose to wear one when the A.Q.I. is closer to 100 or 150. Your best bet is to look at the A.Q.I. on a given day, review the air quality scale, and judge for yourself.

People with respiratory issues, allergies or asthma should be especially careful.

■ **Love the skin you're in**

After a day of sightseeing, protecting your skin and your lungs from air pollution and particulates that may have settled in your clothes, on your skin or in your hair, is simple: take a shower as soon as you can, apply sunscreen and moisturizer, and repeat every time you spend a prolonged period outdoors.

Dr. Steven Wang, director of Dermatology at the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center of Basking Ridge, has studied the effects of ambient air pollution on skin. His top tips include applying sunscreen in the morning; using gentle, liquid cleansers; and generally making sure to take care of your skin when you travel.

■ **Know when to just stay inside**

Refraining from outdoor activities on heavily-polluted days is the most common piece of advice when it comes to avoiding the effects of air pollution from medical experts, including those at the American Lung Association. Plan activities like museum visits, souvenir shopping trips, and other mostly-indoor activities for days when the air quality is really bad. Or, just keep a few of those activities in your pocket in case everything seems good one day, but the air quality takes a turn on the next.

Fortunately for those looking for a reprieve from air pollution, a growing number of accommodations and activities are now making clean air a main feature. Not only have several hotel chains have added air purifiers to their list of amenities, but smog-free cinemas, oxygen bars and clean air cafes have become en vogue in cities like Seoul, Bangkok and Beijing. If you've already been to the museum, maybe it's time to take in a film.

(Source: The New York Times)



# Kangaroo pouches, koala mittens: knitters unite to aid animals in Australia fires

The bushfires affecting Australia in recent weeks have sparked a global crafting effort, as thousands of volunteers unite to knit, crochet and sew shelters for animals affected by the crisis.

Millions of hectares of land have burned in the bushfires, killing an estimated 1 billion animals. As the death toll climbs, many creatures have been orphaned or left without homes.

Young marsupials including possums, koalas and wombats require pouches to grow. Without their mothers they rely on hand-stitched products from donors. Other animals such as flying foxes also require pouches to help their recovery, and rescuers say koalas need mittens for their burnt paws.

The Australia-based Animal Rescue Craft Guild put out a call for these products on its Facebook group, which amassed more than 120,000 members in the subsequent weeks. The effort has attracted donors across Europe, Asia, and from more than 40 US states and Puerto Rico, posts in the group show.

The Rescue Collective, based in Queensland, has partnered with the Animal Rescue Craft Guild to distribute donated items to independent animal carers across the country. The collective has been getting an overwhelming number of requests from rescuers around Australia following the fires, said Rachel Sharples, a volunteer there.

“It’s not just kangaroos, it’s also baby koalas, it’s bats, and possums, and sugar gliders – all the marsupials in Australia who are used to growing up inside a pouch now don’t have a pouch to grow up inside any more,” she said.

Holly Wehmeyer from Cincinnati, Ohio, is one such donor. She received a sewing machine for Christmas and made her first ever project this week: a bat wrap for orphaned babies to cling to. She had watched videos of the devastation in Australia and felt powerless to help, until she came across the post asking for hand-sewn products.

“I am a single mom, so I don’t really have a lot of money to donate,” she said. “But I know there is a need, and this gives us something to work for. It’s rewarding to think a bat can lay in this pouch and feel some kind of comfort.”

Alison Rouse-Cramp, a tutor in Australia, began sewing wraps for bats in October 2019 after seeing a call for them on a local wildlife Facebook page. Carers often send her



photos of the bats using wraps she sewed.

A lot of times in these crises animals are forgotten, so I am just doing my bit to know I have helped in some small way,” she said. “When a carer sends me photos of their babies in items that I have made, it brings tears to my eyes.”

Animals are always in need of these wraps – not just in fire season. Despite the outpouring of supplies, experts say they do not expect to have an excess any time soon.

Sharples said interested potential donors should follow instructions rigorously as some materials and patterns are not

appropriate for small animals. The group has also received a sufficient number of koala mittens and is now seeking bat and kangaroo pouches.

“Australia has a lot of iconic and lovable animals,” Sharples added, “and I think that for people to physically be able to create something, to physically create an item they know an animal will use, resonates with people more so than a cash donation and that is why we have set that up as an option or a way to help.”

(Source: The Guardian)

## Police contradict claims spread online exaggerating arson’s role in Australian bushfires

Victoria police say there is no evidence any of the devastating bushfires in the state were caused by arson, contrary to the spread of global disinformation exaggerating arsonist arrests during the current crisis.

A misleading figure suggesting 183 arsonists have been arrested “since the start of the bushfire season” spread across the globe on Wednesday, after initial reports in News Corp were picked up by Donald Trump Jr, US far-right websites and popular alt-right personalities.

The figure included statistics from some states covering the entirety of 2019, rather than just the current bushfire season, which began in October.

In Victoria, 43 alleged arsonists were counted among the 183 arrested “in the past few months” and “since the start of the bushfire season”. That Victorian figure was, in fact, the figure for all of 2019.

“There is currently no intelligence to indicate that the fires in East Gippsland and the North East have been caused by arson or any other suspicious behaviour,” a Victoria police spokeswoman said.

The reported figure of 183 also includes 101 individuals from Queensland who were “picked up for setting fires in the bush”. But a Queensland police spokeswoman said the figure included a broader range of offences than arson, including the breaching of total fire bans, and was not a total of arrests, but a total of “police enforcement actions”.

“Enforcement action includes charging,



restorative justice or cautioning,” she said.

Queensland police said between 10 September and 8 January there had been 1,068 reported bushfires in the state, of which 114 had been deliberately or maliciously lit through human involvement and have been subject to police enforcement action.

The Australian subsequently updated its story to say the figure covered people “arrested since the start of 2019”.

Victoria police said they were investigating a suspiciously lit fire in Euroa on 4 January, which burned through a large area of land but damaged no properties.

Its cause remained unknown.

NSW police statistics show 24 individuals have been arrested for deliberately lighting bushfires during the current fire season.

But a Rural Fire Service spokesman told Sky News on Wednesday that the majority of the larger fires in the state were caused by lightning, and that arson was a relatively small source of ignition.

Arsonists have been responsible for some of the bushfires this season – though specific numbers are not yet available. There is also no doubt that arson remains a serious problem in Australia, particularly during heightened

periods of fire danger. Arsonists have been responsible for some of Australia’s worst fires, including a fire that killed 10 people on Black Saturday in 2009.

But exaggerated claims about arson during the current crisis have also been used to undermine the link between climate change and the longer, more severe bushfire seasons currently being experienced in Australia.

Preliminary research from the Queensland University of Technology suggests bots and trolls are involved in spreading disinformation about arson on Twitter.

Regardless of the source of ignition, Australia’s scientific agencies all state that climate change is creating longer, more severe fire seasons.

On Wednesday, the RFS commissioner, Shane Fitzsimmons, shot down another common argument blaming environmentalists for holding up hazard reduction work.

Fitzsimmons said the main obstruction to hazard reduction was weather conditions. Hazard reduction burns are particularly fraught at times of heightened fire risk.

