



Spirit of resistance must be path of future generations **2**



Any wrong step will harm Europeans **2**



Estili issues apology after Iran's AFC U23 C'ship exit **11**



Fajr poetry festival launches book donation campaign for flood-stricken Sistan-Baluchestan **12**

Zarif, Modi confer on pressing issues

Tehran hosting 2 international exhibitions

TEHRAN — The 11th International Exhibition of Cement, Concrete, Manufacturing Technology and Related Machinery (IRAN CEMENTEX 2020) and the 4th International Exhibition of Agriculture, Agricultural Machinery and Equipment, Input, Irrigation Systems (Iran Agri Show 2020) are running at the Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds.

As reported by Shata, Iranian Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Reza Rahmani, Head of Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO) Khodadad Gharibpour and Deputy Industry Minister Hossein Modares Khiabani attended the opening ceremony of the Iran CEMENTEX 2020 exhibition. **→ 4**



See page 2

Iran probing possible U.S. disruption in radar system that caused plane downing

TEHRAN — A possible disruption in Iran's radar network by the U.S. may have caused the operator mistake the Ukrainian passenger plan for an incoming American cruise missile, at top Iranian military official said on Wednesday.

Ali Abdollahi, the deputy commander of the Armed Forces General Headquarters for coordination affairs, said "the U.S. mischiefs in the region have been proven before, and so far

Iran's cyber systems have observed and recorded virtual objects manufactured by the U.S. in the country's airspace"

"Disruption in performance of radar systems by the United States is not unprecedented," the military official said.

Abdollahi said a team has been established to investigate such a possibility. **→ 2**

Russia, China slam decision to trigger Iran deal dispute mechanism

TEHRAN — Russia and China have criticized the three European parties to the Iran nuclear deal over a move to trigger the dispute mechanism.

France, Britain, and Germany confirmed on Tuesday that they had triggered the dispute mechanism in the nuclear deal, also known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), but said they were not joining the United States campaign to exert

maximum pressure on Tehran.

"We have therefore been left with no choice, given Iran's actions, but to register today our concerns that Iran is not meeting its commitments under the JCPOA (Iran deal) and to refer this matter to the Joint Commission under the Dispute Resolution Mechanism, as set out in paragraph 36 of the JCPOA," the three European states said in the statement, according to Reuters. **→ 3**

Imam Khomeini had a rather practical turn of mind: Falk

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
By Maryam Khormaei & Javad Heirannia

TEHRAN — Forty-one years have passed since Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, upon failure to attract popular support, fled Iran forever.

Over the past decades, despite being faced with threats, provocations, harsh sanctions, and even a variety of covert interventions, Iran has been more stable than ever - a fact even acknowledged by Professor Richard Falk as the former UN Special Rapporteur.

Falk, who came to Tehran as a member of an American delegation in 1979, has an interesting narrative of Bakhtiar's desperation on the day of Shah-Escape.

As Iran marks 41th anniversary of Islamic

revolution, we asked Professor Falk to share his experience from this historical trip and the visit he later had with the founder of Islamic republic of Iran Ayatollah Khomeini.

Richard Anderson Falk is an American professor emeritus of international law at Princeton University. He is the author or co-author of 20 books and the editor or co-editor of another 20 volumes. In 2008, the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) appointed Falk to a six-year term as a United Nations special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territories occupied since 1967.

Following is the full text of the interview:

■ Before Iran's Islamic revolution, as a member of an American delegation, you had a visit

to Iran. What were the objectives of that trip?

A: I was chair of a small committee in the United States with the name, "Committee for the Defense of Human Rights in Iran," which sponsored events with Iranian students and some prominent figures. It became active within university settings as the revolutionary movement gathered momentum in 1978.

The Committee had almost no funding, but had dedicated members, and achieved a certain visibility as there was so little attention being given to these historic developments in Iran unfolding as the months passed. The treatment of these issues in the mainstream media was not only mostly very pro-Shah but also quite uninformative, and even uniformed. **→ 7**

Kata'eb Hezbollah supports Sadr, urge million-man march against U.S. military presence

Influential Iraqi Shia cleric Muqtada al-Sadr has demanded that Iraqis stage a "million-man march" against the continued US military presence in the country, days after Iraq's parliament voted to expel the American troops following an assassination operation by Washington on Iraqi soil.

