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'CBI to facilitate private sector's foreign trade'

TEHRAN — The governor of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) says the bank is going to take necessary measures in order to facilitate the private sector's foreign trade, IRIB reported.

"To facilitate the private sector's trade with other countries, we try to consider a fund or intermediary channel for cash settlement. This could increase the volume

of foreign trade significantly," Abdolnasser Hemmati said in a meeting with the heads of the country's joint chambers of commerce on Monday.

Stressing the important role of the private sector in the country's foreign trade, the official said, "A big part of the country's exports is being done by the private companies." → **4**

Iran warns to take firm, decisive response if E3 takes unconstructive steps

TEHRAN — The Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman, in a statement on Tuesday, reacted to a decision by the European signatories to the 2015 nuclear deal to activate the "trigger mechanism", noting that the move will not serve nobody's interests.

"I have to mention that the three European nations (Britain, France and Germany) have taken a passive measure from a weak position," Abbas Mousavi said.

"Iran, as always, is prepared to deal with any constructive effort to save the important international agreement," he said, adding that his country will take "firm, decisive and proportional response" to any "unconstructive" moves.

France, Germany and the United Kingdom issued a joint statement on Tuesday, three parties to the JCPOA, announcing they have formally triggered the dispute mechanism in the nuclear deal. → **2**

Baghdad will not sign agreement keeping U.S. forces in Iraq: government

Spokesman for the Iraqi Prime Minister William Warda said that his country will not sign an agreement to keep the U.S. forces in Iraq to continue fighting against ISIL (Daesh) terrorists, Sky News reported.

He stressed that the Iraqi government will support the parliament's vote on the withdrawal of U.S. forces from the country.

"Up to this point, the Iraqi govern-

ment is committed to implementing the decision of the Iraqi parliament, which stipulates that all foreign forces should withdraw from Iraq. Foreign forces do not only mean the presence of American forces. But all other foreign forces are in Iraq," the spokesman added.

On 5 Jan 2020, Iraq's parliament passed a resolution that asks the government to end the presence of foreign troops in the country. → **10**



EDITORIAL
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When the liar and the honest person are replaced!

The U.S. is gradually opening the doors of the Ain al-Asad air base to some selected reporters and media while five days have passed since the missile strikes by the Islamic Revolutionary Guards' Aerospace Force. Therefore, the U.S. practically had enough time to clear the evidence of the damages caused by the attacks and hide them from the media.

On the other hand, the Islamic Republic of Iran, in a continuous effort to investigate different scenarios, bravely and honestly announced the cause of Ukrainian airliner crash less than 3 days, immediately after the operator's human error has been determined (regardless of whether the error was caused by a cyber-attack or something else).

The utmost attempt by the Western media outlets for reversing the truth is the other side of coin. The outlets intended to downplay the humiliation of the Americans in the Ain al-Asad air base in public opinion and inflame the hearts of the Iranian people, whose pain had been alleviated by the hard revenge for the assassination of commander Soleimani.

Regardless of the commendation by the Western-affiliated media, the examination of the performance and statements by the White House, especially Trump, following the attacks on the Ain al-Asad base on the one hand, and Iran's performance after the Ukrainian airliner crash on the other hand, make it clear that who really deserves to be called "liar and secretive".

It should be noted that the hegemonic system has made full use of its capabilities within 48 hours to turn Iranian "national unity and integrity" into the threat of "division and street riots". It made every bid in this regard, including the hostile remarks by the U.S.-European governments, the widespread media warfare, triggering riots, influencing illegal gathering and leading them.

The strong slap by the IRGC was so hard for the Americans to bear that, along with the media warfare, they involved the British ambassador to Iran Rob Macaire in their plan, giving him a mission to personally attend the Saturday evening illegal gatherings and foment divisions.

The British ambassador to Iran was aware of the illegality of his action under the Vienna Conventions, and perhaps this is the reason of his contradicted claims after being identified and arrested by the NAJA forces.

Assassination of Major General Soleimani in the light of international law

By Mohammadreza Farahzadi

TEHRAN — "Assassination" is a form of extrajudicial execution that is carried out illegally and arbitrarily by a state and is contrary to the principles of human rights under Article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Many states that carry out assassinations refer to the term "targeted killing" to justify their actions. Targeted killing is the targeting of terrorist forces even far from a war situation. In the alleged targeted killing, the targeted individuals must be formally charged with terrorism, and naturally members of the liberation movement and the official personnel of the armed forces of a country cannot be the legitimate targets of the assassination

unless they are in conflict and war.

The theory of targeted killing has many opponents, even with the assumption of the killing of official terrorists. The UN Special Rapporteur on Extra-Judicial summary or arbitrary Executions believes that even in the event of armed conflict, the proper requirements of the law must be observed and that a person may not be killed without a fair trial.

Some also state the theory of self-defense to justify targeted killing. Following the 9/11 attacks, the exercise of the right to self-defense against nongovernmental terrorist groups was debated and emphasized in Resolutions 1373 and 1386.

In this regard, it should be noted that in the case of self-defense the existence of hostility and

the necessity of defense are essential and political conflicts and baseless accusations cannot be a good reason for assassinating the other party.

There are some significant points regarding the assassination of commander Soleimani:

Iran and the U.S. have not been at war when commander Soleimani was assassinated. In definition of armed conflict, Article 2 of the Geneva Conventions reads: the present Convention shall apply to all cases of declared war or of any other armed conflict which may arise between two or more of the High Contracting Parties, even if the state of war is not recognized by one of them. The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) also describes the armed conflict as the use of armed forces by two states. → **3**

The End of Impunity

By M. A. Saeed

MUSCAT — On December 17th 1998 Americans woke up to a NY Times headline "Impeachment vote in House delayed as Clinton launches Iraq air strike".

Fast forward on January 4th 2020, CNN quoted a Washington Post report that "Some Democrats privately worried about sending impeachment articles to senate amid Iran tensions".

Deja vu with a very bitter taste. Regional lives are again sacrificed at the altar of American domestic politics. For more than 200 years our region has been the victimized arena where Western domestic political fights and imperialistic misadventures play out. They invented the tools of destruction and torture to advance their agendas as well as names for those standing up to these agendas. "Fundamentalists",

"extremists", "terrorists", "insurgents" – the list of adjectives grows. This imperialist adventurism is supported by an army of lobbyists and think-tanks armed with studies and data intended to prove that drone strikes, arms sales, and extra judicial killings will bring peace to our region.

Of course, the peace is conditional to our total subjugation. In their view, we who belong to this region do not have the right to govern our region. Only those coming from thousands miles away onboard warships and other killing machines are entitled to govern us.

Security of our region is not the affair of those indigenous to our region but those foreign and distant from it. Regional countries and leaders demonstrating the military and technological capability and desire to take

control of regional security are portrayed as threats to the very security they are trying to protect!

Country after country are being attacked if they do not accept colonial subjugation. Iran is the current target. Count the number of military bases surrounding Iran. Iran is not the first. It certainly will not be the last. There is Turkey, another regional superpower unwilling to surrender to colonial subjugation. Turkey is still the continuous target of political and economic attempts to blackmail.

Others, especially in the oil producing dictatorships, have succumbed in the belief that they will be protected. In reality, the protection is the surety that having subjugated themselves, they will not be attacked by the very colonial forces protecting them. → **3**



Rouhani meets Syrian PM, reiterates U.S. must leave the region

TEHRAN — Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said on Tuesday that the United States' military presence in the region must come to an end and its forces must leave the region.

During a meeting with Syrian Prime Minister Imad Khamis in Tehran, Rouhani said that Iran will never forget the U.S. crime in assassinating Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani.

He noted that the U.S. assassinated Soleimani because he foiled Washington's plots against the regional people. General Soleimani was a legendary commander in leading the resistance movement against terrorist groups, especially Daesh, in both Syria and Iraq. → **2**



ARTICLE
Ebrahim Fallahi
Tehran Times journalist

How U.S.-China trade deal is going to impact Iranian oil exports?

Today, the U.S. and China are going to sign a trade deal, which is expected to ease the tensions between the two economic rivals and push the global economy out of recession and bring markets back to life.

The deal, which is labeled as the "Phase 1 trade deal", is going to be signed by U.S. President Donald Trump and China's Vice Premier Liu He, at the White House.

Despite the undeniable positive impact of the deal on the global markets, the consequences of this deal for the Iranian oil market could be a little complicated. Since, on one side, the increase in oil prices as the result of the trade deal would benefit Iranian oil industry like all others, but on the other side, it could force China to take some reassuring actions in order to show its determination for ending the trade war.

That means, under U.S. pressures, and to cement the agreement with the Americans, China could probably cut or even end its oil imports from Iran.

■ **The U.S.-China-Iran triangle**

Tensions between the U.S. and Iran have been escalating in the recent weeks after the U.S. assassinated the top Iranian General Qassem Soleimani in an air strike, and Iran answered with an attack on U.S. military bases in Iraq.

Following Iran's revenge, Washington imposed new sanctions on the Iranian metal sector and some of the country's senior officials.

The Trump administration has also intensified the pressure on Iranian allies, like China, for reducing their economic transactions with the Islamic republic and follow the Americans' lead in isolating Iran.

China however, so far, has been resisting such pressures and despite the U.S. threats and imposing penalties on Chinese tanker companies dealing with Iranian oil, the country has continued to import oil from the Islamic Republic.

Now with the U.S. and China on the verge of signing the significant agreement, the Trump administration is using this deal as a leverage to make the Chinese side to bend to their wills in cutting ties with Iran. → **5**

German parliament questions legality of Gen. Soleimani's assassination

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Germany's Bundestag lower house of parliament has questioned the legality of the assassination of Iranian Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani by the U.S. military.

Bundestag has announced it has considerable doubts that assassination of Soleimani is compatible with international law, RND said on Tuesday.

The German MPs have said it is not clear why the assassination of Soleimani was absolutely necessary in Iraq in order to ward off threat to the lives of the U.S. forces.

Soleimani was assassinated in a United States' airstrike in Baghdad on January 3.

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

The Iranian military responded to the adventurist move by firing more than 10 missiles at a U.S. airbase in western Iraq, becoming the first country to counter the U.S. militarily since the Second World War.

Soleimani was architect of U.S. defeats: IRGC chief

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Chief of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Hossein Salami said on Tuesday that Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani was architect of defeats suffered by the United States, the Zionist regime of Israel and their allies in the region.

In a meeting with Syrian Prime Minister Imad Khamis in Tehran, Salami noted that Soleimani's path will continue powerfully.



He also said, "General Soleimani was born in Iran, however, his endeavors in Islamic lands made him a figure who belongs to the world of Islam, especially in Iraq, Syria and Lebanon."

The world of Islam mourned his martyrdom, he added. Khamis said that Soleimani will remain alive in the hearts of the Syrians.

Soleimani was a legendary commander in the fight against terrorist groups including Daesh (also called ISIS) in Iraq and Syria. Soleimani was assassinated in a U.S. airstrike in Baghdad on January 3.

Immediately after the terrorist attack on General Soleimani, Zarif resorted to his Twitter account, writing, "The US' act of international terrorism, targeting & assassinating General Soleimani—THE most effective force fighting Daesh (ISIS), Al Nusrah, Al Qaeda et al—is extremely dangerous & a foolish escalation."

After the assassination, Iran vowed "harsh revenge". Thereby on January 8, on the dead of the night, Iran responded to the U.S. military act by firing 22 ballistic missiles at a major U.S. airbase in western Iraq.

Iran pounded the military base from which the U.S. had flown drones to assassinate Soleimani.

CNN, Al Jazeera and other major media outlets have released videos and photos showing the extent of the damage on the airbase hosting the U.S. troops.

A top official from the Lebanese Hezbollah resistance movement has said Iran's precision missile strikes at the U.S. military base shattered Washington's invincibility myth, according to Press TV.

"Iran, by bombing the bases, exposed the American arrogance and put an end to the U.S. invincibility myth. It demonstrated that it stands ... prepared for any confrontation. The blood of Lt. Gen. Soleimani marks the end of American presence in Iraq and the region, so the United States no longer has a future in the region," Nabil Qaouk, the deputy head of Hezbollah's executive council, said at a memorial ceremony held in Lebanon's southern town of Khiam on Monday.

Rouhani meets Syrian PM, reiterates U.S. must leave the region

1 → However, in a highly dangerous move, the United States assassinated this anti-terror general in Baghdad on January 3. Iran retaliated to the hostile act by firing ballistic missiles at a U.S. airbase in western Iraq.

■ Rouhani says U.S. seeking to gain control over Syrian oil wells

Rouhani also said that the U.S. is seeking to gain control over oil wells in Syria.

"Today, the United States' interference in other countries' affairs and its efforts to gain control over Syria's oil wells are clear to all. They have never been and will never be concerned about the regional people's interests," the president remarked.

Elsewhere, he said that Iran will stand beside the Syrians. For his part, Khamis thanked Iran for its support to Syria and called for expansion of relations and cooperation.

He said that efforts to eradicate terrorism in the region will continue.

The prime minister also said, "The United States' presence in Syria is clear example of occupation. We believe that all the nations and governments must resist against their illegitimate presence in the region."

Pointing to Iran's missile attack on a U.S. base in Iraq in retaliation to the assassination of Soleimani, Khamis said the move bore a message for the world.

"This action showed the enemies that hegemony has no place in the region," the Syrian prime minister pointed out.

Rouhani: Judiciary should form special court to investigate plane crash

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — President Hassan Rouhani of Iran said on Tuesday that the Judiciary should form a special court headed by a high-ranking judge and assisted by tens of senior experts to investigate the issue of the Ukrainian plane crash.

The Ukrainian passenger plane, with 176 people aboard, was mistakenly downed on the 8th of January by the air defense system.

The plane was shot down six minutes after taking off from Tehran's Imam Khomeini Airport to Kiev in the morning time of January 8.

"This is not an ordinary case. The entire world will monitor the proposed court," Rouhani said.

"I myself, due to my somehow knowledge about air defense issue, say that only one person can't be guilty in this adventure, so there are some others. I want (the relevant bodies) to explain the issue honestly to the people," Rouhani added.

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

Rouhani said, "The government feels responsibility towards the people as well as other nationalities who lost their lives in the incident. The government will fulfill its legal and judicial duties in this regard."

In a press conference on Monday, government spokesman Ali Rabiei acknowledged that the country's defective cycle of information was the cause of misinforming people about the cause of the plane crash, expressing official apology for the shortcoming.

The downing happened a few hours after Iran fired dozens of missiles at a U.S. airbase inside Iraq in retaliation to the assassination of Iranian Lieu-



tenant General Qassem Soleimani in Baghdad on January 3. According to IRGC Aerospace Force Commander Amir Ali Hajizadeh, the operator at the airbase had mistaken the plane for an attacking cruise missile.

Iran's Armed Forces issued a statement on Saturday morning announcing that the Ukrainian passenger plane was shot down near the Imam Khomeini Airport due to a "human error".

"The Ukrainian passenger plane was hit unintentionally and due to human error which unfortunately led to martyrdom of a number of our people and also a number of foreign nationals," the statement read.

Rabiei criticized the defective cycle of information, saying, "In fact, the government itself is wrapped in a defective cycle of providing and receiving information."

"Some people are criticizing that why the government did not conduct more studies before announcing its stance, but, we sent several inquiries to the relevant officials before releasing our view and the entire relevant officials, based on their information at the time, told us that there were no any missile fire," Rabiei explained.

"Hereby, we apologize to the dear Iranian nation, public opinion and journalists," he added.

Ali Shamkhani, secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC), said on Sunday that Iran had no intention to hide causes of the plane crash.

"From the beginning of the crash, we had no intention to hide its causes," he said during a memorial service for two victims of the crash.

It took time to announce the causes due

to necessity to investigate all hypotheses, especially "possible actions of the enemies in jamming", "hack of the systems" and "the issue of infiltration", explained Shamkhani who served as defense minister in the Khatami administration from 1997 to 2005.

On Saturday, hundreds of people gathered in front of the main universities in Tehran to voice their protests over the late admission of downing the Ukrainian plane and misinforming the people.

Similar protest gatherings were held in certain other cities on Saturday and Sunday.

Major General Hossein Salami, chief of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), said on Sunday that he wished he was on the downed plane so he could avoid the shame of making such a colossal mistake.

"Concerning the incident, we are saddened more than anybody else and never thought we would carry out an action that could harm people," Salami told a closed session of the parliament on Sunday.

"The operator was informed of cruise missiles targeting some points in Iran, for few moments he was disconnected with SOC (security operations center)," he explained, according to Mehr.

"Therefore, he mistook the passenger flight for a missile and shot it down," he added.

Judiciary Chief Ebrahim Raisi on Monday vowed to fully observe justice in probing the plane crash case.

"In pursuing the case of the downed plane, justice will be implemented irrespective of any circumstances," Raisi said, Tasnim reported.

"People should be assured that all the material and moral rights of the deceased and their families will be fully fulfilled and the establishment is resolute with regard to this issue," he stated.