“Hazard reduction burning is really challenging, and the single biggest impediment to hazard reduction burning is the weather,” he said.

“And with longer fire seasons, earlier starts and later finishes to fire seasons like we’ve been experiencing in recent times, you get a shrinking window of opportunity for more favourable hazard reduction burning periods.”

(Source: The Guardian)

## Heatwaves in 2019 led to almost 900 extra deaths in England

The summer heatwaves of 2019 resulted in almost 900 extra deaths, according to statistical analysis from Public Health England.

Over the past four years more than 3,400 people have died early during periods of extreme temperature in England. Global heating is increasing the frequency of heatwaves and a cross-party committee of MPs warned in July that the UK was “woefully unprepared” for this impact of the climate emergency.



All regions of England were affected except the south-west, and almost all the premature deaths were among people aged 65 or over. The frail elderly with heart or kidney problems are most at risk in a heatwave and dehydration can also lead to dizziness and falls.

“Heatwaves continue to result in significant health impact,” said the PHE report. It reported the “excess deaths” during the heatwaves, ie the additional mortalities compared with the long-term average for those dates.

Two heatwaves accounted for the 892 deaths. The first, from 21 to 28 July, included the highest temperature ever recorded in the UK: 38.7C in Cambridge. The second occurred between 23 and 29 August.

The climate crisis made 2019 a year of record temperatures in the UK, according to the Met Office. The only region that recorded a statistically significant number of deaths in those under 65 was London, with 41 early deaths reported during the August heatwave.

“Tragically, many of these deaths are likely to have been preventable,” said Bob Ward, at the Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change at the London School of Economics. “Many of the people who are killed by heatwave conditions die in their own homes or in care homes. The Committee on Climate Change (CCC) pointed out in July 2019 that the government has failed to set out a coherent plan for implementing the adaptations required.”

The CCC said it had been recommending new building regulations to ensure homes, hospitals and schools do not overheat since 2015, but that this advice had been rejected by ministers, who cited a commitment to “reduce net regulation on home-builders”. Without action, the number of people dying as a result of heat is expected to reach 7,000 a year by 2040, the CCC said.

“The CCC also noted that although there has been a heatwave plan for England since 2004, there is no evidence that it has reduced the number of deaths that occur during hot weather,” said Ward.

The report from the House of Commons environmental audit committee said hospitals and care homes in particular must be prepared for heatwaves, given that sick and elderly people are most vulnerable. But they say currently the NHS is only required to prepare plans for severe cold weather.

“The government needs to take much more seriously the dangers of hot weather. The threat of deadly heatwaves is growing due to climate change and the death toll is likely to rise unless there is strong action,” said Ward. The Department of Health has been contacted for comment.

(Source: The Guardian)

## WORDS IN THE NEWS

### Ireland Votes “Yes” to European enlargement

(October 21, 2002)

The people of the Republic of Ireland have voted “Yes” to plans for enlarging the European Union. The result has been especially warmly received in the countries hoping to join the EU by 2004. In Poland - the largest of these countries - the feeling was one of relief. This report from Nicholas Walton:

Poland’s government watched the **run-up** the Irish vote on Nice with **trepidation**. It’s **staked its reputation** on joining the European Union at the earliest opportunity, and there’s no real **Plan B** to call upon if Poland’s bid **goes off-track**. Relief at the result was easy to see on the face of Prime Minister Leszek Miller. He appeared on television news bulletins **grinning** widely, **sipping** a drink and at one point singing, “I love you, Ireland!” Earlier, the Polish President, Aleksander Kwasniewski, had thanked the Irish government for their successful campaign for a “yes” vote.

Mr Kwasniewski said that nothing should **overshadow** the big idea of EU enlargement, which he said would overcome the **rifts** that had divided Europe. In the build-up to the referendum, Polish politicians and public figures had underlined the importance of Ireland’s decision to people on the other side of Europe. Open letters were sent to Irish newspapers and delegations went to Dublin to remind the Irish people that their votes had **far reaching** consequences. Many Poles feel that the existing members of the EU are **reluctant** to accept the demands that new, poorer members will place on the Union’s budget. The Irish backing of Nice will have **reassured** Poles that expansion is a policy that doesn’t just attract public support in aspiring EU members.

#### Words

**run-up:** the run-up to an event is the period of time and the events that happen just before it  
**trepidation:** nervousness  
**staked its reputation:** risked its reputation on the result  
**Plan B:** an alternative plan  
**goes off-track:** if something goes off-track then it doesn’t happen the way it was planned  
**grinning:** smiling broadly  
**sipping:** drink (something) by taking small mouthfuls  
**overshadow:** if something overshadows an event or situation then it makes it seem less important  
**the rifts:** a rift is something that prevents friendship between people who were friends before  
**far reaching:** events or actions that are far-reaching have a very wide influence and affect very many things  
**reluctant:** unwilling and hesitant; disinclined  
**reassure:** say or do something to remove the doubts or fears of (someone)

(Source: BBC)

## ENGLISH IN USE

### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ↔ ع

### Relief foundation creates over 1.5m jobs for the deprived in 7 years

Imam Khomeini Relief Foundation has generated over 1.5m job opportunities for those financially struggling since the past 7 years, Hojatollah Abdolmaleki, the Foundation’s deputy director has announced  
Job generation for the underprivileged is among the most important and tough responsibilities of the Foundation, he stated, YJC reported on Monday  
Since Iranian calendar year of 1390 (March 2011– March 2012) to 1396 (March 2017- March 2018), the Foundation has earmarked 100 trillion rials (nearly \$2.4 billion) to open up over 1.4 million job opportunities in order to facilitate .income generation for the deprived, he explained  
He went on to add that last year (March 2018-March 2019), a total of 148,000 jobs were created by the Foundation’s budget of 23 trillion rials (around \$547 .million

Last year, some 495,000 families have become financially independent and no .longer under the Foundation coverage, he highlighted

#### PREFIX/SUFFIX

### “hem- or heme- or hemi- or hemo- or hemat- or hemato-”

■ **Meaning:** blood

■ **For example:** **hemoglobin** is measured by nursing staff using technology incorporated into blood gas analyzers.

#### PHRASAL VERB

### Pick over something

■ **Meaning:** to examine a group of things very carefully in order to choose the ones you want

■ **For example:** She was sitting at the kitchen table picking over a pile of mushrooms.

#### IDIOM

### Dark horse

■ **Explanation:** If you refer to someone as a dark horse you mean that they are secretive, so you don’t know how they will react or perform

■ **For example:** I can’t tell you anything about my neighbor’s intentions. He’s a bit of a dark horse.

### ایجاد بیش از یک میلیون و ۵۰۰ هزار شغل برای محرومان در کشور طی ۷ سال

معاون کمیته امداد گفت: کمیته امداد امام (ره) از سال ۹۰ تاکنون بیش از یک میلیون و ۵۰۰ هزار شغل برای محرومان کشور ایجاد کرده است.