The march is needed "to condemn the American presence and its violations," Sadr, who leads the largest parliamentary bloc, Sairoon, said in a tweet on Tuesday.

"The skies, land, and sovereignty of Iraq are being violated every day by occupying forces," he added. The cleric, however, cautioned that such a show of popular disapproval should be a "peaceful, unified demonstration," but did not offer a date or location for the proposed rally.

On January 5, the parliament voted overwhelmingly in favor of a resolution calling for the expulsion of all U.S.-led forces, two days after the US military assassinated senior Ira-

nian commander Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani and along with Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the second-in-command of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), among others, near the Baghdad airport. The parliament resolution also urged the Baghdad government to drop a request for assistance from a U.S.-led coalition of foreign troops purportedly operating against Daesh remnants in Iraq.

The Iraqis censured the targeted killings — which were ordered by US President Donald Trump — as a blatant violation of the country's sovereignty as well as the security agreement between Baghdad and Washington.

In a letter to the parliament following the vote, Sadr called for an immediate cancellation of the security agreement with the U.S., the closure of the US embassy, the expulsion of US troops in "a humiliating manner," and the criminalization of communication with the US administration.



© Tehran Times

War veterans protest Soleimani assassination

A number of war veterans, including those suffering disability in Iraq's war against Iran in the 1980s, held a gathering in front of the Swiss embassy in Tehran to protest the assassination of Iran's top military commander Qassem Soleimani by the U.S. in Baghdad on January 3. The protesters, carrying photos of Soleimani and Iraq's PMF deputy chief Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, shouted slogans against the U.S. state terrorism. The Swiss embassy in Tehran represents the U.S. interests in Iran.



EDITORIAL
Mohammad Ghaderi
Tehran Times editor-in-chief
@ghaderi62

Legal look into the arrest of the UK ambassador to Iran

In the legal term, immunity generally means that the person is exempted from prosecution, in other words the law and its executors cannot prosecute the person. The Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (1961) states that the immunities and privileges are not intended to benefit individuals; rather they are to perform the functions of diplomatic missions as representatives of states.

Therefore, granting immunity to diplomats is intended to ensure that they perform their duties, and it is not to benefit them personally. Immunity is given to them as the authority of the sending state.

On the other hand, among the behaviors of diplomats in the host country, two most prominent principles have been repeated in all diplomatic law instruments, namely the principle of non-interference and the principle of respect to the laws and regulations of the host country.

Non-interference principle

Non-interference in the domestic affairs of a state is one of the fundamental principles of international law and a reflection of autonomy and equality of states. No government allows interference in its domestic affairs without its own will.

Advocacy of political parties and groups, spreading opposition press, taking stance on election, participating in rallies, criticizing the host country's domestic and foreign policy, and any action taken to disregard party autonomy is considered as interference.

The principle of non-interference by diplomats is a common and accepted practice. But since the domestic affairs of states have a significant and growing impact on foreign policy, this principle is ignored by deceit in the countless cases. Financial or economic aid is among these deceptions.

Another point regarding the non-interference principle is that there is a narrow line between intervention and espionage. The issue is so complicated that the International Court of Justice in its 1980 stated in its verdict regarding the case of the U.S. embassy in Tehran that it is difficult to distinguish between espionage and interference in domestic affairs.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)



ARTICLE
Farrokh Hesabi
Tehran Times journalist

Alarming concerns about Iran National Team

Iran Football Federation is still weighing up the options following their decision to part ways with Marc Wilmots and now there are two potential candidates for the role of Team Melli head coach: Amir Ghalenoei and Ali Daei, with Yahya Golmohammadi, the third candidate, was named as the new head coach of Persepolis on Monday.

The Asian section of the 2022 FIFA World Cup qualification restarts in a little more than two months and the Iranian federation has not introduced the new head coach so far.

Heaydar Baharvand, acting president of Iran football federation, is responsible to select the replacement for Wilmots, but it seems neither Baharvand nor the federation are in a hurry to pick the new trainer for Team Melli's hotseat.