Zarif: E3 has bowed to U.S. diktat

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has said that France, Germany, and the UK have bowed to "the U.S. diktat" for 20 months.

"For 20 months, the E3-following UK appeasement policy has bowed to US diktat," Zarif tweeted late on Monday. Zarif said this policy "hasn't gotten it anywhere-and it never will."

The chief diplomat added that the three European countries can save the 2015 nuclear deal "but not by appeasing the bully & pressuring the complying party." In the same tweet, Zarif also said, "Rather it should muster the courage to fulfill its own obligations."

France, Britain and Germany plan to trigger on Tuesday the dispute mechanism in the Iran nuclear deal, Reuters reported.

Two European diplomats said on Tues-

day the decision was aimed at saving the deal by discussing with Iran what it should do to reverse its decision on suspending all the nuclear limits.

The three countries were to inform the European Union on Tuesday they plan to trigger the mechanism.

U.S. President Donald Trump quit the nuclear deal, officially known as the JCPOA, in May 2018 and introduced the harshest ever sanctions in history on Iran as part of his administration's "maximum pressure" strategy against Iran.

The European countries failed to protect Iran's benefits from the deal and after patiently watching for more than a year and seeing no clear action from the other signatories of the nuclear deal, Iran started to partially reduce its commitments.

Iran's action is based on articles 26 and 36 of the JCPOA. Tehran has repeatedly

announced it will reverse its decisions once other signatories fulfil their commitments.

Under the 2015 nuclear agreement endorsed by the UN Security Council resolution 2231, Iran agreed to put limits on its nuclear activities in exchange for termination of economic and financial bans.

■ UK is parroting U.S. line, Zarif says

Zarif said in another tweet that the "UK is parroting U.S. line", criticizing London's appeasement to Washington.

"UK is parroting US line & blindly abetting its terrorist adventurism in our region. The last time UK was dragged along to infamy by the US was in Iraq war. How did that work out?" he asked in his tweet.

He added, "Take the honorable path for a change: settle court-ordered debt



to Iranians."

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has backed U.S. assassination of Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani in Baghdad on January 3.

In a phone conversation with Johnson on Thursday, President Hassan Rouhani said that London would not have been secure if it had not been for Soleimani's relentless campaign against terrorists in Iraq and Syria.

Iran warns to take firm, decisive response if E3 takes unconstructive steps

1 → According to Reuters, they said they still want the deal to succeed and were not joining a "maximum pressure" campaign against Iran by the United States, which abandoned the deal in May 2018 and re-imposed sanctions.

Triggering the dispute mechanism could lead eventually to the re-imposition of UN sanctions that were lifted under the agreement.

U.S. President Donald Trump quit the nuclear deal in May 2018 and introduced the harshest ever sanctions in history on Iran as part of his administration's "maximum pressure" campaign against Iran.

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

So far Britain, France, Germany have only paid lip service for the agreement and done nothing concrete to protect Iran's economy from sanctions.

On May 8, exactly one year after the U.S. abandoned the deal, Tehran announced that its "strategic patience" is over and began to partially reduce its commitments



to the agreement at bi-monthly intervals.

Iran's moves are based on paragraph 36 of the JCPOA which "allows one side, under certain circumstances, to stop complying with the deal if the other side is out of compliance."

In the first stage, Iran announced that it will not

limit its stockpile of the nuclear fuel to 300 kilograms allowed under the deal. On that date (May 8) Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) said if the remaining parties to the JCPOA, especially Europeans, devise a mechanism to protect Iran from the sanctions' effect in the two-month deadline it will reverse its decision.

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

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

In the fourth step, which started on November 6, Iran began injecting uranium gas into 1,044 centrifuges at the Fordow nuclear site. It was done at the presence of inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

In its fifth and final step on January 5, Iran suspended all limits under the JCPOA.

Foreign Ministry condemns British envoy's suspicious participation at protest gathering in Tehran

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — The Iranian Foreign Ministry, in a statement on Monday, strongly condemned the British ambassador's unlawful, unprofessional and suspicious participation at a gathering in Tehran.

The statement denounced Ambassador Rob Macaire's attendance at the gathering as a blatant interference in the internal affairs of Iran, the ministry's English language website reported.

His attendance at the gathering contravenes the principles of diplomatic relations and raises suspicions of Britain's involvement in the failed policy of the U.S. "maximum pressure" campaign against Tehran.

On Saturday, a group of students had gathered inside

Amirkabir University of Technology to voice their protest after Iran officially acknowledged an accidental downing of a

Ukrainian passenger plane last Wednesday.

On Saturday, a senior police official told media that Macaire was arrested during the mourning vigil which turned into a protest in front of Amirkabir University in downtown Tehran, where he was organizing and provoking people.

The statement also condemned the unacceptable remarks by the British prime minister, foreign secretary and defense secretary for backing the U.S. assassination of Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, saying their remarks are tantamount to London's partnership in the U.S. terrorist act.

The statement also slammed the Monday comments by British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab who had threatened further sanctions against Iran.

"It is obvious that the British regime is still having anti-Iran delusions on the

basis of a dangerous miscalculation and is seeking an escalation of tensions in the region and in its relations with Iran. The British leaders must know that the accusations against Iran could not cover up that regime's blind obedience to the U.S., Britain's scandalous failure to honor its JCPOA commitments, or even the refusal to abide by a verdict given by a British court on repaying hundreds of millions of pounds in debt to the people of Iran due to its fear of the U.S."

It added, "Any new British mistake will face Iran's harsh and proportionate reaction, and the British government bears responsibility for all of its consequences."

Mentioning the history of British colonialism in the Middle East, the Iranian Foreign Ministry said the era of interference of British ambassadors in the internal affairs of other countries, fomenting divisions and fueling

domestic conflicts has ended a long time ago.

"Britain must abandon such scandalous activities and realize that the time when the sun never set on the British Empire has been over for decades," the statement underlined, adding, "With all different tastes and views, the vigilant people of Iran do not accept foreign interference, particularly from the governments with a record of colonialism and support for dictators, and would not forget that the very same British government is the main supporter and arms supplier of those who slaughtered Khashoggi and who kill children in Yemen."

The ministry finally called on the British embassy in Tehran to immediately stop any meddling and provocative measure, and warned that if such behavior continues, the ministry will not be satisfied just by summoning the ambassador.

Iran says will file lawsuits against Trump for Soleimani assassination

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iran's Judiciary spokesman said on Tuesday that the Islamic Republic will file lawsuits against U.S. President Donald Trump and the U.S. government for the assassination of Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, Iran's top anti-terror commander, in Iraq earlier this month.

"We intend to file lawsuits in the Islamic Republic, Iraq and The Hague Court (International Court of Justice) against the military and government of America and against Trump," Gholamhossein Esmaeili said during a press conference, according to Mehr.

"There is no doubt that the U.S. military has done a terrorist act assassinating Guards Commander Lt. Gen. Soleimani and Second-in-Command of Iraq Popular Mobilization Units (PMU) Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis... and Trump has confessed doing the crime."

"The firmest reason for accusing an individual is his confession," he added.

"We will initially file a lawsuit in Iran, which is legal under the Islamic Penal Code," he said.

"Then we will do the same in Iraq and The Hague Court against Trump and the U.S. military," he added.

Soleimani and al-Muhandis along with eight others were assassinated at Baghdad's International Airport on January 3. They were



The Judiciary spokesman says the huge turnout at Soleimani's funeral was a big referendum.

targeted in an airstrike at Trump's order.

In the early hours of January 8, the IRGC attacked the U.S. airbase of Ain al-Assad in Anbar province in western Iraq as revenge against the assassination.

In his Tuesday remarks, Esmaeili said the next step in Iran's tough revenge will be taken as well in order to end the illegitimate presence of the Americans in the region.

"The enemies are after creating crises in the region and in Iran and their main plan and plot is to wage a soft war and create a media frenzy," he added.

The spokesman also said the huge turnout at Soleimani's funeral was a big referendum.

Millions of mourners took to the streets in Ahwaz, Mashhad, Tehran, Qom, and Kerman - Soleimani's hometown - to attend the top general's funeral procession.

Addressing the mourners in Kerman, where Soleimani was buried, 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.

Iran won't allow enemy exploit Ukrainian plane incident: Army chief

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Army Chief Major General Abdolrahim Mousavi has said Iran will not let the enemy take advantage of the accidental downing of a Ukrainian plane, Mehr reported.

"We won't let the enemy take advantage of the recent aerial accident, which was bitter and regrettable for everyone, and disrupt the tranquility and security of the country and the people by its disinformation campaign," Mousavi said on Tuesday.

"Today, Iran's aerospace is more secure than before for all flights and is ready to provide different flights with its services," he added.

All 176 crew members and passengers, 147 of whom were Iranians, died in the Ukraine International Airlines (UIA) crash which came a few minutes after take-off from Tehran to Kiev on Wednesday.

The General Staff of the Armed Forces issued a statement on Saturday saying that the Ukrainian plane crash was caused



by a "human error".

"The Ukrainian passenger plane was hit unintentionally and due to human error, which unfortunately led to the martyrdom of a number of our people and also a number of foreign nationals," the statement read.

It came in the aftermath of a Trump-ordered U.S. attack at Baghdad's airport on January 3 that killed top Iranian general Qassem Soleimani.

Iran took revenge by attacking an American airbase in Iraq with more than ten missiles.

The Ukrainian plane was hit accidentally right after the attack, which had put Iran on full alert due to a possible U.S. retaliation.

"Surely, in the eyes of the appreciative people of the Islamic Iran and the noble families of the deceased, human error will not wane the Guards' great achievements which have established security and brought dignity [for Iran]," General Mousavi said.

He added that the Army, through cooperation with the IRGC and other armed forces, will strive until its last breath for the independence, security and glory of the great Iranian nation under the leadership of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

EU chief diplomat: Preserving nuclear deal is now more important than ever

By staff and agency

European Union's foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said on Tuesday that preserving the 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the JCPOA, is now more important than ever.

"I have received a letter from E3 FMs triggering the dispute resolution mechanism of #JCPOA with Iran. Will now oversee the process which requires intensive efforts& approach in good faith by all. Preserving the #nucleardeal is now more important than ever," he tweeted.

France, Germany and the United Kingdom issued a joint statement on Tuesday, three parties to the JCPOA, announcing they have formally triggered the dispute mechanism in the nuclear deal.

According to Reuters, they said they still want the deal to succeed and were not joining a "maximum pressure" campaign against Iran by the United States, which abandoned the deal in May 2018 and re-

imposed sanctions.

Triggering the dispute mechanism could lead eventually to the reimposition of UN sanctions that were lifted under the agreement.

U.S. President Donald Trump quit the nuclear deal in May 2018 and introduced the harshest ever sanctions in history on Iran as part of his administration's "maximum pressure" campaign against Iran.

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

Britain, France, Germany, Russia, China, and Iran have been trying to salvage the pact. However, Europeans' efforts to protect trade with Iran against the U.S. sanctions have yielded nothing concrete so far.

On May 8, exactly one year after the U.S. abandoned the deal, Tehran announced that its "strategic patience" is over and began

to partially reduce its commitments to the agreement at bi-monthly intervals.

Iran's moves are based on paragraph 36 of the JCPOA which "allows one side, under certain circumstances, to stop complying with the deal if the other side is out of compliance."

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

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



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

In the fourth step, which started on November 6, Iran began injecting uranium gas into 1,044 centrifuges at the Fordow nuclear site. It was done at the presence of inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

In its fifth and final step on January 5, Iran suspended all limits under the JCPOA.

The End of Impunity

1→ And therein lies the paradox. Almost Al Capone, but on a global scale. After all, it was Al Capone who said, "My rackets run on strictly American lines". Indeed. The playbook does not change. First come accusations of terrorism and listing the country in the famous list of terrorist supporting "regimes". This is usually followed by economic blockade that aims to strangle and weaken the "target" country and ultimately comes military attack.

While we are consumed by sectarian and religious divisions that turn populations against one another, geopolitical control of our region is allowed to be taken over by forces thousands of miles away.

Those who seek to dominate our region couldn't care less about your religious faith. It is not the direction you face in prayer but the resources your feet stand on that is their target. Their weapons of war do not discriminate by religion, sect or nationality - they are equal opportunity killers.

The invading missiles that fell on Iraq did not tar-

get a religious or sectarian community but all Iraqis. Afghanistan is a Sunni majority nation, Iran is a Shia majority nation. One has been destroyed and the other is now being targeted for destruction. You have a political religion. They don't. And as long as you refuse to see these realities and deal with them, you are contributing to the destruction and continued occupation of your region and the subjugation of your children's future.

This is why it is important for us in the region to look at Iran's retaliatory strikes, in June against a spying drone and recent missiles upon U.S. bases on Iraq as a major development that has sent an important message.

This is not just important for us in the region but the American public as well whose youngsters are being sacrificed in distant wars they do not understand and do not have to fight and die in. These are youngsters who should be building their lives back home with their families and not being killed in an Arabian desert protecting ruthless dictators, some of whom have attacked the U.S. mainland itself.

Tragically, the American public has been a victim of America's Military Establishment, War Industry and Zionist Controlled Media, an Axis of Evil that dominates and directs American foreign military adventures, sacrificing American blood and treasure.

This retaliatory strike should send two strong messages to the American public: 1- There is a retaliatory capability and resolve to use it. 2. The fact that American youngsters in the bases have been excluded is a show of technological precision capability and also goodwill that should be built upon towards peaceful resolution and not lost to further adventurism.

It is time the American public rein in, on a very short leash, the American Axis of Evil that is destroying America's relations with this region. 2020 can be the year to start that process.

Whatever is read from the events of the past few days, there is one very critical message that we cannot afford to miss in as far as colonial military adventurism is concerned: The End of Impunity.

Meanwhile, the IRGC is a main military body in Iran and follows the provisions of the Geneva Convention, so it cannot be known as terrorist.

Accordingly, Soleimani assassination is undoubtedly a clear violation of all rules on armed conflicts and legitimate defense mechanisms in the world. Therefore, the U.S. cannot legally justify its act of terrorism.

Resistance Front to drive U.S. forces out of the region: ex-IRGC chief

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — The Resistance Front will continue its activities until the full expulsion of American soldiers and military men from the region, says a former chief of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC).

"Today, the nations of the Resistance Front have come closer together more than ever, and they will do anything to take revenge ... and they will continue their activities until the full expulsion of American soldiers and military men from the region," Mohsen Rezaee said on Tuesday.

Rezaee was referring to a promised revenge for the assassination of IRGC Quds Force Chief Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani by the U.S. military in Iraq.

The United States assassinated Soleimani, Iran's top anti-terror commander, and his comrades-in-arms in an airstrike in Baghdad on January 3.

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 "tough revenge" for Soleimani's blood. Rezaee said the martyrdom of Soleimani was like the events of Karbala 14 centuries ago, when Imam Hussein (AS), the third Imam of Shia Muslims and the grandson of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), was martyred.

Those who had pledged allegiance to Imam Hussein (AS) from Iraq and Iran were martyred together on January 3, the former IRGC chief remarked.

He said the relations between Iran and Iraq are based on friendly and brotherly ties and Iran does not interfere in Iraq's internal affairs.

Justin Trudeau: Plane victims would be alive if there were no tensions

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau says the 176 victims, including 57 Canadians, of the Ukrainian plane shot down accidentally by the Iranian military would have been alive if there had been no tension in the region.

"If there was no escalation recently in the region, those Canadians would be right now home with their families," Trudeau said in an interview with Global News Television on Monday.

"This is something that happens when you have conflict and the war. Innocents bear the brunt of it."

Many of the Canadians citizens were dual Iranian nationals. Trudeau was careful to avoid blaming U.S. President Donald Trump for the deaths which followed in the wake of the U.S. assassination of Iran's top general, Qassem Soleimani, in Iraq.



The Ukrainian passenger plane was accidentally shot down by an Iranian air defense unit on Wednesday morning, after the operator mistook the civilian plane with a cruise missile.

The air defense was at the highest level of alert following IRGC's missile attacks against a U.S. base in Iraq, which came in retaliation for the U.S. assassination of General Soleimani.

In his Monday interview, Trudeau said Canada did not receive a heads-up before the United States assassinated Soleimani, and that he "obviously" would have preferred one.

"The U.S. makes its determinations. We attempt to work as an international community on big issues. But sometimes countries take actions without informing their allies," he complained.

Trudeau said that while the government was working as quickly as possible to bring the bodies home for burial, it was likely to take weeks or "perhaps even months."

Canada said on Monday that Iran had signaled that Canadian investigators would take an active role in the probe of the crash. A delegation of Canadian officials arrived in Iran in early Tuesday morning in order to investigate the plane crash.

Earlier, the head of Canada's Transportation Safety Board said Iran is allowing Ottawa to play a more active role than is normally permitted in the investigation into the plane crash.

International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) also announced on Monday that it has accepted an invitation from the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to provide expert advice in support of the investigation of the aircraft accident for the PS-752 flight.