به گزارش خبرنگار حوزه رفاه و تعاون گروه اجتماعی باشگاه خبرنگاران جوان، حجت الله عبدالملکی معاون کمیته امداد امام خمینی (ره)، اظهار کرد: ایجاد اشتغال امری سخت است، تولید اشتغال برای محرومان سخت‌ترین اقدام برای کمیته امداد است که در حال انجام است.

وی افزود: از سال ۹۰ تا سال ۹۶، یک‌میلیون و ۴۰۰ هزار شغل با تسهیلات ۱۰ هزار میلیاردی برای محرومان ایجاد شده است، در سال گذشته ۱۴۸ هزار نفر با ۲ هزار و ۳۰۰ میلیارد تومان تسهیلات توسط کمیته امداد شغل ایجاد شده است.

عبدالملکی تصریح کرد: ۴۹۵ هزار خانوار محروم خودکفا از پوشش کمیته امداد خارج شده اند.



## U.S. House votes to restrain Trump’s actions against Iran

➔ **1** Iran responded to Soleimani’s assassination with missile attacks against Iraqi bases housing U.S. troops. Trump said on Wednesday there were no US or Iraqi casualties. He welcomed an apparent pause in hostilities, but announced new economic sanctions on Iran.

Republicans attacked Democrats during the debate for showing a lack of patriotism in failing to support the Trump for killing Soleimani who is believed to have orchestrated attacks that killed or wounded an estimated 600 U.S. troops during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

“I know most in here haven’t seen or smelled or touched that kind of death, but let me tell you about it,” said Representative Brian Mast, who lost both legs as a Special Forces bomb disposal expert in Afghanistan.

“They were burned alive inside of the Humvees. Their lungs were scorched by the flames of the explosions. Vehicle fragments were blown into their skulls,” said Mast, who walks with prosthetic legs and was elected to Congress in 2016.

Democrats countered that it is for those same risks to some 60,000 U.S. troops now deployed in the Middle East and North Africa, Congress must provide a check on Trump’s actions to prevent an escalation with Iran.

“If we are going to put our troops in harm’s way, we had better have a strategy. Unfortunately, we don’t have a strategy,” said Representative Ted Lieu, a Democrat and former Air Force officer.

“Soleimani was a malign actor who masterminded the killing of U.S. soldiers but assassinating him has unleashed the dogs of war,” Democratic Representative Gerry Connolly said in floor remarks.

“We must be prepared for further Iranian retaliation,” Connolly said. “Congress must reassert its solemn constitutional duty to decide when and where the United States goes to war.”

### Uphill battle in Senate

In a parliamentary twist to be worked out with Senate, the War Powers resolution passed by the House would not require the president’s signature. The Senate is poised to debate a similar but slightly different measure that would need the president’s signature to take effect.

Two Senate Republicans, Rand Paul and Mike Lee, have signalled they will join Democrats in rebuking the president on Iran. Paul and Lee railed against Trump and his team after administration officials gave a limited briefing to senators on Wednesday.

It was “probably the worst briefing I’ve seen on a military issue in the nine years I’ve been in the United States Senate,” Lee told reporters.

(Source: al Jazeera)

## Anti-war protests break out across U.S.

➔ **1** The group marched from City Hall down Market and Walnut Streets before returning to Dilworth, drawing curious crowds out of stores and restaurants as they chanted, “No threats, no bombs, no war on Iran.”

“We’re spending ... money that could be used for other things such as health care and education,” said Christina Allen, 22, a math education student at Rowan University. “It’s important that we get out here and shake people out of their complacency. We’re the ones that will make a difference.”

A previous Philadelphia rally was Saturday, two days after President Donald Trump ordered the airstrike that killed Soleimani at Baghdad’s airport alongside top Iraqi militia commander Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis. Some Iranian officials called the strike an act of war.

The action has divided Americans and politicians. Some believe that the death of Soleimani should be celebrated, as the high-ranking official was responsible for the deaths of hundreds of Americans. Others have criticized what they’re calling an assassination of a foreign leader, and the fact that Congress was not briefed on the decision, as well as the lack of an overall strategy that could potentially waste resources and put innocent lives at risk.

Trump deployed thousands of troops in response to Iran’s promise of “harsh revenge.” Iran launched a missile attack on American bases in Iraq earlier this week. There were no casualties.

(Source: agencies)

## India , Pakistan trade poetic barbs at UN Security Council

A highly eloquent war of words erupted between the United Nations envoys of India and Pakistan during meetings at the agency’s Security Council, with New Delhi’s representative slamming the “dark arts” of his counterpart.

On the heels of a speech from Pakistan’s UN envoy Munir Akram on Thursday – who insisted on New Delhi’s “aggressive intent” toward his country, and that India had been “false and duplicitous” in claiming Kashmir had returned to a state of normalcy – the Indian envoy shot back with surprising diction.

“One delegation that epitomizes the dark arts has, yet again, displayed its wares by peddling falsehoods earlier today. These we dismiss with disdain,” replied Ambassador Syed Akbaruddin.

My simple response to Pakistan is even though it is late, neighbour, heal thyself of your malaise. There are no takers here for your malware.

At the Security Council, Akram also alleged India had carried out some 3,000 ceasefire violations in the disputed Kashmir region, where Pakistan also maintains territorial claims, and called on the council to “to act decisively to prevent a disastrous war between Pakistan and India.”

(Source: TASS)

## U.S. strike kills Taliban splinter commander

A U.S. airstrike killed a Taliban splinter-group commander and several other fighters in the western Afghan province of Herat, Afghan and military sources said Thursday. The commander, named as Mullah Nangyalay, was killed in Shindand district, close to the border with Iran, said Herat provincial governor’s spokesman Jailani Farhad.

Nangyalay split from the main branch of the Taliban after the 2013 death of founder Mullah Omar and joined a smaller breakaway faction led by a commander known as Mullah Rasool.

A senior provincial police source said the airstrike had been carried out by a U.S. drone.

Resolute Support, NATO’s mission in Afghanistan, told AFP their forces had launched “a defensive airstrike in support of Afghan forces.” A spokesman confirmed U.S. participation in the operation.

(Source: AFPO)

# Iraqi PM tells U.S. to decide mechanism for troop withdrawal

Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi has told the U.S. secretary of state to send a delegation to Iraq tasked with formulating the mechanism for the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq, according to a statement released Friday.

The statement, from the office of the Iraqi caretaker prime minister, said the request came in a telephone call between Abdul-Mahdi and U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Thursday night. It says Pompeo called the Iraqi premier, AP reported.

Abdul-Mahdi’s comments to Pompeo suggests he was standing by his previous statements that U.S. troops should leave Iraq despite recent signals toward de-escalation between Tehran and Washington following the tit-for-tat attacks that brought Iraq to the brink of a proxy war.

Tensions eased Wednesday when President Donald Trump signaled that Washington was stepping away from escalation.

The Iraqi prime minister said his country rejects America’s violation of Iraq’s airspace in the airstrike that killed a top Iranian general last week.

The Iraqi leader asked Pompeo to “send delegates to Iraq to prepare a mechanism to carry out the parliament’s resolution regarding the withdrawal of foreign troops from Iraq,” the statement said.