"Noting that all relevant States have been granted the right to participate in the investigation in compliance with Annex 13 to the Convention on International Civil Aviation (Aircraft Accident and Incident Investigation), ICAO has appointed senior and expert technical staff who will now serve as advisers and observers with respect to States' interactions and interpretations relevant to Annex 13 investigation provisions," it added.

Assassination of Major General Soleimani in the light of international law

1→ The question now is that on what front Iran and the U.S. are involved in an armed conflict that the U.S. considers an Iranian military official, who was attending an official meeting outside the territory of Iran, as a legitimate target?

Another considerable point is that the U.S. has resort to the allegation of "Terrorist act by the IRGC". In this regard, it should be noted that the U.S. claims over

calling the IRGC terrorist is completely illegal and contrary to international law.

The IRGC is part of the Iranian official sovereignty, and under Article 2 of The U.N. Convention on Jurisdictional Immunities of States and Their Property, it is not possible for the U.S. to prosecute the Iranian government through domestic courts.

On the other hand, under Article 5

of the Convention, U.S. domestic courts cannot prosecute the IRGC, an element of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and its members. Therefore, considering the IRGC as terrorist to justify hostile acts is futile. The U.S. cannot unilaterally declare the IRGC a terrorist organization and fight it, while no international body, including the Security Council, considers the IRGC to be a terrorist organization.

STOCK MARKET	
TEDPIX	395912.6
IFX	5094.86
Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir	

CURRENCIES	
USD	42,000 rials
EUR	46,775 rials
GBP	54,579 rials
AED	11,437 rials
Source: cbi.ir	

COMMODITIES	
Brent	\$64.66/b
WTI	\$58.39/b
OPEC Basket	\$67.04/b
Gold	\$1,544.75/oz
Silver	\$17.79/oz
Platinum	\$974.95/oz
Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com	

TEDPIX, IFX climb up on Tuesday

ECONOMY **TEHRAN**— TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stok Exchange (TSE), rose 3,874 points to 395,912 on Tuesday, IRNA reported.

Some 6.183 billion securities worth 34.674 trillion rials (about \$825.5 million) were reportedly traded at TSE.



Also, IFX, the main index of Iran's over-the-counter (OTC) market known as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB), climbed 49 points to 5,094 as 2.012 billion securities valued at 17.067 trillion rials (about \$406.3 million) were traded on Tuesday.

Loading, unloading in Noshahr Port rise 44% in 9 months on year

ECONOMY **TEHRAN**— Loading and unloading of commodities in Noshahr Port, in northern province of Mazandaran, increased 44 percent during the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-December 21, 2019), director general of Mazandaran Province's Ports and Maritime Department announced.

Mohammad-Taqi Anzan-Pour also informed that loading and unloading of goods in Fereydounkenar Port, the other major port of the province, has risen 154 percent during the mentioned nine-month time, website of Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) published.

Anzan-Pour further said entrance of vessels to these two ports has increased 50 percent in the first nine months of the present year.

South Korea's chip exports headed for rebound as trade war eases

Some of the topics discussed include: momentum remains a significant force with stock markets almost universally breaking on the upside and led by large cap tech, global reflation trade gaining traction with Dollar weak, gold and Treasuries easing.

Semiconductor shipments, South Korea's biggest source of income, rose 12% in the first 10 days of January from a year earlier, data from the Customs Service showed Monday. That's the first time the preliminary figure posted growth since October 2018.

While the expansion benefits from a base effect of poor performance last year, it suggests global tech demand is improving after being battered by the U.S.-China trade war. The two countries entering a phase-one trade deal later this week should further support demand.

"It's definitely a positive signal," said Lim Hye-youn, an economist at KTB Investment & Securities, referring to the chip shipment in South Korea's preliminary trade data. "But it's still difficult to see the growth big enough to be leading Korea's strong economic recovery. The base effect played a large role."

The global semiconductor sector is a lead indicator for corporate spending and tends to suffer when expectations for future economic potential are weak. All we hear right now is about the negative expectations for future growth among CEOs. If that were the full story then chips sales would not be turning higher.

The 10 biggest companies in the world by market cap are Saudi Aramco, Apple, Microsoft, Alphabet, Amazon, Facebook, Alibaba, Berkshire Hathaway, Tencent and JPMorgan. To be part of the list a minimum market cap of \$426 billion is required.

While analysts say the exchange rate is being driven by improving market sentiment as China's economy steadies and trade tensions ease, the recent bout of strength comes at a pivotal time for U.S.-China negotiations. Chinese Vice Premier Liu He is expected to sign the long-awaited phase one agreement in Washington today.

Some now predict the currency will touch 6.8 per dollar within three months -- a level not seen since May last year.

(Source: proactiveinvestors.co.uk)

Projects defined to boost steel products output by 17m tons

ECONOMY **TEHRAN**— Iran has defined 16 development projects in the steel sector which are aimed to boost the country's output of steel products by 17.3 million tons in a course of five years, IRNA reported.

These projects are for constructing production units each with the capacity of 600,000 tons, while some other projects have been also defined to set up some units with under 500,000-ton capacity that together with the 600,000-ton capacity units will add 19.1 million tons to the country's annual steel products output, the same report confirmed.

Iran's Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Reza Rahmani says the country has achieved a proper self-reliance in steel industry.

Steel industry is one of the industries in which some good investment has been made and today it has become a production advantage, according to Rahmani.

Iran's annual steel production is planned to reach 45 million tons by the Iranian calendar year 1400 (March 2021-March 2022).

The country's annual crude steel production is planned to rise to 30 million



tons in the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 19, 2020) from 25 million tons in the past year.

According to the World Steel Association

(WSA), Iran became the world's tenth largest steel producer in 2018.

The country which stood at the 13th place in 2017 could lag behind three major

steel producers in the world, namely Italy, Taiwan, and Ukraine to stand at the 10th place in 2018, despite the re-imposition of sanctions by the U.S.

According to the WSA's report, Iran produced 25 million tons of crude steel in 2018 which indicates 17.7 percent growth from 21.2 million tons in 2017.

In last May, Washington imposed new sanctions on Iran's metals and minerals sectors in an attempt to [as the U.S. president Trump put it] "choke off the country's largest non-petroleum related sources of export revenue".

While at the first glance [considering Trump's comments], this might seem to be a heavy hit to Iran's economy in the near future but a close look into the country's exports data could reveal Trump's great miscalculations. In fact, this could even be considered a "blessing in disguise" for the country's minerals and metal industry.

Iranian Deputy Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Jafar Sarqini has said that the ministry has taken necessary measures to maintain the country's metal exports despite U.S. sanctions.

CBI to facilitate private sector's foreign trade

1 → He put the country's current non-oil exports at about \$40 billion, adding that the same amount is also being imported into the country.

According to the official, in the mentioned meeting, foreign trade issues and opportunities were discussed and countries with which Iran has more trade were prioritized for resolving problems.

"The central bank is also going to follow up on the issues in the currency sector," Hemmati said.

He further mentioned the U.S. sanctions on the country, saying, "As long as the U.S. continues the cruel sanctions, we will find new ways of doing business."

"The private sector is ready to play its important role in thwarting the impact of the sanctions and meeting the country's imports and currency needs, and the central bank thanks them", Hemmati stated.



According to the official, the bank is fully controlling the foreign currency market and sudden shocks are not going to create turbulence in the market.

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

Intl. architecture, interior design exhibit participated by 220 companies

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — The 10th edition of Iran's International Exhibition of Architecture, Interior Design, and Modern House (MIDEX 2020) kicked off at the Tehran Permanent International Fairground on Tuesday and will wrap up on Friday, IRNA reported.

As reported, 212 Iranian companies and eight foreign exhibitors from Germany, South Korea, Italy, Belgium, France, and China are showcasing their latest products and achievements during the four-day event.

In addition to the private companies, some government organizations and agencies are also presenting their capabilities in various areas of architectural and interior design and decoration, as well as their latest achievements and productions in the fields of nanotechnology and biotech-



nology, in this year's exhibition.

The exhibition is featuring a variety of products and services like prefabricated houses, lighting equipment, outdoor furniture and equipment, interior decoration, curtains, wallpapers, decorative coatings, decorative accessories, sports furniture and entertainment, electronics including remote control systems, as well as building safety systems, material filtration systems and etc.

Qeshm Free Zone hosting conference on energy investment opportunities

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Qeshm Island in southern Iran is hosting the second specialized conference on introducing Qeshm investment opportunities in the fields of oil, gas, and petrochemicals, IRIB reported on Tuesday.

According to the Qeshm Free Zone Organization's Director for Oil and Energy Affairs Mohammad-Javad Dehghani, this year's conference will focus on presenting solutions for financing energy projects in the sanctions era, as well as reviewing the challenges in the way of implementing such projects in Qeshm Free Zone.

Dehghani, who is also the secretary of the conference, mentioned 30 underway energy projects in Qeshm Free Zone including refinery, power plant, storage, and oil and petrochemical docks, and said such projects are going to turn the region into one of the energy hubs in the country.



According to the official, as the largest island in the Persian Gulf, Qeshm Island could benefit from huge oil and gas reserves in the region for attracting domestic and foreign investors. Therefore, Qeshm Free Zone Organization, in line

with the policies of the resilient economy, plans to facilitate investment in the fields of oil, gas, and petrochemicals.

Given the legal investment incentives in the zone such as 20-year tax exemptions, customs duty and commercial interest exemptions, issuing on-arrival visas for foreign investors, as well as unique geographical features like access to the wide regional market, proper transportation, access to skilled local workforce, all basis are provided for investors in order to contribute to the development of this strategic region, Dehghani said.

At this year's conference, officials, executives and experts from all over the country will discuss and explore issues pertaining to development of the island with a focus on the oil, gas and petrochemical industries, their challenges, and opportunities, as well as ways to finance projects in the sanctions era.

China's economic growth set to slow to 30-year low this year; more government support seen

China is expected to post its slowest economic growth in 30 years in 2020 as domestic and global demand remain sluggish, a Reuters poll showed on Tuesday, reinforcing views that Beijing will roll out more support measures.

This year is crucial for the ruling Communist Party to fulfill its goal of doubling gross domestic product (GDP) and incomes in the decade to 2020, but risks to growth still loom large despite a trade deal with the United States that will relieve some pressure on Chinese exporters.

China's economic growth is expected to slow to 5.9% this year, according to median forecast of 83 economists polled by Reuters, which would mark the weakest clip since 1990 and a further easing from an expected 6.1% in 2019.

The United States and China are expected to sign the Phase 1 trade deal on Wednesday, de-escalating a prolonged confrontation that has disrupted global supply chains and rattled financial markets. But Washington will not roll back all of its punitive measures, and the risk of another flare-up remains.

The "negative impact (on the economy) from U.S tariffs will start to fade in the second quarter, but given the global economy is slowing, exports could still face some downward pressure," said Bank of Communications economists in a report.

Analysts noted the limited Phase 1 deal does not appear to address long running U.S. complaints about China's state-led economic model.

The "fact is, with or without a deal, China-U.S. relations cannot go back in time," said Zhang Monan, analyst at China Center for International Economic Exchanges.

■ The structural issues

The "structural issues between China and United States, the U.S. crackdown on Chinese technology and partial decoupling between the two countries will make frictions the new normal."

China's economy was already slowing before the trade war erupted 18 months ago, as a regulatory crackdown on debt and riskier types of lending and led to a sharp slowdown in investment. Since the trade dispute escalated, business and consumer confidence have softened.

But November data and December factory activity surveys have pointed to signs of improvement in the manufacturing sector as trade tensions eased and Beijing rolled out more stimulus measures.

Policy sources have told Reuters that Beijing plans to set a lower economic growth target of around 6% this year from last year's 6-6.5%, relying on increased infrastructure spending to ward off a sharper slowdown.

"We think the policy support would not falter this year but its effect could be more pronounced amid lower trade-related risks," said Robin Xing, chief China economist at Morgan Stanley, in a news conference in Beijing last week.

Beijing is likely to increase its budget deficit ratio again this year, while hiking the quota for the issuance of local government special bonds, Xing said.

Analysts also expect the People's Bank of China (PBOC) to announce more cuts in banks' reserve requirement ratios (RRR), and predict further reductions in the country's one-year loan prime rate (LPR), its new benchmark lending rate.

(Source: reuters.com)

New Zealand's business confidence continues to improve

Business confidence improved at the end of 2019, with signs of a recovery in construction and manufacturing, although growth may continue to slide.

The Quarterly Survey of Business Opinion (QSBO) for the final quarter of 2019 showed that the general outlook for the economy remained negative, but was improving.

A net 26 percent of businesses which took part in the survey expect the overall economy to deteriorate in the coming year, however this was an improvement from the net 35 percent which expected a downturn in the September survey.

Across the survey - the leading indicator of its type in New Zealand - respondents were generally more positive, in particular in manufacturing.

A net 1 percent of manufacturing businesses said they had seen improved output at the end of 2019, up from a net 27 percent which saw a fall in output in September.

A large proportion of manufacturers also reported improving export condition compared to September.

"Although domestic demand remains soft, there has been a rebound in export demand," the New Zealand Institute of Economic Research said. The institute has been undertaking the survey since 1961.

■ The tone of survey more positive
Overall the tone of survey was more positive, but key indicators pointed to New Zealand's economic growth remaining weak at least until the end of 2019.

A net 11 percent of businesses reported a deterioration in their own activity in the quarter, the same as in September.

While recent economic commentary suggested New Zealand's economic growth

had reached a trough in the second half of 2019, NZIER principal economist Christina Leung said the QSBO suggested growth may continue to weaken for some time yet.

In late 2019 the monthly ANZ business outlook survey picked up strongly.

"Uncertainty remains a key theme and appears to be holding back firms from going too gung-ho on the expansion front," Workman said.

While the survey showed companies are still looking to hire staff and reporting difficulty finding the right people, investment expectations remain weak.

The balance of companies expect to reduce investment in both buildings and plant and machinery.

Meanwhile, profitability remains under pressure, as companies struggle to pass on higher costs through price increases.

A net 28 percent of companies said profits fell at the end of 2019, around the same as three months earlier, while a net 16 percent expect profits to drop in the coming months.

"While businesses have been increasing prices for their outputs, costs have been rising more rapidly," Westpac economist Satish Ranchhod said.

The "resulting squeeze on profits is likely to continue in the New Year."

The survey suggested annual GDP growth of around 1 percent towards the end of 2019, Leung said, but there did appear to be indicators showing that conditions were starting to improve.

To "the extent that we're seeing a stabilization in conditions, that suggests this is as bad as it gets," Leung said.

(Source: nzherald.co.nz)

Second phase of Iran's TJPC goes operational

ENERGY TEHRAN — The second phase of Takht-e-Jamshid Petrochemical Complex (TJPC) was officially inaugurated on Tuesday in Mahshahr Special Petrochemical Economic Zone in southwest-ern Khuzestan Province.

As Shana reported, the inauguration ceremony was attended by the Head of National Petrochemical Company (NPC) Behzad Mohammadi and the Vice President for Scientific Affairs Sorena Satari.

This phase of the TJPC has the capacity of producing 55,000 tons of polybutadiene rubber (BR) annually, according to the officials.

Speaking in the ceremony, Mohammadi underlined the significance of TJPC as one of the major projects in the second leap of the country's petrochemical industry, saying "This project is one of the first petrochemical projects in the country which has been established fully based on domestic knowledge and technology and by Iranian experts."

The second phase of TJPC is designed to produce 55,000 tons of polybutadiene rubber, 20,000 tons of latex, 5,000 tons of STP and 18,000 tons of Hips-grade polybutadiene rubber, the official said.

TJPC products are going to be used mainly in petrochemical supplementary industries, especially for the supply of raw materials for the tire and rubber industries. The first phase of the mentioned petrochemical complex was inaugurated in February 2017, by First Vice President Es-haq Jahangiri.

In the first phase the complex was comprised of a styrene butadiene rubber (SBR) unit with a capacity of 35,000 tons annually and a polybutadiene rubber (PBR) unit with a capacity of 18,000 tons per year.

Mahshahr Special Economic Zone is one of Iran's main industrial units in Khuzestan.

NPC plans to make the zone's petrochemical sector one of the major hubs in the region by adding up to six million tons of new capacity to the zone.



Petrochemical industry is one of the most important pillars of Iran's economy and one of the main suppliers of foreign currency especially euro for the country.

Iran is currently producing nearly 56 million tons of petrochemicals each year of which 21 million tons is being exported to 30 different destinations across the globe.

Why oil won't get to \$100 – and why it doesn't matter

By Luke Burgess

There is a major false belief about the oil industry that's held by most of the public and only serves to get you to buy crude over a longer period. That belief: Oil companies and organizations like OPEC want crude prices to be as high as possible.

That's simply not true. And, over the weekend, Saudi Arabia's energy minister gave us some evidence of that.

On Monday morning, Reuters reported that Saudi Arabia's Minister of Energy Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman Al-Saud wants "sustainable" oil prices and growth in demand. The media outlet writes:

Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman said it was too early to talk about whether the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and its allies, a group known as OPEC+, would continue with production curbs agreed under a deal that expires in March.