“The prime minister said American forces had entered Iraq and drones are flying in its airspace without permission from Iraqi authorities and this was a violation of the bilateral agreements,” the statement added.

Top American military officials including Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and U.S. Defense Secretary Mark Esper have said there were no plans for the U.S. to withdraw from Iraq.

Iraqi lawmakers passed a non-binding resolution to oust U.S. troops following a strike that killed top Iranian general Qassem Soleimani and senior Iraqi militia commander Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis last Friday.

The latest escalation was set off when a rocket attack blamed on the militia group Kataeb Hezbollah, or Hezbollah Brigades, caused the death of an American contractor at a base in Kirkuk province. The U.S. replied with a barrage of strikes on the militia’s bases, killing at least 25 people.

## Australians leave homes as heat, winds escalate fire danger

Thousands of people fled their homes and helicopters dropped supplies to towns at risk of nearby wildfires as hot, windy conditions Friday threatened already fire-ravaged southeastern Australian communities.

The danger is centered on New South Wales and Victoria, Australia’s most populous states, where temperatures and winds spiked after a few days of relatively benign conditions.

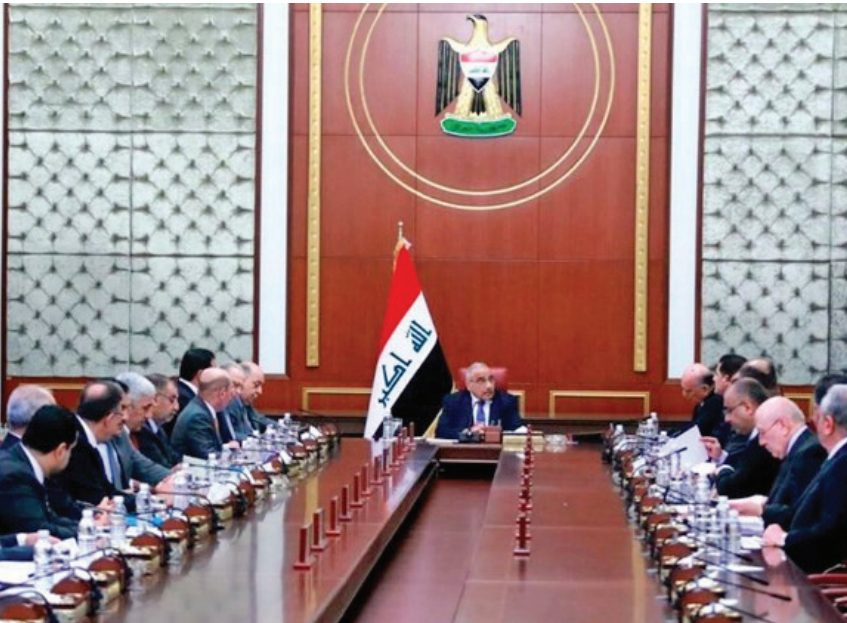
Firefighters were working into the night to keep the fires from reaching communities as fierce winds whipped the blazes in multiple directions.

The New South Wales Rural Fire Service had warned that coastal towns south of Sydney including Eden, Batemans Bay and Nowra could again be under threat weeks after losing homes to the fires. By Friday evening, the wildfires burning in that region were holding within containment lines, but winds could cause them to flare anew, Rural Fire Service Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons told reporters.

New South Wales Premier Gladys Berejiklian said the extent of any damage from the fires wouldn’t be known until Saturday morning.

“We know it’s going to be a long and difficult night,” Berejiklian said.

In neighboring Victoria, evacuation orders were issued in alpine areas, and Premier Daniel Andrews pleaded with



### Al-Hakim stresses need for withdrawal of foreign troops from Iraq

Meanwhile, raqi Foreign Minister Mohammad Ali al-Hakim has stressed the need for U.S. and other foreign troops to leave Iraq as a backlash grows over the recent American assassination of a top Iranian general in Baghdad.

The top Iraqi diplomat made the appeal during a joint press briefing with his Turkish counterpart Mevlut Cavusoglu in Baghdad on Thursday.

Hakim and Cavusoglu strongly condemned the U.S. assassination of Iran’s Lt. Gen. Qassem Soleimani and senior Iraqi commander of the Popular Mobilization Units Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, both key figures in the fight against Daesh and other Takfiri terrorists in the Middle East.

“Iraq insists on maintaining its sovereignty and territorial integrity and the complete withdrawal of foreign forces,” the top Iraqi diplomat said.

He added that talks with his Turkish counterpart focused on the need to respect Iraq’s sovereignty from all sides.

“Iraq condemns the attacks on Iraqi land, which harms the sovereignty of our country as well the security of Iraqi people. They are against the international law,” the Iraqi

minister said.

Hakim added, “We have discussed with the minister that Iraq wants all foreign forces are removed out of the country through dialogue. We also discussed with the minister on cooperation areas. We have agreed to alleviate the Iran-U.S. tension in the region.”

The two sides also discussed bilateral relations at all levels, including cooperation on fighting terrorism, al-Hakim said.

The top Iraqi diplomat said any escalation of tensions in the region could result in the re-emergence of Takfiri terrorist groups.

The Turkish foreign minister, for his part, said Ankara does not want Iraq to become a battleground for foreign forces.

Cavusoglu added that Iraq was not alone and Turkey was there to overcome difficult days together.

Turkish foreign minister also spoke with his Iranian counterpart Mohammad Javad Zarif Wednesday after Tehran fired dozens of missiles at two military bases hosting U.S. troops in Iraq. The missiles were fired at the Ain al-Asad base in Anbar province and another base in Erbil.

### Americans must either withdraw voluntarily, or be expelled by force

The parliamentary bloc of the Leba-

## UK on track for Jan. 31 EU exit as lawmakers approve bill

Britain passed a major milestone on the road to Brexit when the House of Commons Thursday approved a bill authorizing the country’s departure from the European Union at the end of the month. Lawmakers voted by 330-231 to pass the Withdrawal Agreement Bill, which sets the terms of Britain’s departure from the 28-nation bloc. The comfortable majority won by Prime Minister Boris Johnson’s Conservatives in an election last month secured the bill’s passage despite the opposition of smaller parties.

The bill was approved after three days of debate that brought none of the frayed tempers, late-night sessions and knife-edge votes that marked previous rounds of Brexit wrangling over the past year.

After passing through Parliament’s unelected House of Lords - which can delay but not overturn the result in the Commons - the bill should become law in time for the U.K. to leave the EU on the scheduled date of Jan. 31 and become the first nation ever to quit the bloc.

Brexit Secretary Stephen Barclay said he welcomed the “constructive scrutiny” of the Lords but hoped the upper house would not try to delay the bill.

“I have no doubt that their lordships will have heard the resounding message from the British people on the 12th of De-

nese Hezbollah resistance movement says the mass funeral ceremonies for Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani and Iraqi commander Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis across Iraqi and Iranian cities sent a clear message to the Americans that they have no option but to leave the Middle East.

The Loyalty to the Resistance Bloc said in a statement on Thursday that the processions put across a strong message that U.S. military forces should voluntarily withdraw from the region before being driven out by force.