"As tension remains high in our region, Saudi Arabia will continue to do all it can do to ensure stable oil markets," the minister told an energy conference.

"We would like to have a stable oil market, sustainable growth in terms of demand, sustainable growth in terms of supply," he said, adding that both high and low prices were undesirable.

Anyone can understand why OPEC doesn't want oil prices too low. If market prices are too low, there's no profit. But what happens if oil prices are too high?

The uninitiated tend to believe oil prices can't be too high for OPEC — the higher the prices, the higher the profit, right? Well, yes, but here's the problem: That won't last long.

Alternatives to oil

Fact is, there are alternatives to oil. If the price of oil gets way too high, those alternatives become competitive. That's what OPEC wants to avoid.

Back in 2008, OPEC learned its lesson about this. From

the 1980s to 2000, the price of oil didn't change much. It was pretty much stable. But, starting in 2000, oil prices began to sharply rise, peaking at over \$100 per barrel in 2008.

It was a helluva time to be OPEC. The money was pouring in, but the market reacted.

As oil prices increased at the start of the new millennium, alternatives like solar, wind, and electric became more competitive. This led to a sharp increase in energy alternative investments, which also led to a sharp increase in efficiency for energy alternatives. I'd even argue that \$100 oil and the subsequent increased interest in energy alternatives is mostly responsible for the renewed climate change debate.

Our analysts have traveled the world over, dedicated to finding the best and most profitable investments in the global energy markets. All you have to do to join our Energy and Capital investment community is sign up for the daily newsletter below. So while \$100 oil was great for OPEC in the short term, it also led to the faster development and implementation of crude alternatives.

But that wasn't the only problem OPEC had by allowing oil prices to soar during that time. \$100 oil also allowed for the development of the fracking industry in the United States. As a result, the United States has become the world's largest producer of oil.

So, by allowing oil prices to get out of hand, OPEC created its own competition from oil alternatives and resources that were previously uneconomical to exploit. They screwed themselves.

Now that they've learned that lesson, OPEC wants "sustainable" oil prices. What OPEC means is it wants oil prices to trade in a range — not too high, but not too low. I estimate this range is between \$50 and \$75 per barrel.

So if OPEC is actively working to keep oil within this range, it's unlikely the price of oil is going back to \$100 anytime soon.

The oil industry

However (and this is very important), none of this means you shouldn't invest in the oil industry.

Investing is not playing the lottery. From my experience, most new investors are looking to buy a \$0.50 stock hoping it will go to several hundred dollars a share. Of course, that does happen sometimes, but it's not often. If it were often, everyone and their pet goldfish would invest all the time.

And, ultimately, seeking a massive return from anything isn't "investing," it's speculating. According to investing legend Benjamin Graham, an investment operation is one that seeks an "adequate return." In his seminal work, *The Intelligent Investor*, Graham writes:

An investment operation is one which, upon thorough analysis, promises safety of principal and an adequate return. Operations not meeting these requirements are speculative.

Investing is a game of yards. It's not a home run derby. So even though it's unlikely oil is going back to \$100 anytime soon, there are still great reasons to invest.

In fact, you could argue that \$100 oil is bad for oil investors (unless they're sellers, which wouldn't make them investors anymore) because that would give alternatives another boost in popularity.

Bottom line is if you're an oil investor, you should want crude to trade within a range. If you're an oil speculator, then, sure, you want to see \$100 oil. But for long-term holders (a.k.a. real investors, not gamblers), crude staying within a certain range will produce higher returns than if oil prices skyrocketed.

By keeping oil prices at a reasonable level, OPEC and oil companies sustain themselves by forcing the market to continue buying crude over a longer period of time. And that's why even though oil probably won't see \$100 in the short term, you should still be an oil investor.

(Source: energyandcapital.com)

Oil prices rise ahead of trade deal, likely stock draw

Oil prices edged higher on Tuesday as investors focused on the signing of a preliminary trade deal between the United States and China, the world's top oil consumers, and on expectations of a drawdown in U.S. crude oil inventories.

However, price gains were capped by receding Middle East tensions, with both Tehran and Washington desisting from any further escalation after this month's clashes.

Brent crude was up 16 cents, or 0.3%, at \$64.36 per barrel by 0301 GMT after falling 1% on Monday. U.S. West Texas Intermediate crude futures were up 13 cents, or 0.2%, at \$58.21 a barrel.

"Oil prices are modestly rebounding, following four days of intense selling," said Edward Moya, analyst at brokerage OANDA, pointing to trade-deal optimism and fading concerns over the U.S.-Iran conflict.

"Oil prices are tentatively rebounding after seller exhaustion kicked in as investors await the next developments on the trade front and as earnings season begins."

Oil prices were supported ahead of the signing at the White House on Wednesday of a Phase 1 trade deal, which marks a major step in ending a dispute that has cut global growth and dented demand for oil.

Still, with traders already pricing in the signing of the deal, there is more downside risk to prices, said Michael McCarthy, chief market strategist at CMC Markets.

"Regardless whether the deal is signed, we might have a buy the rumors, sell the fact scenario unfolding," he added.

Separately, U.S. crude oil inventories were expected to have fallen last week, a preliminary Reuters poll showed on Monday, helping to boost prices.

The poll was conducted ahead of reports from the American Petroleum Institute (API), an industry group, and the Energy Information Administration (EIA), an agency of the U.S. Department of Energy.



China's crude oil imports in 2019 grew by nearly 10 percent from the previous year on demand growth from new mega-refineries, customs data showed.

Elsewhere, Saudi Arabia's Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman said his country will work for oil market stability at a time of heightened U.S.-Iranian tension and wants to see sustainable prices and demand growth.

Oil prices surged to their highest in almost four months after a U.S. drone strike killed an Iranian commander on January 3. Washington and Tehran retreated from the brink of direct conflict last week.

Prince Abdulaziz said it was too early to talk about whether the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and its allies, a group known as OPEC+, would continue with production curbs set to expire in March.

(Source: reuters.com)

How U.S.-China trade deal is going to impact Iranian oil exports?

➔ Earlier on Sunday, U.S. Secretary of the Treasury, Steven Mnuchin, told Fox News that "The United States is working closely with China to have it cut off altogether imports of Iranian crude oil."

Possible deal outcomes

As I mentioned earlier, despite the U.S. sanctions, China still remains Iran's top oil customer, and the idea of the Asian country cutting ties with Iran would be a huge blow to the Iranian oil industry and economy in general.

However, despite all the hype around the trade deal between the U.S. and China, many believe that this deal is just the first step toward a possible truce and the two sides have a long way ahead for reaching a complete alliance.

As reported by Reuters, Myron Brilliant, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Executive Vice President said on Monday that the Phase 1 trade deal "stops the bleeding" but does not end the trade war.

So it is very unlikely that China would lose one of its biggest trade partners in the Middle East region over a deal which is not even very promising.

Considering the fact that, so far, Washington has done everything in its power to cut off Iran's oil exports to zero, but it hasn't succeeded in this regard, under the current circumstances too, it is unlikely that its pressure on China will lead to a disruption of the country's oil exports.

Therefore, the trade agreement could also have a bright side for the Iranian oil industry. That is to say, a proper trade deal could benefit the global economy and leads it out of recession and thereby alleviate the dark prospect of oil demand.

The trade deal could act as a stimulus for demand growth and, by removing the biggest obstacle to the rising of oil prices over the past year, push the oil prices to higher levels, and consequently boost Iran's oil revenues.

First Announcement



1398.6387

NATIONAL IRANIAN SOUTH OILFIELDS COMPANY AHVAZ-IRAN

TENDER NO.: 01-31-9450090

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

items	Material Description	Quantity
24	P/F AIR PACK NEDERLAND B.V " AIR DRYER	346

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

The applicants should have relevant background in supplying the required goods and capability to provide and submit a bid bond of 68,875 EURO or 3,264,344,940 RIAL, in favor of NISOC

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

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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تهران تایمز : نوبت اول ۹۸/۱۰/۲۵ نوبت دوم ۹۸/۱۰/۲۸



Agricultural Support Services Company

INVITATION TO A RENEWAL OF ONE STEP INTERNATIONAL TENDER

SECOND ANNOUNCEMENT

55/98/25664

15/01/2020



Ministry of Jihad-e-Agriculture

AGRICULTURAL SUPPORT SERVICES COMPANY

Agricultural Support Services Company, hereinafter will be referred as ASSC, a subsidiary of the Ministry of Agricultural Jihad of I.R. of Iran, is considering the purchase of 2×35000±5% MTS of Granular Di Ammonium Phosphate (GDAP) in bulk through renewal of one step international tender.

All of the qualified and interested companies are invited to receive tender documents from Wednesday dated 15/01/2020 until Saturday dated 25/01/2020 (7 working days) from our purchasing committee (located at the 9th floor, no. 1, fourth alley, Gandhi st., Tehran, Iran). The bidders are requested to submit their letters of introduction, along with remittance bill of I.Rials 1,200,000 to ASSC's account no. 4001039704005791 with SHEBA no. IR250100004001039704005791 at the Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran through payment order of SATNA or PAYA with the 30 character identification code of 3580397822635006500000000000006.

The bidders are required to submit their sealed and stamped envelopes containing offers latest on Monday dated 24/02/2020 (during official working hours) to our security office, located on the 8th floor. Meanwhile the meeting for the opening of the envelopes will be on Tuesday dated 25/02/2020 at 2:00 PM with the presence of bidders' representatives in our purchasing committee (9th floor, no. 1, fourth alley, Gandhi St., Tehran, Iran).

The bid bond value should be € 285470 or in equal value of that in any other foreign currencies, except US dollars, based on exchange rate of CBI on 04/01/ 2020 for each lot of 35000 MT ± 5% in bank guarantee.

– The bidders are permitted to submit the bid bond in Iranian Rial. Therefore, the value of bid bond for each lot of 35000 MT ± 5% will be IR 13379000000, which must be only submitted by the bidders.

- After approval of ASSC's Financial Manager, the bidders are permitted to use their previous and definite outstanding claims as bid bond.

For more information, you may refer to our website www.assc.ir, and <http://iets.mporg.ir> or contact us by phone no. 00982188776325.

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What the Philippines volcano ‘worst-case scenario’ could look like

With millions of people at risk, experts are looking to past big eruptions to better understand the unique hazards this peak can produce.

By Robin George Andrew

Normally, the view from the webcam sitting inside Lake Taal in the Philippines shows clouds drifting over the lake's placid waters, as verdant slopes rise in the distance. But on the afternoon of January 12, this peaceful scene was suddenly interrupted by a torrent of hot ash and gas, before the camera was smothered by darkness.

The outpouring marked the beginning of an unnerving eruption sequence at Taal Volcano, which sits on the island of Luzon. On the first day, steam-driven blasts flung ash nine miles into the sky. Startling displays of volcanic lightning ricocheted around this dark maelstrom, and a myriad of intense volcanic earthquakes rocked the region. On January 13, the eruption became somewhat more magmatic, as lava fountains started shooting up from the main crater.

Ash continues to blanket the Philippines as of press time, including in the capital city of Manila, about 62 miles north of the volcano. Flights have been cancelled, schools and other public institutions have closed, and tens of thousands of people have been evacuated from both the volcanic isle within Lake Taal and from the vast shorelines around it.

So far, no casualties have been reported, and there is a chance this eruption could fizzle out. Still, many people likely remain in high-risk zones, and “the biggest bang is not always at the beginning of an eruption,” says Jenni Barclay, a volcanologist at the University of East Anglia. “On a timescale much longer than the threat of a hurricane, something else could happen that's even bigger.”

Past eruptions at Taal demonstrate that this volcano has a profoundly lethal capability, claiming thousands of lives throughout recorded history. If the latest event does become more explosive—a possibility that has scientists deeply concerned—it could yield a surfeit of volcanic hazards, from rocky debris bouncing across the lake to overwhelming tsunamis.

“This is definitely a volcano to be taken seriously,” says Beth Bartel, an outreach specialist at UNAVCO, a geoscientific consortium of universities and scientific institutions.

Telling Taal tales

With a plentiful supply of magma, Taal is one of the Philippines' most active volcanoes, having erupted dozens of times in the past few centuries. Some of those past eruptions rank among the most powerful in the country's history. But Taal Volcano is visually deceptive.

Many of these historical eruptions took place on the volcanic island in the middle of the more expansive Lake Taal. However, the entire volcano is far larger than this rocky outpost; it is a giant cauldron-shaped edifice known as a caldera. Much of the caldera is hidden by Lake Taal, and only a small portion of the volcano sits above the waves.

This is a problem not only for those who live on the central volcanic isle, but also for the 25 million people living within 60 miles of the volcano, including a huge number on Lake Taal's shorelines.

Due to the continuing intense volcanic earthquakes and eruptive activity, the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology, or PHIVOLCS, has set the alert level to four, meaning that a hazardous explosive eruption is possible within hours to days.

A link to the past

To understand what that might mean, experts can look to the past for hints. The most recent past eruption at Taal was a minor steam-driven event in 1977, notes Ed Venzke, the database manager at the Smithsonian Institution's Global



Plumes of smoke and ash rise from as Taal Volcano erupts Sunday Jan. 12, 2020, in Tagaytay, Cavite province, outside Manila, Philippines. (AP Photo/Aaron Favila)

Volcanism Program.

While there may not have been an eruption for four decades, the volcano has “clearly been restless for a very long time,” says Amy Donovan, an expert in volcanic risk at the University of Cambridge. Although often moderate when compared to other volcanic eruptions, many of Taal's paroxysms have been violently explosive and, due to the huge number of people living on or close to it, frequently fatal.

Greater ash production that often accompanies bigger booms will exacerbate matters. Ash can pollute water supplies, damage electronic infrastructure, smother agriculture, and kill off farm animals and pets. It can also kill people if they inhale enough of it; breathing in glassy ash is always bad, but people with pre-existing respiratory ailments are most at risk, as are the very young and the elderly.

Either through explosive mixing of magma and water, or through magmatic activity alone, Taal has also previously produced thundering, high-velocity clouds of hot ash, debris, and gas named pyroclastic flows that have killed thousands of people in mere moments. Boris Behncke, a volcanologist at Italy's National Institute of Geophysics and Volcanology, shared some examples on Twitter, including flows from a 1911 eruption that killed 1,335 people on the central island.

A reasonable worst-case scenario would not just feature pyroclastic flows, but also low-altitude surges of ash and scorching gas that, due to their low density, can literally bounce over the water, says Donovan. These base surges—a term borrowed from nuclear explosion science—“can sandblast everything in their path, including the lake shore on the other side,” Bartel says.

What's more, if explosions dislodge parts of the volcanic island that then fall into Lake Taal, that could generate tsunamis that will swamp the lake's shorelines. As an eruption at Indonesia's Anak Krakatau showed in December 2018, it only

takes a small volcanic collapse to generate a lethal tsunami.

Even if there is no tsunami, falling debris and volcanic earthquakes can cause peculiar and potentially destructive waves known as seiches; if that debris has enough energy, it can miss the lake entirely and instead land directly on shore.

Back to Taal's future

Of course, forecasting eruptions is fraught with difficulty. Donovan points out that we don't know how the properties of the magma under Taal have changed since the 1977 eruption. And while looking to old eruptions for clues is helpful, the past can only tell you so much.

“Every eruption is different,” Venzke says. “There's nothing guaranteed.”

It's possible that this grim future may not transpire, and that we've seen the worst of what Taal has to offer this time, Donovan says: “It might just generate a bit of ash, have a few fire fountains, then go back to sleep again.”

Alternatively, what we are seeing here could perhaps be the opening salvo of a far longer eruption sequence, says James Hickey, a geophysical volcanologist at the University of Exeter. And even if the eruption becomes more explosive, some, all, or none of these hazards may occur.

Still, it is sensible for people in the region to assume the worst-case scenario is unfolding and to take reasonable, responsible action, Donovan says. If you are still around Taal and haven't yet heeded instructions to evacuate, it's best to immediately get away from low-lying areas near the volcano. Always listen to local authorities for updates.

In the meantime, volcanologists will wait with bated breath, since lessons from the past show just how dangerous this particular peak can be.

“When I saw yesterday that Taal was in eruption,” Bartel says, “I was somewhat horrified.”

(Source: The National Geographic)

Australia ‘open for business’ as cool change eases bushfire threat

SYDNEY — Australia urged foreign tourists on Tuesday to put aside concerns about raging bushfires after the United States downgraded a travel warning, even as thick smoke disrupted preparations for the Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne.

Australia is experiencing one of its worst bushfire seasons on record, with fires burning since September and claiming the lives of 28 people, destroying more than 2,500 homes and razing forests and farmland the size of Bulgaria.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison welcomed the U.S. move to scale back its travel warning and said Australia was “very much open for business”, amid concerns the fires would damage the tourism industry and the broader economy.

The United States last week warned citizens to exercise increased caution when traveling to Australia due to the fire risks, putting it on the same Level Two advisory as protest-wracked Hong Kong.

In its latest update, the State Department

revised the advisory to Level One meaning “exercise normal precautions”, however it maintained a Level Two warning for fire-hit areas including the central tablelands of New South Wales state and southeastern Victoria state.

Australia's tourism industry accounts for more than 3% of the country's A\$1.95 trillion (\$1.4 trillion) annual economic output. Americans are among the top visitors.

Despite cooler weather this week, officials warned that bushfire threat was far from over.

At least 145 fires continued to burn across Victoria and New South Wales (NSW) states although widespread rainfall is forecast for fire-hit areas on the east coast from Wednesday.

About 18 bushfires were yet to be contained in NSW, Australia's most populous state, while in Victoria authorities upgraded warnings to show one fire burning at an “emergency level” and seven fires at the ‘Watch and Act’ category, one level below emergency status.

(Source: Reuters)

Libya’s Haftar leaves Moscow without signing ceasefire agreement

No breakthrough in indirect talks between Libya's warring sides leaves fragile ceasefire in uncertainty.

Libya's renegade military commander Khalifa Haftar has left Moscow without signing an agreement that would have formalized a tentative ceasefire in the war-wracked country, according to Russia's foreign ministry.

After hours of negotiations brokered by Russia and Turkey, Haftar on Monday evening asked until Tuesday morning to look over the agreement already signed by Fayez al-Sarraj, the head of the United Nations-recognized Government of National Accord (GNA).

But Haftar, whose eastern-based forces launched an offensive to seize the GNA's base of Tripoli in April, left Moscow without signing the deal drafted at the indirect talks, Russia's foreign ministry was quoted as saying by TASS news agency on Tuesday.

Libyan sources confirmed Haftar's departure. “The draft [agreement] ignores many of the Libyan army's demands,” Haftar was quoted as saying by the Al Arabiya television network.

The talks in the Russian capital were held a day after a ceasefire brokered by Russia and Turkey came into force in Libya.

The negotiations did not include the warring sides meeting face to face, but Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said on Monday there was “progress” and that Haftar viewed the ceasefire document “positively”. (Source: Aljazeera)

Sultan Qaboos ushered in Oman renaissance, quiet diplomacy

By Lisa Barrington, David Barbuscia

DUBAI — Sultan Qaboos bin Said, who died late on Friday, transformed Oman during his 49-year reign from a poverty-stricken country torn by dissent into a prosperous state and an internationally trusted mediator for some of the region's thorniest issues.

He became sultan in July 1970 after deposing his father in a palace coup with the aim of ending the country's isolation and using its oil revenue for modernization and development.



Qaboos, 79, never publicly named a successor but secretly recorded his choice in a sealed letter should the royal family disagree on the succession line. “I have already written down two names, in descending order, and put them in sealed envelopes in two different regions,” he said in a 1997 interview.

State television said his cousin Haitham bin Tariq al-Said was named sultan on Saturday after the high military council called on the ruling family council to choose a successor. The family had followed Qaboos' written recommendation, believing in “his wisdom and vision”, a military council statement said.

State media did not disclose the cause of death. Qaboos, who has dominated decision making in the Gulf state for decades, had been ailing for years and was in Belgium in December for treatment.

“The immediate danger, perhaps, is that regional players may try to influence the outcome of succession or the chosen new leader,” said Simon Henderson, director of the Bernstein Program on Gulf and Energy Policy at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

Analysts worry about royal family discord, and a resurgence of tribal rivalries and political instability, now a new ruler has to be chosen at a time when young hawks have assumed power in neighboring Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

Qaboos healed old rifts in a country long divided between a conservative tribal interior and seafaring coastal region. He became known to his countrymen as “the renaissance”, investing billions of dollars of oil revenues in infrastructure and building one of the best-trained armed forces in the region.

While brooking no dissent at home, Qaboos charted an independent foreign policy, not taking sides in a power struggle between Saudi Arabia and Iran, or in a Persian Gulf dispute with Qatar.

Muscat kept ties with both Tehran and Baghdad during the 1980–88 Iran–Iraq War, and with Iran and the United States after their diplomatic falling out in 1979.

Oman helped to mediate secret U.S.-Iran talks in 2013 that led to an historic international nuclear pact two years later.

The white-bearded Qaboos met Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in October 2018 on a rare visit to Oman. While other Persian Gulf states have made overtures to Israel, none of their leaders have openly met with Netanyahu.

■ Coup

Qaboos, the eighth ruler of the al-Said dynasty that governed Oman since 1744, was born on Nov. 18, 1940 in Dhofar.

In 1958, he headed to England to complete his education, strengthening historic ties between Britain and the Omani royal family. He studied for two years at the Royal Military Academy in Sandhurst and served six months in the British army in West Germany, returning to England in 1962 to study local government.

From 1964–70, Qaboos was confined to the royal palace in Salalah and denied any role in running Oman.

He became disenchanted with his father's methods and skeptical of the army's ability to defeat Dhofari rebels.

When oil exports began in 1967, Sultan Said, accustomed to tight financial constraints, was reluctant to spend on development.

Britain, with considerable clout then over Persian Gulf rulers, helped Qaboos overthrow his father in a palace coup on July 23, 1970. Sultan Said was forced to abdicate after some resistance and spent the last two years of his life in exile in England.

The new sultan, then only 30 years old, inherited a country with little infrastructure, few skilled administrators and none of the basic institutions of government.

Qaboos gradually asserted his authority by taking over the role of prime minister and the ministries of finance, defense and foreign affairs, which he retained.

He fought Dhofar rebels with help from Britain, Jordan and Iran. Through military advances and offering rebel leaders state jobs, Qaboos ended the revolt within six years of taking office.

Iran's 1979 Islamic revolution directed Qaboos' attention to the Strait of Hormuz, through which almost a fifth of global oil passes. He pledged to keep the strait open and in 1980 signed a deal to let U.S. forces use Omani facilities for emergencies.

In 1981, Qaboos began widening political participation and free elections for an advisory council were held in 2003.

■ Charismatic authority

When the “Arab Spring” protests started to threaten - and eventually topple - the leaders of Tunisia and Egypt in 2011, Qaboos took note and defused his own potential bombshell as protests broke out in Oman with promises of jobs and reforms.

He sacked more than a third of the cabinet, created thousands of public sector jobs and paid a dividend to the unemployed, which the IMF said amounted to a quarter of Omanis.

However domestic challenges remain with high unemployment and the state increasingly relying on external borrowing as oil prices fell, pushing its credit rating to junk status.

“Sultan Qaboos had such charismatic authority and became so synonymous with Oman as a modern nation-state that it will naturally be difficult for any successor to replicate that, at least at the beginning,” Kristian Coates Ulrichsen of the Texas-based Rice University's Baker Institute told Reuters.

Reporting by Davide Barbuscia, Sylvia Westall and Sami Aboudi; Writing by Ghaida Ghantous and William Maclean; Editing by Daniel Wallis/Clarence Fernandez/Jane Merriman

(Source: Reuters)

First Announcement



1398.6437

N.I.S.O.C

NATIONAL IRANIAN SOUTH OILFIELDS COMPANY AHVAZ-IRAN

TENDER NO. : 48-32-9825000

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

items	Material Description	Quantity
01	CASING 7",29 PPF WITH SPECIAL DRIFT:6.125", GRADE L-80-13CR, WITH N.VAM THREAD, PSL3, R-3(WITH MAX LEN:40.5 FT), AS PER API 5 CT & NACE MR0175, LATEST EDITION WITH PROTECTOR, MARKING: STANCELLING & ANTI GALLING IN ACCORDANCE WITH API 5CT.BODY OF PIEPES SHOULD BE COATING AND VARNISH & BOX PIPES SHOULD BE COVERAGE WITH ANCHOR PROCESS	200
02	TUBING 4-1/2", 13.5 PPF, GRADE L-80-13CR, WITH N.VAMTHREAD, PSL3, R-3(WITH MAX LEN:40.5 FT), AND WITH STANDARD DRIFT AS PER API 5CT & NACE MR0175, LATEST EDITION WITH PROTECTOR, MARKING: STANCELLING & ANTI GALLING IN ACCORDANCE WITH API 5CT.BODY OF PIPES SHOULD BE COATING AND VARNISH & BOX OF PIPES SHOULD BE COVERAGE WITH ANCHOR PROCESS	384

Vendors who intend to participate in aforesaid tenders are requested to send their " Intention to participate" letter via Fax to the following number along with their resume according to Qualitative Assessment Form no. 1, available at: WWW.nisoc.ir , not .later than 14 days after the second announcement, otherwise, their requests for participation in the tender will be disregarded The applicants should have relevant background in supplying the required goods and capability to provide and submit a bid .bond of 62,343 EURO or 8 ,919 ,685,960 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

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Kouy-e Fadaeian Islam (New Site), Ahvaz, Iran

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تهران تایمز : نوبت اول ۹/۱۰/۲۵ نوبت دوم ۹/۱۰/۲۸

Foreign arrivals in Mazandaran surge 38 percent

TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** — The number of foreign visitors arriving in Iran's northern Mazandaran province surged 38 percent since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (started March 21, 2019), compared with the same period last year, provincial deputy tourism chief has said.



“So far, 106,873 foreign travelers have visited Mazandaran since the beginning of the year, and the figure shows a 38 percent hike year on year,” Mehran Hassani announced on Saturday, IRNA reported.

The official added some 77,000 foreign nationals visited the province during the same period last year.

Some 535 night stays were recorded during the period for staying at hotels or authorized lodging houses and the figure doesn't include the ones accommodated in unregistered places, the official explained.

On January 11, Hassani said that 22 tourism projects, worth 2,515 billion rials (some \$60 million at the official rate of 42,000 rials) have been inaugurated in the province during the first nine months of the year.

Building hotels and hotel apartments, travel agencies, eco-lodge guest houses as well as recreational and tourist facilities are most the development projects that are estimated to generate some 1,500 jobs directly or indirectly, the official added.

Stretched along the Caspian Sea and Alborz mountain range, Mazandaran is a popular destination for domestic holidaymakers and it is home to more than 3500 villages and rural areas, hosted over three million night-stays during the previous Noruz holidays.

Record number of cruise ships to debut in 2020

There are nearly 30 new cruise ships that will make their debut in 2020, including the Iona from P&O Cruises and the Carnival Cruise Line Mardi Gras, both with the capacity for 5,200 passengers.

And that's a 2020 record that will live, oh, about six months. Later this year, the 6,300-passenger MSC Virtuosa will make its debut.

Bigger and better seems to be the theme for 2020. “I've been immersed in the business my whole life, and I still go, ‘Oh my god’ when I see these new ships,” Rick Sasso, chairman of MSC Cruises USA, the North American arm of MSC Cruises, told The Points Guy.

The logic is simple, of course. In fact, it's a basic business tenet – supply and demand. Right now, cruising is arguably the biggest growth item in the travel industry, with more demand than supply.

Just 25 years ago, in the mid-1990s, cruise ships were around 80,000 tons.

Today? 200,000 to 225,000 tons is the norm.

(Source: MSN)



ROUND THE GLOBE

The Sundarbans

The Sundarbans mangrove forest, one of the largest such forests in the world (140,000 ha), lies on the delta of the Ganges, Brahmaputra and Meghna rivers on the Bay of Bengal.

It is adjacent to the border of India's Sundarbans World Heritage site inscribed in 1987. The site is intersected by a complex network of tidal waterways, mudflats and small islands of salt-tolerant mangrove forests, and presents an excellent example of ongoing ecological processes.



The area is known for its wide range of fauna, including 260 bird species, the Bengal tiger and other threatened species such as the estuarine crocodile and the Indian python.

The three wildlife sanctuaries in the south cover an area of 139,700 ha and are considered core breeding areas for a number of endangered species.

Situated in a unique bioclimatic zone within a typical geographical situation in the coastal region of the Bay of Bengal, it is a landmark of ancient heritage of mythological and historical events.

Bestowed with magnificent scenic beauty and natural resources, it is internationally recognized for its high biodiversity of mangrove flora and fauna both on land and water.

The immense tidal mangrove forests of Bangladesh's Sundarbans Forest Reserve, is in reality a mosaic of islands of different shapes and sizes, perennially washed by brackish water shrilling in and around the endless and mind-boggling labyrinths of water channels.

The site supports exceptional biodiversity in its terrestrial, aquatic and marine habitats; ranging from micro to macro flora and fauna.

(Source: UNESCO)

Iran rules out massive cancelation of inbound tours

TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iran's deputy tourism minister Vali Teymouri on Monday ruled out speculations that inbound tours have been massively canceled in the wake of recent tragic incidents in the country.

The Association of Air Transport and Tourist Agencies of Iran (AATTAI) had announced that inbound tours have dropped by 70 percent following a Ukrainian plane, with 176 people aboard, was mistakenly downed on January 8 by the IRGC air defense system. It happened a few hours after Iran fired dozens of missiles at the U.S. airbase inside Iraq in retaliation to the assassination of Iranian Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani in Baghdad on January 3.

Certainly, no one can deny the impact of the recent events on the tourism industry, but this problem can be resolved once tranquility comes back to the country, Teymouri said.

This association [AATTAI] is more active in the field of outbound tourism rather than inbound, the official noted.

“We do not currently have accurate statistics on cancellation of inbound tours. Therefore, further investigation is needed. I don't know where the figure of 70% comes from. We've [already] had a lot of these issues, like Americans leaving BARJAM [an Iranian acronym for 2015 Iran nuclear deal with world powers, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action], and the flight of American drones [around Iran],” he explained.

Teymouri said it is normal that a number of [inbound] tours have been called off [over the past days due to the recent security concerns] but [the tourism sector of] the country has so far overcome all of these.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the official pointed to the upcoming Tehran International Tourism Exhibition, saying representatives and exhibitors from thirty countries have been invited to take part at the fair.

Iran's tourism minister Ali-Asghar Moune-san has said the country's tourism sector has



A view of Azadi (Freedom) Tower in western Tehran.

suffered a major setback but it will certainly return to “normal”.

“These events are a major blow to tourism, but we will leave it behind by the means of new plans and we will definitely return to normal,” the minister said.

“A lot of efforts in the arena of [travel] advertisements were made with the participation of the private sector during the current [Iranian calendar] year (started March 21, 2019). We introduced Iran to target countries, but now we are facing a situation where new procedures are needed.”

Archeological find corroborates Japan-Persia ancient ties

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** — Japan has unveiled a rare discovery of ties between the then mighty empire of the East and people from the then Persia (now called Iran).

Newly-found results of a research by the Nara National Research Institute for Cultural Properties on previously discovered objects reinforces the idea that at least one Persian man lived in the ancient city of Nara in the eighth century CE, IRNA reported on Tuesday.

A team of Japanese researchers has succeeded to read the notes of an ancient wooden tablet, which dates back to 765 CE, using infrared imaging techniques, the news agency reported based on Japanese sources.

The tablet bears a name, attributed to a Persian man, who is believed to be an educator or trainee at the Japanese imperial court of the times.

While it's long been accepted that Japan enjoyed trade connections with countries and cultures all along the Silk Road, records



of these exchanges in ancient Japan are sparse and hard to come by, according to Japanese sources.

“present-day Iran and Japan were known

to have had direct trade links since at least the 7th century, but new testing on a piece of wood — first discovered in the '60s — suggest broader ties.”

No need to fly: three European trips easier by train

With each passing year, the opening of new air routes reshapes our mental map of Europe. Once-favored way stations on rail and ferry itineraries from England to the Alps have slipped from visibility. Areas on the near continent previously feted by English artists and writers are now bypassed. Where in the past an Italian grand tour might have included a few nights along the way in the Moselle or Rhine valleys, today's travelers jet directly to their main destination. As recently as the 1960s, many travelers to Savoy might have stopped en route in the Jura (straddling the French-Swiss border), and the Vosges region to its north was a popular stepping stone en route to the Black Forest.

But the rail routes of yesteryear are still there: across Europe myriad small towns, often distant from the smaller airports that serve budget airlines, make perfect short-break destinations for those inclined to take the train. The launch this month of a new four-day Interrail pass (valid for any four days within a one-month period) gives the opportunity to break the journey on both the outbound and homebound legs. And with prices starting from €185 in second class and €246 in first (for 12-27-year-olds), it's easy to plan outward and return journeys on different routes, thereby making the journey itself as important as the destination.

Here are three rail trip ideas worth considering in 2020. Trains still stop at the villages of Gevrey-Chambertin and Meursault, as they have done every day since this stretch of the classic line from Paris to the French Riviera opened in 1849. These days it is mainly locals and dedicated wine lovers who use this line, where the station names sound like a roll call of great Burgundy wines: Gevrey-Chambertin, Vougeot, Nuits-Saints-Georges, Beaune, Meursault and Rully. And in all these places it is just a short step from the platform to the vineyards.

Those in the know opt for Beaune as a base. The striking walled town claims to be the wine capital of Burgundy, but lovers of the region's crisp white chardonnay or silky pinot noir often regard Beaune as the wine capital of the world. There is a clutch of fine hotels in the town centre, with Hôtel

Le Cep (doubles from €169 room-only) offering enough creature comforts and fine wines to satisfy the most fastidious oenophile. Try the set lunch in the hotel's Michelin-starred restaurant (€28 for two courses).