The statement then lauded the IRGC for firing a salvo of ballistic missiles at the U.S. military in southwestern Iraq in retaliation for the assassination of General Soleimani, the commander of the Quds Force of Iran’s Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), stressing that the strike was the first slap in the face of Americans.

The Loyalty to the Resistance Bloc further noted that the Lebanese nation must be involved in the fight against U.S.’s hegemony and aggression, emphasizing that the Israeli regime and the United States have devised plots against Lebanon’s security, stability and natural resources.

It also called on Arab nations and governments to learn from the recent regional developments to muster up enough courage in confronting world aggressors and oppressors.

Early on Wednesday, the IRGC targeted the U.S. air base of Ain al-Assad in Anbar province in western Iraq after launching a wave of attacks to retaliate the U.S. assassination of General Soleimani.

“Tens of surface-to-surface missiles” were fired at the strategic air base and the attack was later confirmed by the US officials.

The IRGC has called for a complete withdrawal of U.S. troops from the Arab country, asserting that it would not differentiate between the U.S. and Israel in retaliating against the assassination of the Iranian national hero.

“We warn U.S. allies providing bases for the [American] terrorist army... that any country serving as the origin of bellicose and aggressive attacks in any form against the Islamic Republic of Iran will be targeted,” read the IRGC statement on Wednesday.

The IRGC added that it would release more details about the strike.

(Source: agencies)



ember,” he said.

Thursday’s vote was a major victory for Johnson, who has made delivering Brexit the key aim of his premiership. Britain voted narrowly to leave the EU in a 2016 referendum. But before the Dec. 12 election, lawmakers repeatedly defeated attempts by both Johnson and predecessor Theresa May to secure backing for their Brexit blueprints.

But despite Johnson’s repeated promise to “get Brexit done” on Jan. 31, the departure will only mark the start of the first stage of the country’s EU exit. Britain and the EU will then launch into negotiations on their future relationship, racing to strike new relationships for trade, security and a host of other areas by the end of 2020.

(Source: AP)

## Donald Trump sends a birthday message to North Korean leader Kim Jong-un

Trump became the first sitting U.S. president to visit North Korea as part of his attempts to improve relations with the pariah state and resolve a long-time nuclear crisis. Trump managed to establish friendly ties with the North Korean leader in what the media dubbed a bromance.

U.S. President Donald Trump has sent a birthday message to North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, said South Korean National Security Advisor Chung Eui-Yong. Speaking with reporters, the official, who met with POTUS this week, said he had been given a message to pass to North Korea, which

was delivered to Pyongyang on Thursday.

“The day we met was Kim Jong-un’s birthday and President Trump remembered this and asked me to deliver the message”, said Chung Eui-Yong.

Kim Jong-un and Trump managed to establish friendly relations in 2018 after spending months trading insults and aggressive statements. Trump became the first sitting U.S. president to set foot on North Korean soil. Improved relations between Pyongyang and Washington resulted in North Korea’s decision to issue a moratorium on nuclear

and intercontinental ballistic missile tests and a desire to pursue denuclearisation. Media reports say that the bromance between the two politicians may be over as Kim Jong-un has recently vowed to resume missile tests and even threatened to send an unwanted “Christmas gift” to the United States.

Despite apparent tensions between the US and North Korea, President Trump said he believes that Kim Jong-un will honour his commitments on denuclearisation.

(Source: Sputnik)

## ‘Designed by clowns & supervised by monkeys’: Boeing employee shreds 737 MAX in internal messages

Boeing has released another trove of internal company messages suggesting it lied to regulators, and showing fierce criticism from an unnamed employee who said the crash-prone 737 MAX aircraft was “designed by clowns.”

In its release of the redacted communications on Thursday following an internal probe, Boeing acknowledged some of the messages were “completely unacceptable” and contained “provocative language.” In one mis-

sive sent in 2017, an employee castigated the 737 MAX – which was grounded globally last March after a series of fatal crashes – slamming both its designers and ‘supervisors,’ apparently referring to federal regulators.

This airplane is designed by clowns who in turn are supervised by monkeys.

The employee has not been named, and it is not clear what problems he had identified with the MAX at the time.

Another damning message sent in 2018

shows an employee grappling with ethical concerns, telling a colleague “I still haven’t been forgiven by God for the covering up I did last year,” another apparent reference to the company’s interactions with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).

In addition to the faulty flight control system thought to have caused the two MAX crashes, the aircraft’s flight simulators also came under fire by employees in the internal messages.

“Would you put your family on a Max simulator trained aircraft? I wouldn’t,” one employee asked a coworker, who simply replied: “No.”

In a statement issued along with the documents, Boeing apologized “to the FAA, Congress, our airline customers, and to the flying public” for the “content of these communications,” adding it would pursue “disciplinary or other personnel action, once the necessary reviews are completed.”

(Source: RT)



# Iran held by Uzbekistan at AFC U23 C'ship

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Iran came d e s k from behind to secure a 1-1 draw against Uzbekistan in their opening AFC U23 Championship Group C clash on Thursday.

Iranian players wore black armbands in the first half to pay tribute to victims of the recent incidents in Iran.

Uzbekistan went ahead through an Is-lomjon Kobilov penalty kick just before half-time, but Iran drew with Reza Dehghani's 58th minute equalizer to claim a share of the spoils at Tinsulanon Stadium.

The holders arrived confident of making a winning start to their title defense, but found themselves hemmed inside their own half early on, and – despite enjoying more than 60 per cent of first half possession – found occasional difficulty in dealing with an Iranian side eager to put an end to a 44-year Olympic absence.

Iran should have been a goal ahead when Allahyar Sayyadmanesh's excellent low cross gave Ali Shojaei an empty net to aim at in the 24th minute, but the forward inexplicably misfired to let Ljubinko Drulovic's side off the hook.

Uzbekistan grew in stature as the half went on, and their hitherto quiet striker Bobir Abdixolikov made a telling contribution just before half-time, earning a penalty when he was brought down by Iran's Mojtaba Najarian, with captain Kobilov sending Habib Farabbasi the wrong way from the subsequent spot kick to make it 1-0 in the 40th minute.

Iran head coach Hamid Estili replaced Shojaei with Mehdi Ghayedi at half-time, and right from the substitute's mazy dribble straight from the kick-off, positive things started to happen for Team Melli Omid, who were the stronger side after the break.

Their equaliser duly arrived two minutes



before the hour mark, when Reza Dehghani poked the ball home from close range after his persistent pressing had prevented Uzbekistan from effectively clearing the ball during a penalty area scramble.

An incisive counterattack involving both Ghayedi and Sayyadmanesh gave Moham-maed Mohebbi the chance to put Iran ahead

just six minutes later, but he skied his effort at goal, with Uzbekistan substitute Oybek Bozorv guilty of the same offence from an even better position at the other end of the pitch as the sides took a point each from a hard-fought opening encounter.

Iran will play Korea on Sunday and meet China on Wednesday.

The competition will be held in Songkhla, Thailand from Jan. 8 to 26.

The top three teams qualify for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics in July, although should Japan emerge as one of them, the fourth-placed side will advance.