But the beauty of Beaune is that you don't need to spend that sort of money. On my last visit, in November, I stayed at the modestly priced but very comfortable Hôtel de France (doubles from €55.80) right by the railway station, whose restaurant, Le Tast'Vin, offers good, unpretentious fare (two-course lunch €16).

Beaune is eminently walkable. The town center, a 15-minute stroll from the station, has more boutique businesses devoted to wine than one town really deserves. Thomas Javouhey and his team at Domaine des Vins will guide visitors through the essence of Burgundy with small tasting measures.

The Hospices de Beaune, a former charitable hospital, is considered one of the finest examples of French 15th-century architecture. It is also one of the largest vineyard owners in the region, and every November hosts a three-day festival celebrating the food and wines of Burgundy to coincide with its annual wine auction, run by Christie's. It also houses the extraordinarily beautiful Last Judgment altarpiece, painted in around 1445-1450 by Rogier van der Weyden.

In the Saturday market flanking the Hospices, stalls overflow with local produce, including Epoisses and Saint-Florentin cheeses, Bresse chickens, jambon persille (jellied ham with parsley) and torte beaunoise (Beaune pork pie).

From Beaune, it's an easy cycle on quiet roads to Auxey-Duresses, passing (and sampling) the wines of Pommard, Volnay and Monthelie along the way. Or you can push out further and explore the 60km Route des Grands Crus.

Those travelling on an Interrail pass could make a day trip by train to Nevers in the Loire Valley, just two hours away on a direct regional service from Beaune. Nevers is a historic town known for its long tradition of fine faïence porcelain manufacture. It's one of those unsung places that are instantly appealing, with a gothic/romanesque cathedral and an imposing ducal palace.

From here there's a direct train back to Paris — on the



Stairway to heaven... the Himmelstreppe train between Sankt Polten and Mariazell. Photograph: Image Broker/Alamy

Ligne du Bourbonnais, which is another splendid provincial route, with its own feast of vineyards. The line runs through the chalky vineyards where Pouilly-Fumé is produced, with fine views over to Sancerre on the other bank of the Loire.

Train details Beaune is about six hours by train from London with one change in Paris (Gare du Nord to Gare de Bercy, where trains for Beaune depart). Return fares start at about £120 with Rail Europe; or use a four-day Interrail pass (supplements for Eurostar travel). A good plan is an overnight stop in Paris, a few days in Beaune then, on the morning of departure, make the detour to Nevers, spending the rest of that day exploring there, returning from Nevers to London, via Paris, the following day.

For decades, the natural route to the Netherlands for Londoners was by paddle steamer from Queenborough, on the Isle of Sheppey in north Kent, to Vlissingen on the Dutch coast, which the British invariably referred to as Flushing. From there, the usual first stop was Middelburg, just four miles inland. Generations of British travellers, clutching their Baedeker or Murray guidebooks, used to stop overnight in Middelburg, but with the demise of the Flushing ferry in 1989, Middelburg slipped from the English horizon.

(Source: The Guardian)

All-out efforts underway to help flood-hit Sistan-Baluchestan

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — All the facilities and capacities of the country have been mobilized to assist people in the flood-stricken province of Sistan-Baluchestan, IRNA news agency reported on Tuesday.

Unprecedented heavy rainfall which began on January 10 has led to flash flooding in the southeastern province, as 145 stations have recorded rainfall, 95 of which have reported to receive more than 50 mm of rain and 17 stations received some 100-200 mm.

Meanwhile, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, in a message, called on all responsible bodies and the public to help the flood-affected people of Sistan-Baluchestan as much as possible.

Currently, 3,500 people are working and providing relief and rescue operations in the flood-stricken areas of the province.

According to preliminary estimates, a loss of 6.5 trillion rials (nearly \$155 million at the official rate of 42,000 rials) have been brought to the agricultural sector of the region.

Esmail Najar, head of the Disaster Management Organization, told IRNA on Monday that heavy rainfall in urban and rural areas of the province have caused damage to roads, parks, infrastructure and equipment amounting to 3.3 trillion rials (about \$78 million).

He went on to say that over 3,000 people who had got stuck in flood were rescued.

According to the latest assessments, roads to around 500 villages have been blocked, 179 villages have hit by power cuts and drinking water have been shut off in 245 villages.



Majlis to discuss bill on protection of the rights of persons with mental disorders

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — A bill on protection of the rights of persons with mental disorders, approved by the cabinet approved a month ago, has been sent to the Majlis (Iranian parliament) to be discussed and approved, ISNA news agency reported on Tuesday.

Iraj Khosronia, head of the Iranian society of internal medicine physicians, said that some 22-30 percent of the population (three out of every ten people) are suffering from mental disorders, according to the Ministry of Health.

Although Iran has been lauded by the World Health

Organization for its quality of health services, the country has been hinted at a lack of "protection for the rights of people with mental disorders," according to Deputy Health Minister Iraj Harirchi.

The bill defines a variety of mental disorders, including issues related to compulsory hospitalization, the treatment of patients, the timing and manner of discharge, how to treat offenders of people with mental disorders, and ways to promote culture among the society has been addressed.

Climate crisis: Ocean temperatures hit record highs as rate of global warming accelerates

The Earth's oceans hit record high temperatures last year as the rate of global warming continued to accelerate, researchers have said.

The rate of heat introduced to the planet's oceans over the last 25 years is equivalent to the energy produced by 3.6 billion atomic bombs, according to scientists.

Climate change has fuelled rapid rises in global surface air temperature since the 1950s, with 2016 the hottest year on record.

A new study mapping the impact of warming on the oceans found waters in 2019 were at their hottest in recorded human history – increasing by 0.075C above the 1981-2010 average.

Oceans provide a good picture of the planet's warming as they trap more than 90 per cent of the excess heat stored on Earth, scientists say.

"This measured ocean warming is irrefutable and is further proof of global warming. There are no reasonable alternatives aside from the human emissions of heat trapping gases to explain this heating," said Lijing Cheng, lead author of the study, published in the journal *Advances In Atmospheric Sciences*.

To have increased to the level it has, the ocean will have absorbed 228,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 (228 sextillion) joules of energy.

"That's a lot of zeros indeed," said Mr Cheng, associate professor with the International Centre for Climate and Environmental Sciences at the Chinese Academy of Sciences. "The amount of heat we have put in the world's oceans in the past 25 years equals to 3.6 billion Hiroshima atom-bomb explosions."

Researchers assessed data from all available sources including 3,800 Argo floats across the planet's seas and oceans.

Assessing the data with new methods of analysis to compare with heat trends stretching back as far as the 1950s, they found the last five years have been the warmest on record.

"It is critical to understand how fast things are changing," said John Abraham, co-author and professor of mechanical engineering at the University of St Thomas in the United States. "The key to answering this question is in the oceans – that's where the vast majority of heat ends up. If you want to understand



global warming, you have to measure ocean warming."

He added: "Global warming is real, and it's getting worse. And this is just the tip of the iceberg for what is to come. Fortunately, we can do something about it: We can use energy more wisely and we can diversify our energy sources. We have the power to reduce this problem."

Alongside long-term trends, sudden bursts of warmth – such as a north Pacific heatwave from 2013 to 2015 dubbed "the blob" by researchers – can have catastrophic

effects on ocean biodiversity.

"The blob is documented to have caused major loss of marine life, from phytoplankton to zooplankton to fish – including a 100 million cod – to marine animals, such as whales," said Kevin Trenberth, co-author and senior scientist at the National Centre for Atmospheric Research in the United States. "These manifestations of global warming have major consequences."

Researchers also warned hot spots in the oceans could have significant effects in storms – such as the heat in the Gulf of Mexico that helped to spawn Hurricane Harvey in 2017 and Hurricane Florence in 2018, which both killed dozens of people.

"The price we pay is the reduction of ocean-dissolved oxygen, the harmed marine lives, strengthening storms and reduced fisheries and ocean-related economies," Mr Cheng said. "However, the more we reduce greenhouse gasses, the less the ocean will warm. Reduce, reuse and recycle and transferring to a clean energy society are still the major way forward."

(Source: *The Independent*)

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → E

56% of motorcycles running in only 5 provinces

Some 56 percent of the total motorcycles in the country are running in only five provinces, Ali Mohammadi, a senior traffic police official has said. Of all 32.9 million vehicles in the country, motorcycles amount to 11.6 million, accounting for 35 percent of the total vehicles moving in the country, he stated.

According to the statistics, 56 percent of motorcycles are plying the roads in 5 provinces of Tehran, Khorasan Razavi, Isfahan, Fars and Khuzestan, he added.

There are 2 million motorcycles in Tehran, 1.3 million in Khorasan Razavi, 1.2 million in Isfahan, 916,000 in Fars, and 564,000 in Khuzestan, he also said.

The capital city of Tehran alone has the biggest share of motorcyclists constituting 21 percent of the estimated 56 percent, he noted, IRNA reported on Sunday.

۵۶ درصد موتورسیکلت ها در ۵ استان تردد دارند

رئیس مرکز شماره گذاری و تعویض پلاک پلیس راهور ناجا گفت: بنابر آمارها، ۵۶ درصد موتورسیکلت ها تنها در ۵ استان تردد می کنند.

سرهنگ علی محمدی روز یکشنبه افزود: از ۳۲ میلیون و ۹۰۰ هزار دستگاه انواع وسایل نقلیه در کشور، ۱۱ میلیون و ۶۵۰ هزار دستگاه یعنی معادل ۳۵ درصد را موتورسیکلت ها شامل می شوند.

وی اظهار داشت: برابر آمارها تهران بزرگ، خراسان رضوی، اصفهان، فارس و خوزستان ۵۶ درصد موتورسیکلت های کشور را در خود جای داده اند.

رئیس مرکز شماره گذاری و تعویض پلاک پلیس راهور ناجا گفت: تهران بزرگ با حدود ۲ میلیون دستگاه موتورسیکلت، خراسان رضوی ۱.۳ میلیون دستگاه، اصفهان ۱.۲ میلیون دستگاه، فارس ۹۱۶ هزار دستگاه و خوزستان با ۵۶۴ هزار دستگاه موتورسیکلت بیشترین موتورسیکلت های کشور را به خود اختصاص دادند.

محمدی با بیان اینکه بیش از ۲۱ درصد موتورسیکلت های کشور در تهران بزرگ تردد می کنند، اظهار داشت: تهران بیشترین سهم موتورسیکلت را در سطح کشور داراست.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“cerebro-, cerebr-”

■ **Meaning:** brain

■ **For example:** Passive smoking is considered a major cause of **cerebrovascular** disease, which causes strokes.

PHRASAL VERB

Think something up

■ **Meaning:** to produce a new idea, name etc. by thinking

■ **For example:** She was trying to think up an excuse.

IDIOM

Give somebody a (good) run for their money

■ **Explanation:** to make your opponent in a competition use all their skill and effort to defeat you

■ **For example:** They've given some of the top teams a run for their money this season.

Iran breaks U.S. monopoly on cancer diagnosis radiopharmaceutical

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — Iranian researchers have acquired the technical knowledge for producing a radiopharmaceutical to diagnose lymphoma (a group of blood cancers), which was previously produced only by the United States, ISNA news agency reported on Tuesday.



Iran is now the second producer of this radiopharmaceutical. "We succeeded to produce the Tc-Rituximab, which is prescribed for the diagnosis of various types of lymphoma cancers," one of the researchers involved in the project told ISNA.

The radiopharmaceutical has successfully passed pre-clinical quality control tests, and clinical tests are currently being conducted at Shiraz's Namazi Hospital on patients with Non-Hodgkin Lymphoma (NHL), the report added.

FAO, WFP support Afghan refugees residing in Iran to initiate alternative livelihoods

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), in collaboration with the World Food Programme (WFP) and Iran's Bureau of Aliens and Foreign Immigrants' Affairs, has established a greenhouse in Mohajerin Semnan Settlement (located around 220 km east of Capital Tehran), providing the Afghan refugees with the new sustainable livelihoods opportunities.

According to the last official government estimates, Iran hosts 951,142 Afghan refugees. Approximately 97% of these refugees live in urban and semi-urban areas, while the remaining 3% reside in 20 refugee settlements located throughout the Country.

Financially and technically supported by FAO, the greenhouse would enable the Afghan refugees to generate income through agricultural practices.

"Following a joint assessment conducted by FAO and WFP, and the one-day training workshop held for 30 interested refugees, a group of 15 capable individuals has been selected to participate in this initiative," said Hooman Moezzi, FAO Programme Consultant. "The selected refugees will gradually be empowered to manage the greenhouse independently. They will be advised, and equipped with necessary skill to cultivate various ornamental and edible plants in the greenhouse."

Moezzi further said that "greenhouse cultivation will allow the refugees to have higher control on growth conditions and produce off-season products based on the periodic market demand."

Highlighting the cooperation with FAO, Salman Bahrami, WFP Livelihoods Expert said, "this is the first joint project of these two UN agencies in refugee settlements in Iran, aiming at providing the beneficiaries with new opportunities for sustainable income generation." He added, "hopefully, WFP and FAO implement additional similar projects in other refugee settlements in the Country."

FAO, as a UN specialized agency, leads efforts to defeat hunger, improve nutrition, increase agricultural productivity, raise standard of living in rural populations and contribute to economic growth. (Source: FAO)

WORDS IN THE NEWS

Football wages

(November 06, 2002)

Eighteen of Europe's biggest football clubs have agreed to restrict the cost of wages which are threatening the future of the world's most popular sport. This report from Hugh Pym.

For years, money kept **rolling in** to Europe's football clubs. The growth in **transfer payments** and player salaries seemed limitless. But **the climate's changed**. **TV rights deals** in some countries have collapsed. The days of big money transfers are numbered. So now the G14 clubs, as they call themselves, have decided **to tighten their collective belts**. At their meeting in Brussels today, members — including clubs like Bayern Munich and Barcelona, as well as the British representatives -- agreed **to impose a ceiling** for player wage bills. The aim is to keep them to seventy percent or less of total turnover.

But can it be enforced? The answer technically is no - it's a voluntary agreement and there are no **penalties** for those who don't control wages. However, the G14 group also announced a **commitment to link** pay more closely to performance on the field. **The veiled warning** to players was clear - if there's no action, more clubs will struggle or even **go bust**.

■ Words

rolling in: if something such as money is rolling in, a lot of it comes
transfer payments: money which is paid by one football club to another for a player who moves
the climate's changed: the situation has changed
TV rights deals: Financial agreements which allow television companies to broadcast public events e.g. football matches
to tighten their belts: if you tighten your belt you try to spend less money

to impose a ceiling: to put a maximum limit on spending
penalties: a punishment in the form of a disadvantage for breaking the rules

to link: to make a connection between two things (here between pay and winning matches)

the veiled warning: a warning that is given in an indirect way.
go bust: if a business or a football club goes bust, it loses so much money it must close

(Source: BBC)

U.S. military deployment in Bahrain illegitimate, not welcome: Opposition

A Bahraini opposition political organization has censured the presence of the U.S. Navy's Fifth Fleet in the tiny Persian Gulf kingdom, emphasizing that the deployment is illegitimate and not welcome by ordinary Bahrainis.

"The American military presence in Bahrain lacks any legitimacy and is not welcome. U.S. forces stationed in Bahrain do not have any legal legitimacy, because their presence is based on treaties concluded without any legislation. Such agreements have been reached secretly and caused sufferings for the people of Bahrain for decades," the Haq Movement for Liberty and Democracy said in a statement released on Monday.

It added, "The authority in Bahrain lacks popular legitimacy and the system is a dictatorial one, in which people have no role or participation in decision-making and legislation, especially sensitive ones. People do not have a real representation in the sham parliament, and therefore foreign military bases like that of the U.S. Fifth Fleet and HMS Jufair (a British Royal Navy base) are illegitimate and against the will of the free Bahraini nation."

The opposition organization highlighted that hostility towards the United States has reached an unprecedented level due to President Donald Trump's flawed policies, and that U.S. troops have become persona non grata in the eyes of the peoples of the region.

"Trump brags and is trying to deceive the world. He claims support for popular protests. Where is Trump then as the regimes in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia practice repression and their prisons are filled with thousands of activists and political detainees," the statement pointed out.

(Source: Press TV)

Dozens killed by avalanches in Pakistani and Indian Kashmir

At least 59 people were killed and many more were missing after avalanches in Pakistan-controlled Kashmir over the last 24 hours, senior government officials said on Tuesday.

In neighbouring India, at least 10 people were killed after several avalanches hit the northern-part of Indian-administered Kashmir.

Two Pakistani officials said many villagers were still stranded by the avalanches in the Neelum Valley area following heavy rain that also triggered landslides. Many people were reported missing and feared dead as rescue efforts got under way, one of the officials said.

Rescuers had managed to extract more than 50 people from the snow and airlifted them out of the area for treatment. Authorities also scrambled to provide relief to local people with another spell of heavy snow expected on Friday.

At least 53 houses had been completely destroyed by avalanches in the Pakistani administered region known as Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), officials said.

"I have asked the National Disaster Management Authority, the military and all our federal ministers to immediately provide all humanitarian assistance on an emergency footing to the affected people in AJK," Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan tweeted.

A senior Indian police official said five soldiers were among the 10 killed near the border between India and Pakistan.

(Source: al Jazeera)

Republicans reject Trump's call for dismissal of impeachment charges

Top Senate Republicans have rejected U.S. President Donald Trump's call for immediate dismissal of his impeachment charges as the democratic-controlled House prepares to send the charges to the Senate trial.

"I don't think there's any interest on our side of dismissing. I think our members, generally are not interested in the motion to dismiss. They think both sides need to be heard," said Senator Roy Blunt, a member of the Senate Intelligence Committee and chairman of the Senate Rules Committee.

The Associated Press said one key Republican Senator Susan Collins of Maine, said she too would oppose a motion to dismiss the charges.

The AP said Collins is leading an effort among some Republicans, including Mitt Romney, to ensure the ground rules include plans to eventually consider voting to call witnesses.

Senior Republicans, most of whom are prepared not to convict Trump, said immediate dismissal of president's charges could not win approval in the Senate trial (chamber).

Over the weekend, Trump urged the Senate to simply dismiss the charges against him rather than giving legitimacy to charges, which he considers a "hoax."

Trump was impeached by the majority-Democrat House on Dec. 18, on charges of abuse of power over pushing Ukraine to investigate Democratic rival Joe Biden and obstructed a subsequent investigation in the House.

(Source: The Hill)

Baghdad will not sign agreement keeping U.S. forces in Iraq: gov't spox

➔ 1 Iraqi Shia groups unite for expulsion of U.S. forces
Meanwhile, representatives of Iraqi Shia groups have decided to unite to expel U.S. forces from Iraq, a spokesman for one of them said Monday.

The decision to «unite and coordinate forces» was taken to fully liberate Iraq from U.S. forces, Nasr al-Shammari, from the Al Nujaba Movement, told Iraq's official news agency INA.

Al-Shammari said Iraqi Shia cleric Muqtada al-Sadr met with the representatives of Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq, the Sayyid al-Shuhada Brigades, the Nujaba Movement and Saraya al-Salam (the Peace Companies) in Iran's northwestern city of Qom.

Iraqi Shia organizations «gave the opportunity» to the Iraqi government and parliament to diplomatically expel foreign forces from the country, he added.

Iraq's parliament voted Jan. 5 on a motion to expel U.S. troops. In an extraordinary session, lawmakers unanimously decided to demand U.S. and foreign troops leave the country.

(Source: agencies)

NGOs boycott pre-G20 meetings in Saudi Arabia over rights violations

Three prominent international NGOs have boycotted meetings that Saudi Arabia is holding with civil society groups ahead of the annual Group of Twenty (G20) Summit, saying the Riyadh regime is trying to "whitewash its dire human rights record" by hosting such events.

In a joint statement issued on Monday, human rights group Amnesty International, anti-corruption body Transparency International, and the global alliance of civil society organizations and activists known as CIVICUS said they would not take part in the dedicated meetings for civil society within the G20, known as the Civil 20 or C20.

"As leading civil society organizations present in most countries around the world (but notably not Saudi Arabia), we cannot participate in a process that seeks to give international legitimacy to a state that provides virtually no space for civil society, and where independent civil society voices are not tolerated," read the statement.

In December 2019, Saudi Arabia took over the presidency of the G20 — the group of 19 of the world's largest economies along with the European Union.

This year's G20 Summit is planned to be held in Riyadh in November. This week, the kingdom is holding C20 meetings with civil society groups.

The NGOs boycotting the C20 said Saudi



Arabia has "recruited expensive Western PR advisers and spent millions of dollars" in an attempt to polish its image and suppress criticism from international media.

The kingdom arrests and prosecutes rights defenders, censors free speech, discriminates against women, and tortures detained journalists and activists,

the groups noted.

"Instead of real reform, the Saudi government has been trying to whitewash its dire human rights record by holding major international events in the country. This includes the G20," they said.

The trio also called on other groups to join them in the boycott, stressing that

even if they participate in the C20, Saudi Arabia will censor the discussions to its own people, and that protests by activist groups would be limited.

"Freedom of peaceful assembly is a right, but in a country where all gatherings, including peaceful demonstrations, are prohibited, there is no possibility that this fundamental right will be respected," they said.

Separately, Netsanet Belay, Research and Advocacy Director at Amnesty International, said, "The C20 is supposed to provide a platform for civil society voices from around the world to influence the G20 agenda. Since Saudi Arabia has locked up most of its own independent activists, the only domestic organizations present will be aligned with the government — which makes a mockery of the whole process."

"The C20 in Riyadh is a sham. We cannot participate in a process which is being abused by a state which censors all free speech, criminalizes activism for women's and minority rights..., and tortures and executes critics," he added.

Agnes Callamard, the UN rapporteur investigating the state-sponsored murder of Saudi dissident journalist Jamal Khashoggi, has already called for the G20 meetings to be moved elsewhere this year.

(Source: agencies)

Trump considering visit to India next month

U.S. President Donald Trump is considering visiting India next month, for what would be his first visit to the world's largest democracy since he took office three years ago, sources with knowledge of the matter said Tuesday.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, seeking to build close ties with Washington, had previously invited Trump to attend India's annual Republic Day parade later this month, but the U.S. officials said it would clash with the president's State of the Union address.

"There has been an open invitation for him to visit, both sides are working out the dates," one of the sources said.

Another source said Trump could come in the second half of February and that he may visit a second city besides the national capital Delhi.

The Indian foreign ministry did not have an immediate comment on the proposed visit.

India and the United States have built close political and security ties,



but in recent years trade frictions have come to the fore. Trump has frequently named India as one of the countries with the highest tariffs in the world and withdrawn a key trade concession for that reason.

The two sides have been trying to work out a new and limited trade pact on lowering tariffs, but these negotiations have run into problems over broader issues of data privacy and controls over e-commerce.

(Source: Reuters)

Germany creates elite networking club to boost China ties

German politicians and managers have set up an elite networking association to strengthen links to China at a time of tension over Hong Kong and a looming decision on whether to exclude Huawei from Germany's 5G rollout.

The organizers say the "China-Bridge" initiative is modeled on the "Atlantic-Bridge", a non-profit organization set up in 1952 to boost German-American friendship which has 500 decision-makers in business, politics, science and media as members.

China is a crucial business partner for export-oriented Germany. The two traded almost 100 billion euros in goods in the first half of last year.

"China will be one of the global powers that shape this century. Germany needs a dialogue led by business, politicians and civil society," Bavarian conservative politician Hans-Peter Friedrich, who will head the new body, told Reuters.

Other members include Andreas Hube, a manager at software company SAP and



the head of the Sino German Hi Tech Park Holding in Heidelberg, Mike De Vries.

Those involved said the idea was not to tackle everyday political tussles but to create channels for dialogue between citizens and institutions of both countries. Friedrich also made clear the organization would not be uncritical of China.

Relations with China have deepened significantly in the 14 years Angela Merkel has been chancellor of Europe's biggest economy.

(Source: Reuters)

Dozens of children die in Yemen dengue epidemic

A child advocacy group says dozens of children have lost their lives as a result of dengue-related illnesses, warning of an epidemic in the war-ravaged country whose health sector is teetering on the verge of total collapse due to the ongoing Saudi-led military onslaught.

"Seventy-eight children under 16 have already died in the outbreak of dengue-related illness in Yemen, with more than 52,000 suspected cases being recorded across the country," Save the Children said in a statement on Tuesday.

The aid group added this "could signal the start of an epidemic."

It noted that a total of 192 people died in Yemen last year from dengue-related illnesses, and the most cases were reported in the port cities of Hudaydah as well as Aden.

"Hudaydah has the second highest death rate in the country with 62 adult and children deaths in 2019. We have never seen anything like this before," Save the Children's field coordinator in Yemen, Mariam Aldogani, said.



"More than 40 of our staff including their families have been affected by the fever," Aldogani, who is herself recovering from dengue fever, added.

Back in November, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) announced that Yemen was already grappling with an epidemic of dengue fever.

Syria opens 3 humanitarian corridors for civilians from militant-held areas in Aleppo, Idlib

Syrian authorities have opened three humanitarian corridors for civilians from areas controlled by foreign-sponsored militants in the northwestern provinces of Aleppo and Idlib to leave and move to government-controlled parts of the country.

Syria's official news agency SANA reported on Monday that the corridors were set up in the town of Abu al-Duhur, located about 45 kilometers (27 miles) south of Aleppo, al-Hadher village in the Mount Simeon district of Aleppo province as well as Hobait town in the Ma'arrat al-Nu'man

district of Idlib province.

The report added that local officials and army units have made preparations "to evacuate civilians who want to leave areas controlled by terrorists," namely buses, ambulances and food supplies.

Later in the day, SANA reported that dozens of civilians from the last remaining militant-held regions in the countryside of Aleppo province crossed the al-Hadher humanitarian corridor into government-controlled territory.

They underwent medical checks, and are

expected to be transferred to their hometowns across the country within the next few days.

Turkey's Defense Ministry said on Friday that Ankara had agreed with Moscow that a ceasefire will be implemented in Syria's Idlib.

The announcement came a day after a Russian defense ministry official said a ceasefire had already been implemented there in line with agreements with Turkey.

"According to the agreements with the Turkish side, the ceasefire regime was introduced in the Idlib de-escalation zone starting

from 14:00 Moscow time (11:00 GMT) on January 9, 2020," Russian Major General Yury Borenkov was quoted as saying then.

The ceasefire eventually came into effect on Sunday.

The Turkish Defense Ministry said attacks by air and land would halt at one minute past midnight on January 12 under the agreement.

Turkey had earlier requested Russia to declare a ceasefire in Idlib, and sent a delegation to Moscow in December last year to discuss the issue.

(Source: SANA)

Germany invited Libya's Serraj, Haftar to conference

Turkey will not refrain from teaching 'putschist Haftar' lesson if he keeps attacking Libya's government: Erdogan

Germany confirmed Tuesday it will host a conference Sunday in Berlin to support the United Nations' effort to achieve peace and reconciliation in Libya after months of violence. Representatives from the United States, Russia, Britain, France, China, Turkey, Italy and the U.N. will be among the participants, said the German government in a statement.

According to Reuters, Germany has also invited Fayez who heads the internationally recognized government in Tripoli, and General Khalifa Haftar, who leads the eastern-based Libyan National Army, it said.

Attempts to broker a ceasefire between the sides to the Libyan conflict have failed in Russia, Moscow has confirmed, as the head of rebel forces in Libya leaves the peace talks.

Russia and Turkey have been trying to broker a halt to

fighting between the Libyan government and rebel militia under the command of General Khalifa Haftar.

Libyan Prime Minister Fayez al-Sarraj and Haftar held about eight hours of indirect talks mediated by Moscow and Ankara in the Russian capital on Monday.

On Tuesday, the Russian Foreign Ministry confirmed that, despite the drafting of an agreement, Haftar had left without signing the deal.

Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said Haftar had on Monday evening asked for until Tuesday morning to look over the agreement — already signed by Sarraj — but left the Russian capital without signing it.

On Saturday, the two sides had agreed to a ceasefire brokered by Turkey and Russia. But that agreement unraveled soon after implementation time, as both sides accused each other of violating the truce.

■ Russia 'to continue pushing for ceasefire'

Commenting on Haftar's departure, Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on Tuesday that Moscow would continue pushing for a ceasefire agreement in Libya.

"We will pursue our efforts in this direction. For now, a definitive result has not been achieved," he said at a news conference in Colombo on Tuesday.

Since 2014, Libya has been divided between two rival camps: the government in Tripoli, and a camp based in the eastern city of Tobruk.

■ Turkey

In another event, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has vowed to teach Libyan militia leader Khalifa Haftar a "lesson" if he does not cease his attacks on forces loyal to the UN-backed government in Tripoli.

(Source: agencies)

Iran volleyball learn group opponents at Tokyo 2020

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iran national volleyball team have learned their opponents at the 2020 Olympic Games.

Twelve teams will compete for the title in two pools of six at the 2020 Olympics. The composition of the pools has been determined based on the FIVB ranking of the teams.

Team Melli have been drawn along with Japan, Poland, Italy, Canada and Venezuela in Pool A.

Pool B features Brazil, the U.S., Russia, Argentina, France, and Tunisia.

Iran earned the right to represent the home continent, alongside hosts Japan, in the men's volleyball tournament at the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo. The team of coach Igor Kolakovic celebrated victorious after Sunday's final of the AVC qualifier in Jiangmen as they mastered a 3-0 (25-14, 25-22, 25-14) win over China to stamp their visa for the Games.

It's for the second time Iran qualify for the Olympics. The Persians made their debut in the previous edition in Rio, where they finished in fifth place.

The 2020 Summer Olympics will begin on July 24 and run until Aug. 9, with the opening ceremony on July 24 and the closing ceremony on Aug. 9.

The volleyball tournaments at the 2020 Summer Olympics in Tokyo will be played between 25 July and 9 Aug. 24 volleyball teams and 48 beach volleyball teams will



participate in the tournament. The indoor volleyball competition will

take place at Ariake Arena in Ariake, and the beach volleyball tournament will be held at

Shiokaze Park, in the temporary Shiokaze Park Stadium.

Yahya Golmohammadi happy to return to Persepolis



S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — New-appointed Persepolis coach Yahya Golmohammadi is happy to return to the team club after seven years. Ex-Iran captain is confident Persepolis club will challenge for top honors again after being appointed head coach on a one-and-a-half-year contract.

"This is a huge honor." Yahya Golmohammadi said in his first talks as Persepolis coach.

The 49-year-old succeeds Argentine Gabriel Calderon, who parted company with the club last month. Golmohammadi was one of the three candidates to lead Iran National Team, alongside

the other two candidates Ali Daei and Amir Ghalenoei.

But Golmohammadi believes it was not the right time for him to sit on the Team Melli's bench: "I think it was too early for me to be the head coach of the national team. In the future there will be the chance for me to experience working in Team Melli. Now I'm happy to be in Persepolis and in my opinion Persepolis is as important as the national team."

Speaking about his separation of Shahr Khodro club, Golamohammadi said: "it was a professional transfer between the two clubs and everything happened very quickly. I think the interests of the two clubs were served."

Sprinter Taftian to begin Olympics preparations in Paris



S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iranian sprinter Hassan Taftian will begin his preparations for the 2020 Summer Olympic Games in Paris, capital of France.

In a session which was held in Iran Athletic Federation's headquarters on Tuesday, it was decided that Taftian to continue his training at the INSEP (National Institute of Sport, Expertise, and Performance), where many of the elite athletes in most sports disciplines train there.

The fastest Iranian man won 2020 Tokyo Olympics quota of men's 100m by hitting the national record of 10.03 at the IAAF Diamond League meeting in Paris in late August.

In the session, the officials reviewed Taftian's requirements for the Olympics and decided to send him to France to get ready for Tokyo 2020.

Taftian will continue his training under his French coach Guy Ontanon in INSEP.

Hiring physiotherapist and masseur for the Iranian sprinter also was on the agenda.

"I would like to thank the federation's officials for my support. I am focusing on getting the best results in the 2020 World Athletics Indoor Championships and 2020 Olympic Games. To train among the French athletes is a good opportunity for me to prepare for Olympics in the best way possible," Taftian said.

Iran U23 football team to face China to keep hopes alive

Islamic Republic of Iran may look to utilize fresh legs, as they fight to keep their AFC U23 Championship Thailand 2020 campaign alive against China PR at Tinsulanon Stadium on Wednesday.

The knockout stage has come early for Iran, who must beat China - and hope Uzbekistan lose to Korea Republic in Pathum Thani - to have any chance of reaching the last eight of the competition.

A tally of one point from two matches — a 1-1 draw with Uzbekistan and a 2-1 defeat to Korea Republic — has given head coach Hamid Estili plenty to consider ahead of the clash with a Chinese side which has already been eliminated, and the former Persepolis star believes his team's salvation may come from a rotated starting line-up.

"It's the most important match for us," said Estili. "If we want to stay here and qualify for the second round, we need to win this game. We have no other choice."

"Between two matches we have just three days, and maybe our players were a little tired, but you need 23 ready players for this competition. For the last match, Korea Republic

changed many players and had a really ready team, but my players were tired in the second half.

"In this situation, we will try to use players who are not tired and can help us. It's really important that we have enough running power throughout the match.

"We will do our best to win using the players we have who are physically ready to face China." Ensuring his side are mentally ready is also on Estili's agenda.

Team Melli Omid have shown glimpses of quality in both their matches so far at Thailand 2020, but what is becoming a habitual dip in quality late in the first half of matches has hurt them, and Estili is eager for his side to deliver a full 90-minute performance against China.