Iran have not been in the Olympics since the 1976 games in Munich.

## Sports minister meets FIFA President Infantino

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Iran's Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs, Masoud Soltanifar, hold a meeting with FIFA President Gianni Infantino in Lausanne, Switzerland.

The Iranian top sports official attended Winter Youth Olympic Games 2020 Opening Ceremony Thursday night.

Soltanifar says the purpose of the trip is to hold bi-lateral talks with the International Olympic Committee officials about the Iran's sports.

"I had been invited to the ceremony to discuss bilateral matters a few months ago. We will talk about several issues related to Iran's sports and we will also discuss about our delegation in the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo," Soltanifar said.



"We will want to achieve full potential in our sports and the several meetings have been scheduled with the world's top officials for this purpose," he added.

Soltanifar also met Infantino during the opening ceremony of the Winter Youth Olympic Games.

"I told Mr. Infantino the General Assembly of Iran Football Federation will be held in the shortest possible time and the activities of the federation will be carried out in accordance with the regulation by the acting president. I talked to him about Mehdi Taj, who was forced to step down as president of football federation due to heart failure, and Infantino expressed how sorry he is about that," Soltanifar concluded.

## Half-time switch was planned, says Estili



Introducing Mehdi Ghayedi at half-time was all part of the plan, head coach Hamid Estili said, after the Esteghlal star was part of a second half revival in Islamic Republic of Iran's 1-1 AFC U23 Championship draw against holders Uzbekistan on Thursday.

With Team Melli Omid facing a 1-0 deficit at the interval, Estili introduced Ghayedi in place of Ali Shojaei, with the shift forcing Allahyar Sayyadmanesh into a positional change after he had led the line in the opening 45 minutes.

The reshuffle paid dividends, with Iran

manufacturing five efforts on goal in quick succession after the break; pressure that ultimately produced Reza Dehghani's equalising goal in the 58th minute.

Ghayedi's impressive eight-goal start to the 2019-20 Iran Pro League campaign made his non-selection in the starting line-up something of a surprise, but Estili explained the reasoning behind his decision.

"Mehdi Ghayedi is one of our best players, but we had two plans for this match, and this was part of the plan," said 82-cap international Estili.

"In the first half we played well, but we were losing in terms of the result, so we made some changes and Ghayedi came into the match and played very well. Sayyadmanesh also played very well, but we moved him another position.

"It was part of a plan. Ghayedi knew about it. We told him. It was a special plan that we had just for this match.

"We made effective substitutions and we changed the situation of the match."

While their opponents had more of the ball, Iran were able to create regular scoring opportunities in a match which might have ended differently had Shojaei not blasted his effort wide of an open goal prior to Uzbekistan captain Islomjon Kobilov's penalty spot opener just before half-time.

Further misses from Sayyadmanesh and Mohammed Mohebbi meant Estili felt more than a touch of regret at not having taken all three points, but the former Persepolis boss's overall reaction was one of satisfaction at a fine performance against the defending champions.

"The first game in any tournament is difficult, especially when playing against a great team like Uzbekistan, who were the champion in the last (AFC U23) competition," Estili said.

"I think we played very well and made a lot of chances. In the first half we could have scored the first goal, but we missed our chances, whereas Uzbekistan had

no real scoring chance, but we made one mistake and gave them a penalty.

"We started the second half well, came back into the game and scored. I have to say: I think the players played very well and I'd like to thank all of them."

While the spoils were shared, Estili was the happier of the two coaches, with Uzbekistan boss Ljubinko Drulovic admitting his side did not perform to their full potential in their first outing in Thailand.

The former Serbian international highlighted the 30-minute period before half-time as his side's best period in the match and said that Uzbekistan could have emerged victorious had it not been for Oybek Bozorov's late miss.

"For maybe the first 15 minutes, Iran were better than us," Drulovic declared.

"They had a strong press and they were better, but after this I think we controlled the game, we controlled the ball, we had more possession and we scored a penalty.

"I think Iran had maybe three or four good chances to score, and we also had the last chance to score but we weren't able to take it."

"I think we have the capacity to play better, and I think in the future we will play better than we did today."

Uzbekistan's title defence continues against China PR on Sunday, while Iran are set for another quality opponent in the shape of group leaders Korea Republic. (Source: the-afc)

## Iran into Olympic Qualification Tournament semis

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Iran's men's volleyball team d e s k cruised past China 3-0 (25-22, 25-20, 25-21) at the Asian Volleyball Confederation (AVC) 2020 Olympic Qualification Tournament in Jiangmen, China on Thursday.

Iran, who had defeated Chinese Taipei and Kazakhstan in Pool A, advanced to the competition's semifinals as the winners. Team Melli will play Korea on Saturday and China meet Qatar. The winners will book a berth in the 2020 Olympic Games. Australia, Qatar, India and South Korea are in Pool B.

## Indonesia edge Iran's women volleyball at Olympics qualification

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Indonesia edged past Iran in a d e s k five-set thriller 3-2 (25-21, 25-15, 21-25, 22-25, 15-12) in their last match of the AVC Women's Tokyo Volleyball Qualification tournament at Chatchai Hall in Nakhon Ratchasima on Thursday.

Mona Ashofteh led Iran with 18 points and Arselu Nuari Purnama scored 24 points for Indonesia.

Iran had lost to Kazakhstan and Korea in Pool B.

Pool A consists of Thailand, Chinese Taipei and Australia. "I think my players did a good job today and they are getting better and better day by day. We and Indonesia team are at the same level, but Indonesia have more experience than us," Iran head coach Mitra Shabanian said.

"I hope my young players will improve more and have a bright future."

## Coach Shabanian satisfied with women's performance

Iran women's volleyball head coach Mitra Shabanian is satisfied with her team's performance at the AVC Women's Tokyo Volleyball Qualification tournament.

Iran lost to Indonesia in a five-set thriller 3-2 (25-21, 25-15, 21-25, 22-25, 15-12) in their last match of the tournament at Chatchai Hall in Nakhon Ratchasima, Thailand.

"I think my players did a good job today and they are getting better and better day by day. We and Indonesia team are at the same level, but Indonesia have more experience than us," Shabanian said in the post-match news conference.

"I hope my young players will improve more and have a bright future," she added.

(Source: fivb.org)

## Korea good at defense: Saeid Marouf

Iran national volleyball team captain Saeid Marouf says that South Korea are a good team at defense.

Iran defeated hosts China in straight sets (25-22, 25-20, 25-21) on Thursday at the AVC Men's Tokyo Volleyball Qualification tournament and will play the Korean team in the semifinals on Saturday.



"As both teams have already made it to the semifinal, we have enough time to think about the next match against Korea since we have one day off to recover both physically and mentally," Marouf said.

"We know Korea are good at defense as we had very tough games during the Asian Games. I'm sure the semifinal will also be tough but we are confident to confront the challenge," he added. (Source: fivb.org)

## Ex-Persepolis goalkeeper Bagheri laid to rest

**PLDC** — Former Persepolis goalkeeper Nader Bagheri was laid to rest in Karaj, Alborz Province on Friday.

He passed away at the age of 51 on Wednesday.