"In both matches so far, some of players forgot the rules (of the team) and it was big problem for us," he said. "But, in both matches, we made changes and played a lot better in the second half. "I think it's a problem we need to fix. We have some young players and it's very difficult to come from behind in a match, especially if you have conceded two goals, in a difficult competition like this."

Meanwhile, China PR will look to bid farewell to Thailand 2020 by gaining their first points of the competition, after their hopes of a knockout stage berth were dashed by Sunday's 2-0 defeat to Uzbekistan.

The loss of main striker Zhang Yuning continues to linger over the Chinese squad, who struggled to create opportunities against the defending champions, and would have suffered a heavier defeat had it not been for a Chen Wei penalty save.

Hao admits his side is struggling to overcome the absence of Zhang, but the former national team defender said he will select a balanced side to face Iran.

"The loss of the striker has given me a lot of difficulties when making my tactics," Hao admitted.

"As coaches, we focus on the overall balance of the game. Against Uzbekistan, I planned to switch one of the full-backs on the right, because the opponent was playing very strongly on that side, but I analyzed the game and decided not to make any switch in order to maintain the balance.

"I hope in the next game we can improve and be better." (Source: the-afc)

FIFA President Infantino wishes Mehdi Taj 'speedy recovery'

FIFA President Gianni Infantino has wished former President of Islamic Republic of Iran Football Federation Mehdi Taj a speedy recovery.



Taj resigned from his role after heart failure. The federation is headed by acting president Heydar Bahravand.

"I learnt with sadness about your health problems and your decision to resign from your position of President of the Islamic Republic of Iran Football Federation on 29 December 2019.

"I send you my best wishes for a speedy recovery, looking forward to seeing you in full health very soon! Health is a paramount priority and I accompany you in the distance giving you strength to transit this difficult phase, look forward to seeing you again soon. With my warmest regards, all the best for 2020," Infantino wrote in a letter sent to Iran Football Federation.

(Source: FFIRI.ir)

Four Iranian freestyle wrestlers to compete for Olympics' ticket in Italy

MNA — Iran's freestyle wrestling team will depart Tehran for Rome on Wednesday to participate in Matteo Pellicone competition. This is the first stop on the road to 2020 Olympics where wrestlers try to raise their ranking.

Iran will field four wrestlers in the event; Behnam Ehsanpoor (65kg), Yones Aliakbar Emamichoghaei (74kg), Mohammad-hossein Askari Mohammadian (97kg), and Amir Hossein Abbas Zare (125kg).

Gholamreza Mohammadi and Abbas Hajkenari will coach the team while Kourosh Taghizadeh will also be departed to officiate the competitions.

The four-day tournament kicks off January 15-18 in Ostia, a port city of ancient Rome, located 30km away from the city center.

According to a report by the United World Wrestling, the stacked entry list includes seven reigning world champions, all three 2019 Wrestlers of the Year and over 30 world medal holders from the 2019 World Championships.

Mojtaba Sarasiaei named Shahr Khodro coach

IRNA — Mojtaba Sarasiaei has been confirmed as the new head coach of Iranian football club Shahr Khodro on Tuesday.

He took over from Yahya Golmohammadi who was appointed as Persepolis coach on Monday.

Sarasiaei, who was working as Shahr Khodro technical manager, has taken charge of the Mashhad-based football team until the end of the season.

Shahr Khodro, currently in sixth place in Iran Professional League, will play the winners of the match between Indian Chennai City and Al Riffa of Bahrain on January 21 in the preliminary second round of the AFC Champions League.

The winners will take on Al Sailiya of Qatar in a play-off on January 28 for a place in the group stage of the AFC Champions League.

Iran handball beat Besiktas in friendlies

Tasnim — Iran national handball team defeated Turkish club Besiktas in two friendly matches as part of preparation for the 2020 Asian Men's Handball Championship.

Iran beat Besiktas 29-26 Monday night and traveled to Kuwait for the Asian championship.

Team Melli had already defeated the Turkish giant and Beykoz Bld in two other friendly matches.

The 2020 Asian Men's Handball Championship is the 19th edition of the championship held under the aegis of Asian Handball Federation.

The championship will be held in Kuwait City, Kuwait from January 16 to 27.

It acts as the Asian qualifying tournament for the 2021 World Men's Handball Championship.

Iran has been drawn in Pool A along with Bahrain and New Zealand.

Pool B consists of Qatar, Japan and China. South Korea, Saudi Arabia and Australia are in Pool C.

Host Kuwait is in Pool D along with the UAE, Iraq and Hong Kong.

Persepolis sit 171st at Club World Ranking

Tasnim — Persepolis football team of Iran sit at the 171st place in the latest Club World Ranking.

Persepolis are followed by its arch-rivals Esteghlal who sit 182nd in the table.

Zob Ahan and Sepahan are third and fourth, sitting 199th and 295th place respectively.

Barcelona stay first in the Club World Ranking, followed by Liverpool and Valencia.

Club World Ranking is a ranking system of the best soccer teams, top scorers and coaches in the world, based on match results over the past 52 weeks.

Barcelona put faith in purist Setien after sacking Valverde

Quique Setien began his first session as Barcelona coach on Tuesday morning just as the sacked Ernesto Valverde drove out of the training ground for the last time.

Valverde had said goodbye to the players, collected his things and left, closing the page on a brutal few days that had finally seen him sacked on Monday night.

After Barca's public pursuit of Xavi Hernandez ended in failure, they have turned to Setien, the 61-year-old who has dedicated his coaching career to a belief in exciting, possession-based football.

Barcelona confirmed Setien's appointment following a board meeting that lasted more than four hours at the Camp Nou on Monday afternoon. His contract, which runs until June 2022, appears also to be a show of faith.

Valverde is the first coach to be sacked by Barca mid-season since Louis van Gaal in 2003 and if that points to chaos, Setien inherits a team in a healthy position too.



Barcelona sit top of La Liga, albeit level on points with Real Madrid, and face a winnable tie against Napoli next month in the last 16 of the Champions League.

Off the pitch, the club came top of Deloitte's annual Football Money League table on Monday, after posting record

earnings of 840.8 million euros (\$937 million) for 2018/19.

Some of that income might have to be channelled into signing a new striker this month, with Setien taking over a squad that will be without Luis Suarez for four months due to a knee injury.

More generally, he will have to find a way to marry his purist principles with results at one of the most demanding clubs in the world. His critics have suggested style can take precedence over substance.

"Having the ball makes you a football player, not running after it," Setien said last year. He once commented he would have cut off his little finger to play under Johan Cruyff.

After Valverde's more functional approach, Barca will believe Setien's philosophy chimes better with the principles they see as part of their DNA.

(Source: AFP)

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GUIDE TO
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Adopt abstemiousness so that God may reveal its
ugliness to you, and never neglect yourself, for He Who
is never forgetful of His servants watches your deeds.
Imam Ali (AS)

Iran, Qatar discuss plans to cooperate on publishing industry

CULTURE **TEHRAN** — Plans to collaborate on book publication were discussed during a meeting between Doha International Book Fair director Jassim Ahmad al-Buainain and the director of the Art, Culture and Communication Research Center of Iran's Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance of Iran, Mohammad Solgi, on Monday.

Iranian official Mohammad Solgi (L) and Doha International Book Fair Director Jassim Ahmad al-Buainain pose at the Doha International Book Fair on January 13, 2020.

The meeting was organized during the 30th Doha International Book Fair, the culture ministry announced on Tuesday. The Doha International Book Fair, which opened on January 9 in the Qatari capital, will come to an end on January 18.

Niavaran center to review film scores by David Newman

A R T **TEHRAN** — Tehran's Niavaran Cultural Center will be hosting a session on Thursday to review film scores by American composer David Newman.

A poster for a review session for David Newman's film scores at Tehran's Niavaran Cultural Center.

Iranian musician and scholar Nasrollah Davudi is scheduled to discuss a number of Newman's works during the session. In a career spanning more than 30 years, Newman has composed music for nearly 100 feature films including "Critters", "The Phantom", "The Brave Little Toaster", "Malone", "Ice Age" and "Serenity". He received an Academy Award nomination for writing the score for the 1997 film "Anastasia", which made the Newmans the most nominated Academy Award extended family, with a collective 92 nominations in various music categories.

The center also reviewed works by David's father Alfred and his uncle Lionel, other prominent musicians from Newman family, in its previous sessions.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Tehran center to review "Marriage Story"

A R T **TEHRAN** — American filmmaker Noah Baumbach's comedy drama "Marriage Story" will be reviewed today during a session at the Sarv Cultural Center in Tehran. Film expert Shahrzad Shahkarami and Tehran Psychoanalysis Institute director Turaj Moradi will attend the session. Starring Adam Driver and Scarlett Johansson, "Marriage Story" follows a married couple going through a coast-to-coast divorce.

Agaverdi Pashayev to perform Hossein Dehlavi's compositions in Azerbaijan

A R T **TEHRAN** — Azerbaijani conductor Agaverdi Pashayev has said that he plans to perform compositions by the late celebrated Iranian composer Hossein Dehlavi in a concert in his country in the future.

Pashayev, who is the conductor and art director of the Azerbaijan State Orchestra of Folk Instruments, made the remarks in a press conference at Tehran's Rudaki Hall on Monday.

He is in Tehran to conduct Iran's National Orchestra in a performance titled "Azerbaijani-Iranian Music Night" at Vahdat Hall on January 16.

"I know that Dehlavi was a celebrated composer and very popular in his country. He made great endeavors for the music of Iran and has written many beautiful pieces," Pashayev said.

"I am planning to perform the compositions we have selected for the Tehran concert for a performance in Azerbaijan, because I believe these compositions need to be performed and heard more and more," he added.

Dehlavi was mostly famous for "Sabokbal", "Bijan and Manijeh" and many other compositions that connect traditional Iranian music with Western classical music.

"I believe many good musicians have been gathered in Iran, and it is a pleasure for me to collaborate with them," said Pashayev, who accompanied Iran's National Orchestra during a concert at the Fajr Music Festival in 2019.

He noted that he hopes he will be able to

Azerbaijani maestro Agaverdi Pashayev conducts Iran's National Orchestra during a rehearsal at Tehran's Rudaki Hall on January 13, 2020. (Honaronline/Barat Zamani)

give other performances in both countries. Vocalist Fakhri Kazim Nijat and tar player Sahib Pashazadeh, both from

Azerbaijan, will accompany the orchestra during the performance. "Asgarin Ariyasi", "Sana da Qalmaz", "San

Siz", "Ayriliq", "Karanful", "In Memory of Saba" and "Shur Afarin" will be performed during the concert.

Recent political events cause sharp drop in Iran box office receipts: report

A R T **TEHRAN** — The recent political events in Iran have caused a sharp decline in the country's box office revenues, the Persian service of ILNA reported on Tuesday.

The report shows a fifty-percent drop in box office receipts as a result of the assassination of Quds Force chief Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani and its aftermath.

Based on a survey, Tehran's theaters with 29 movies on screen grossed over 70 billion rials (over \$1.6 million) in the twelve days from December 22 to January 2. At the same time, Iranian theaters took in total revenues of over 13.5 billion rials (over \$3.2 million).

From January 3 to 13, however, there was a fall in box office receipts across the country. Within the span of eleven days, Tehran's theaters took in 28.7 billion rials (over \$683,000) and theaters across the country grossed over 50.5 billion rials (over \$1.2 million). The theaters were closed for three days in the span of eleven days due to the national mourning period for commander Soleimani.

A view of the Mellat Cineplex, Tehran.

Speaking to ILNA, the director of the Association of Iranian Theater Owners, Mohammad Qased-Ashrafi, confirmed the fall in the country's box office takings.

"Social circumstances and people's mental states affect their tendency toward art and cultural activities, including going to the cinema," he said.

Commander Soleimani and a number his companions were assassinated in a U.S. military attack in Baghdad on January 3. Afterward, Iran retaliated for the attack by targeting a U.S. base in Iraq by over a dozen missiles.

Shortly afterwards, Iran unintentionally shot down a Ukrainian jetliner due to human error, killing all 176 people on board. Following this, Iran's mishandling of information concerning the downing of the plane escalated political and social tensions.

"There was a decrease in box office receipts after the assassination of commander Soleimani, and the sales saw another sharp drop after Iran announced that the plane had been shot down due to human error," Qased-Ashrafi said.

He noted that big disasters harm society and cultural activities, and added, "All of us and officials should help return peace to the society."

Officials call on artists to retract withdrawals from Fajr festivals

This combination photo shows Visual Arts Office director Hadi Mozaffari (L) and Fajr International Theater Festival director Nader Borhani Marand.

A R T **TEHRAN** — Top officials of the Fajr festivals, which Iran organizes every year during February to celebrate the anniversary of the 1979 Islamic Revolution, have asked Iranian artists to retract their decisions to withdraw from the festivals.

Iranian artists in groups and singles have withdrawn from the Fajr festivals over the past few days to express

their sympathy with the families of those people killed in the unintentional downing a Ukrainian plane by Iran last week.

In separate statements published on Tuesday, Fajr International Theater Festival director Nader Borhani Marand and Visual Arts Office director Hadi Mozaffari have invited the artists back to the festivals.

Borhani Marand asked the theatrical figures to put aside the little differences and stay with the organizers of the event.

"We are all passing through hard days now, grieving over the loss of our dear ones," he wrote in the statement.

"The organizers of the Fajr theater festival, as in other years, have asked the artists and theatrical figures to take part in the event to share and display pain, hope and even despair with the audience," he added.

"The festival is a place for talented youth to come and showcase their new art and talent, although some have decided to withdraw, there are troupes that would like to continue and participate," he noted.

"Feel assured that we all have one common ideal, and that is the exaltation of the art and culture of this land, and serving our respected people," it adds

The 38th Fajr International Theater Festival will take place in Tehran from January 30 to February 9.

In addition, Mozaffari did not accept the resignation of Ebrahim Haqiqi, the secretary of the 12th Fajr Festival

of Visual Arts.

Haqiqi and the jury members and organizers have all resigned from the festival, which is scheduled to be held at the Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds from February 12 to 19.

In his statement, Mozaffari said that the festival as a national event is a trustee of the artworks and will be held appropriately with due consideration of the country's public atmosphere.

"I should say that we understand his (Haqiqi's) concern over the great loss of our dear ones, and I must say that we are all grieving these days," he wrote.

"When a disaster happens, the presence of the veterans is a therapy for the disaster, and today we need master Haqiqi and the great masters of art, including the directors and the jury members, more than at any other time. This is why the resignation is not accepted," he added.

On Saturday morning, the Armed Forces General Staff released a statement noting that human error in an air defense mistakenly targeted the Ukrainian passenger plane near Tehran's Imam Khomeini Airport. 176 people on board lost their lives.

The incident happened a few hours after Iran attacked a U.S. base inside Iraq by with a dozen missiles in retaliation for the assassination of Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani in Baghdad.

It's a (mostly) man's world as "Joker" leads Oscar nominations

NEW YORK (Reuters) — Dark comic-book story "Joker" led nominations on Monday for the Oscars in a best picture lineup dominated by stories by or about men and featuring only one actor of color despite efforts over the past few years to diversify the field.

The 11 nods for "Joker", which turned the comic-book genre on its head with its terrifying portrayal of an isolated loner, covered all the major fields, including best picture, director Todd Phillips and Golden Globe-winning actor Joaquin Phoenix. The controversial Warner Bros. (T.N) movie has taken in more than \$1 billion at global box offices.

Phillips in a statement said he saw the film as "a character study to reflect the world around us. Explore what we're seeing and feeling in society, from the lack of empathy to the effects of the absence of love."

"Joker" will compete for the top prize with testosterone race car drama "Ford v Ferrari", Netflix (NFLX.O) gangster movie "The Irishman", Nazi-era satire "Jojo Rabbit", divorce drama "Marriage Story", World War One film "1917", nostalgic

show-business story "Once Upon a Time in Hollywood", and South Korean social satire "Parasite."

Netflix got 24 nominations, including for biographical drama "The Two Popes" and documentary "American Factory", one of the first collaborations with the production company of former U.S. President Barack Obama and his wife Michelle.

Only Sony Pictures' (6758.T) "Little Women", an adaptation of the classic Louisa May Alcott novel by an all-female production team, broke the mold with its best picture nod.

Director Greta Gerwig was shut out of the all-male directing race, but she scored a nomination for adapted screenplay. Stars Saoirse Ronan and Florence Pugh were also nominated.

Pugh said it was sad that Gerwig did not get a director nod but she told Reuters: "She got her film seen and people are recognizing the work and the talent that's been put into it. So as sad as it is, we didn't lose out completely."

"Little Women" co-producer Amy Pascal said the movie "made history by being only the third movie ever to be nominated for best

Joaquin Phoenix in "Joker". (Handout via Reuters)

picture that's written, directed and produced exclusively by women."

However, a record 62 women got nominations on Monday, almost one-third of the field, said the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, whose 8,000 members

vote on the nominees and the winners.

The academy on Monday did not respond to a request for further comment on the issue of diversity among the nominees.

The Oscars will be awarded in Hollywood on Feb 9.