The custodian played 75 matches for Persepolis and became runner-up twice with the Iranian team.

Bagheri started his career with Pas and has also played for Shamooshak and Foolad.

He worked as goalkeeping coach at Pars Jonoubi in the current season.

Bagheri has died because of internal infections.

## Ayanda Patosi joins Foolad

**TASNIM** — South African attacking midfielder Ayanda Patosi joined Iranian football club Foolad on Wednesday.

The 27-year-old player penned a six-month contract with Foolad for an undisclosed fee.

Patosi was on the verge of returning to his former club Esteghlal but opted to join Foolad.

Foolad reached an agreement with Emirati side Baniyas and Cape Town City to sign the player.

Patosi joined Foolad for the remainder of the season with an option to extend his deal.

## Nohemi Carabali suspended for anti-doping violation

The International Paralympic Committee (IPC) has suspended Colombian powerlifter Nohemi Carabali for four years for committing an anti-doping violation.

The athlete who competes in the up to 50kg returned an adverse analytical finding for three prohibited substances in a urine sample provided on 14 July 2019 after competing at the Nur-Sultan 2019 World Para Powerlifting Championships in Kazakhstan.

The substances are metandienone metabolite 17β-hydroxymethyl-17α-methyl-18-nor-androst-1,4,13-trien-3-one, nandrolone (19-nortestosterone) metabolites 19-norandrostosterone, 19-noretiocholanolone and boldenone and its metabolite 17β-hydroxy-5β-androst-1-en-3-one. These substances are included on the World

Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) 2019 Prohibited List under the category S1.1A Exogenous Anabolic Androgenic Steroids and S1.1B Endogenous Anabolic Androgenic Steroids.

As a result of her violation, Carabali will be ineligible for competition for four years from 14 July 2019 to 13 July 2023. All her results obtained from 14 July 2019 and onwards will be disqualified including forfeiture of any medals, points, records and prizes. This includes the Americas record she set in the women's up to 50kg class at the 2019 World Para Powerlifting Championships.

Each athlete is strictly liable for the substances found in his or her sample, and that an anti-doping rule violation occurs whenever a prohibited substance (or its

metabolites or markers) is found in his or her bodily specimen, whether or not the athlete intentionally or unintentionally used a prohibited substance or was negligent or otherwise at fault.

As a signatory of the World Anti-Doping Code (WADC), the IPC remains committed to a doping-free sporting environment at all levels.

The IPC, together with the International Federations and the National Paralympic Committees, established the IPC Anti-Doping Code to prevent doping in sport for Paralympic athletes, in the spirit of fair play. The IPC Anti-Doping Code is in conformity with the general principles of the WADC.

(Source: Paralympic)



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GUIDE TO  
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

I pay no attention to a sin after which I get the chance to pray and repent and turn to God for safety.

mam Ali (AS)

## WHAT'S IN ART GALLERIES

**Painting**

■ An exhibition of paintings by Mohammad-Jafar Pakravan is underway at Seyhun Gallery. The exhibit named "Hitchcock, Picasso and Rest of the Story" will run until January 15 at the gallery located at No. 11, 4th St., Vozara Ave.

■ Saye Gallery is playing host to an exhibition of paintings by Ali Rahimi. The exhibit titled "Around Here" runs until January 15 at the gallery located at 3 Aqakhani Alley, Omidvar St. in the Niavaran neighborhood.

■ A collection of paintings by Najva Erfani is currently on view in an exhibition at Homa Gallery. The exhibit entitled "Anabasis" will run until January 14 at the gallery, which can be found at No. 8, Fourth Alley, Sanai St., Karim Khan Ave.

■ Morteza Razfar is showcasing his latest paintings in an exhibition at Artibition Gallery. Entitled "The Secret", the exhibit will continue until January 17 at the gallery located at Qandi Alley, Sasanipur St., Golnabi St., off Shariati Ave.

■ Paintings by Reza Bigonah are on display in an exhibition at Mojdeh Gallery. The exhibit named "The Restless Branches" will be running until January 17 at the gallery located at No. 27, 18th Alley off North Allameh Blvd. in the Saadatabad neighborhood.

■ An exhibition of paintings by Azadeh Baqai is currently underway at the CAMA – Contemporary and Modern Art Gallery. The exhibit titled "Missing Half" will run until January 15 at the gallery located at No. 44, 10th Golestan, Pasdaran St.

■ A collection of paintings by Mona Fazel is on display in an exhibition at Atashzad Gallery. The exhibit named "Season One" runs until January 15 at the gallery that can be found at 3 North Abbaspur (Tavanir) St. near Vanak Sq.

■ E1 Gallery is hosting an exhibition of paintings by Olduz Robatan. The exhibit entitled "Abruptness" will run until January 17 at the gallery located at 1 Hamid Dead End, off Lesani Alley, Jebbeh St., off Mahdiah St. in the Elahieh neighborhood.

■ Shalman Gallery is showcasing paintings by Shabnam Razi-Sharif in an exhibition named "Untitled". The exhibit will continue until January 15 at the gallery located 27 Kavusi Alley, West Rudbar St., off Mirdamad Blvd.

**Photo**

■ Photos by Mehdi Shadizadeh are on display in an exhibition at Golestan Gallery. The exhibition will be running until January 15 at the gallery located at 34 Kamasai St. in the Darus neighborhood.

**Multimedia**

■ Sets of installation and photos by Maryam Firuzi are on display in a showcase at the Silk Road Gallery. The exhibit entitled "Before Our Chance to Watch Ends" runs until January 15 at the gallery located at 210 Vesal St., Keshavarz Blvd.

# Director Masud Bakhshi withdraws from Sundance festival over U.S. enmity to Iran

**A R T TEHRAN** — Iranian director Masud Bakhshi has withdrawn from the Sundance Film Festival in protest of the hostile U.S. actions against Iran, the Persian service of ISNA reported on Friday.

He was scheduled to attend the festival in Park City, Utah, on January 23 to promote his latest movie "Yalda, a Night for Forgiveness". However, in a letter sent to the festival, he asked the organizers to exclude his film from the festival's schedule.

The withdrawal was announced following the assassination of Quds Force commander Lieutenant General Martyr Qassem Soleimani in a U.S. military attack in Baghdad by Trump's order last week.

"Under these circumstances, I won't attend your festival and I will stay with the people who have been suffering from sanctions, pressures, discriminations, deprivations and prohibitions imposed by the crazy warmongers for years," Bakhshi wrote in the letter.

"Give my best regards to Mr. Robert Redford. He once called the president of the U.S. a dictator who attacks everything your country stands for. Iranians understand that, I hope Americans do too," he added.

"We live in a dark era that needs the light of culture. I wish your festival could shine a light in this darkness," the letter concluded.

"Yalda, a Night for Forgiveness" is about a young woman, Maryam, who has been sentenced to death for murdering her husband, Nasser. Iranian law allows for the victim's family to forgive her and spare her life, so Maryam's fate will be decided by



Iranian director Masud Bakhshi in an undated photo.

Nasser's daughter, Mona, on the country's most popular televised reality show. In front of millions of viewers during Yalda,

the winter solstice celebration, Maryam and Mona discover that forgiveness can be difficult as they relive the past.

The Sundance Film Festival, the largest U.S. independent film event, will take place from January 23 to February 2.



Actress Vishka Asayesh.

## Actress Vishka Asayesh on Pune festival jury

**A R T TEHRAN** — Vishka Asayesh, the star of Iranian director Rambod Javan's acclaimed comedy drama "No Men Allowed", has been selected for the jury of the Pune International Film Festival, the organizers have announced.

She has joined seven other members of the jury at the Indian festival, which opened in Pune today.

Mazhar Kamran and Rajula Shah, both from India, Malini Fonseka from Sri Lanka, Dubravka Lakic from Serbia, Istvan Kovacs from Hungary, Lutz Konermann from Germany and Marie-Pierre Brétas from France are members of the panel.

The organizers of the festival have frequently selected

Iranian cineastes to the juries in previous editions of the festival.

Gelareh Abbasi, the star of acclaimed drama "Track 143", and the film's director Narges Abyar were members of the festival's juries in 2018 and 2017.

The Global Cinema section of the festival will screen the Iranian movies "Kömür" ("Charcoal") by Esmaeil Monsef, "Diapason" by Hamed Tehrani and "Just 6.5" by Saeid Rustai.

In addition, "Aysan" by Mehrshad Kheradmandi, "Better than Neil Armstrong" by Alireza Qasemi and "Slow Death" by Amen Sahrai are other Iranian films that will be competing in the Student Shorts categories of the festival that will run until January 16.

## Mark Sullivan's "Beneath a Scarlet Sky" published in Persian

**CULTURE TEHRAN** — American author Mark T. Sullivan's novel "Beneath a Scarlet Sky" has recently been published in Persian in Tehran.

Ofoqe Bipayan is the publisher of the book translated into Persian by Nima Beigi.

Based on the true story of a forgotten hero, "Beneath a Scarlet Sky" is the triumphant, epic tale of one young man's incredible courage and resilience during one of history's darkest hours.

Pino Lella wants nothing to do with the

war or the Nazis. He is a normal Italian teenager—obsessed with music and food, but his days of innocence are numbered. When his family home in Milan is destroyed by Allied bombs, Pino joins an underground railroad helping Jews escape over the Alps, and falls for Anna, a beautiful widow six years his senior.

In an attempt to protect him, Pino's parents force him to enlist as a German soldier—a move they think will keep him out of combat. But after Pino is injured, he

is recruited at the tender age of eighteen to become the personal driver for Adolf Hitler's left hand in Italy, General Hans Leyers, one of the Third Reich's most mysterious and powerful commanders.

Now, with the opportunity to spy for the Allies inside the German High Command, Pino endures the horrors of the war and the Nazi occupation by fighting in secret, his courage bolstered by his love for Anna and for the life he dreams they will one day share.



A scene from "No Fly Zone" by Amir Dasargar.

## Films from Ammar festival to go on screen in Gaza Strip

**A R T TEHRAN** — A selection of movies on Palestine and Yemen screened during the 10th Ammar Popular Film Festival in Tehran last week will be presented during a three-day program, which will open today at the Commodore Hotel in the Gaza Strip.

The organizers plan to commemorate Quds Force commander Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, who was martyred in a U.S. airstrike in Baghdad last week, during the opening ceremony.

Mahmoud al-Zahar, a co-founder of Hamas, and Khaled

al-Batsh, a daughter of the jailed Nigerian Shia leader Ibrahim Zakzaky, are scheduled to deliver speeches during the ceremony.

"No Fly Zone" directed by Amir Dasargar will also go on screen during the opening ceremony.

Established by a number of Iranian revolutionary figures, the Ammar Popular Film Festival has been named after Ammar Yasir, a close companion of Prophet Muhammad (S).

The 10th edition of the Ammar festival was held in Tehran from January 1 to 10.



Front cover of the Persian version of American author Mark T. Sullivan's "Beneath a Scarlet Sky".

## Iranian publisher launches Martyr Soleimani letter writing contest

**CULTURE TEHRAN** — Ravayat-e Fat'h Publications has launched a contest, during which school students will compete by writing a letter to commander Qassem Soleimani, the organizers

announced on Thursday.

The competition titled "My Hero, Hajji Qassem Soleimani" has been organized to commemorate the Quds Force chief who was martyred in a U.S. air raid in Baghdad last week.

Students are asked to write letters addressing martyr Soleimani in a one-page letter with topics such as "My Hero", "Commander of Hearts", "Soldier of Khomeini", "Cheer to Commander" and "We Are All Soleimani".

The organizers will select top 110 letters, whose writers each will receive two million rials (about \$50).

The letters are scheduled to be published in a book.

## A letter from Iran penned to Michael Moore, Robert De Niro and American nation

**1 →** Maybe, the whole world is capsized and overthrown and government, nation and representatives of the Iraqi Parliament and whole people in the world have become zombies. Maybe, only your statesmen, politicians and your president [Donald Trump] were the last survivors of the world's knowledgeable people in this apocalypse.

Have your statesmen [American officials] like their liar predecessors in the previous administrations (such as Vietnam War, false excuse of existence of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) in Iraq and anti-Mosadeq coup and downing of Iranian passenger plane) think about this issue that how much lies they have told to people and consequently, can your statesmen find a reasonable answer to the question that may be asked from them by the next generation and their grandchildren as well?

There is an old Iranian example that says, "you can make a person wake up when he is sleep but you cannot make a person to wake up when has fallen sleep in fake."

**Messrs. Michael Moore, Robert De Niro and American people**

The great and civilized nation of Iran, the country that your president [Trump] had decided to target 52 cultural centers of the country, attacked U.S. military bases in Iraq's Eyn Al-Asad in retaliation of assassination of Gen. Soleimani for the following two main objectives:

Firstly, Iran attacked U.S. military bases in Iraq in retaliation of the assassination of Gen. Soleimani to show that this country can retaliate and repel any attack. Iran also can attack U.S. military bases in the farthest region in the world but Iran respects the dignity of people with its ethics and humanity and take the two criteria i.e. ethics and humanity into serious consideration. Most importantly, the Islamic Republic of Iran, unlike your statesmen [American officials] prevents the killing of people. As you may be informed, the Islamic Republic of Iran in its battle with Iraq during the eight years (1980-1988) never shoot

a chemical bullet but in contrast, the then Iraqi government used chemical weapons against the noble nation of Islamic Iran in this unequal war.

**Now Messrs. Michael Moore, Robert De Niro and other American peacemakers and artists**

Our country Iran has acted according to your request in separating Trump and other American officials from the noble nation of America in practice and now, it is your time to act on your promise as stipulated in your notes and interviews.

From today, #hard revenge has been assigned to you, other artists, actors and freedom-seekers in the United States. As long as American officials dream of oil instead of humanity, change of governments will not work. However, we, Iranian people, are waiting for your promise but not like the promises as given by your statesmen, officials and politicians.

Best regards,  
Habib Ahmadzadeh