While Marc Wilmots was selected to get the Iranian team to the World Cup 2022, the Belgian struggled to make any sort of meaningful impact on the team's performance and they lost back-to-back games against Bahrain and Iraq in the 2022 World Cup qualification and now the national team is in danger of being eliminated from the 22nd edition of the FIFA World Cup which will take place in Qatar in 2022.

The alarming truth about the current situation of the Iranian national team is that there is no clear plan for the team. After failing to reach an agreement with ex-Persepolis coach Branko Ivankovic, the Iranian federation - in a change of mind - decided to hire an Iranian coach, but the process of selecting the Iranian coach has been lengthy and boring.

Time is running out fast for Iran and the Team Melli's rivals in Group C of 2022 World Cup qualification (AFC), Iraq and Bahrain, are in their best form of the recent years.

Following the resignation of Mehdi Taj as head of Football Federation of the Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI) due to the heart problems, the plans for finding the new coach of the national team was also delayed and now the federation plans to hire a head coach before selecting a new boss.

Both Ali Daei, the legendary Iranian goal scorer, and Amir Ghalenoei, Sepahan's current coach, have previously experienced failure with Team Melli as head coaches, and they know how difficult is the task of leading the Iranian national team in the current condition. The new head coach, whoever he might be, has to live up to expectations and must fix the problems at Team Melli under the watchful eye of the millions of fans around the Iran.

Ayatollah Khamenei: Spirit of resistance must be path of future generations

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has said that the “spirit of resistance and jihad” should be the path of future generations.

He made the remarks during a meeting on Monday with members of the congress of the martyrs of Bushehr Province.

“A country like Iran, which possesses energy, mines, various capacities, climate variations, sensitive geographical status and a population of 80 million, should be able to manage itself through efforts and jihad in order to protect its dignity,” the Leader stated.

He also noted that memory of martyrs must be kept alive.

E3 making ‘strategic mistake’ by triggering dispute mechanism: Zarif

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Tuesday that the European Union trio, known as E3, is making a “strategic mistake” by triggering the dispute mechanism in the 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the JCPOA.

“Europeans’ action in using the dispute mechanism is baseless from legal point of view and strategic mistake from political point of view,” he said during a meeting with Niels Annen, a German foreign office minister, in New Delhi.

Zarif also criticized the Europeans’ failure to protect Iran’s interests under in the JCPOA.

For his part, Annen said, “Our stance is defending and supporting the JCPOA and the spirit of the three European ministers’ statement is not collapse of the JCPOA.”

He also noted that Germany attaches great importance to ties with Iran.

Foreign ministers of France, Germany and the United Kingdom issued a joint statement on Tuesday announcing they have formally triggered the dispute mechanism in the nuclear deal.

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” strategy against Iran.

The European countries failed to protect Iran’s benefits from the deal and after patiently watching for a whole year and seeing no clear action from the European 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 fulfill 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 the termination of economic and financial bans.

President Rouhani also reacted to the activation of dispute mechanism by the EU trio, warning that they will “suffer” if they take a “wrong step”.

“If you take a wrong step, you will suffer,” Rouhani told the cabinet meeting.

Rouhani recommended the Europeans to choose the right path by cherishing the nuclear agreement. “Choose the right path, and the right path is to return to the JCPOA.”

In a statement on Tuesday, the Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman said activating the “trigger mechanism” will serve nobody’s interests.

“I have to mention that the three European nations 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. However, Mousavi added, his country will take “firm, decisive and proportional response” to any “unconstructive” moves.

UN calls on all parties to keep nuclear deal in place

By staff and agency

UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric has called on all parties to the 2015 nuclear deal, known as the JCPOA, to spare no effort to keep it in place.

“We’re, obviously, aware of what happened this morning, of the joint announcement made by the three and the confirmation made by the EU diplomatic chief. We continue to call on parties to work together to do whatever they can to preserve the JCPOA,” TASS quoted Dujarric as saying on Tuesday.

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

Russia’s Foreign Ministry announced on Tuesday that Russia sees no grounds to trigger the dispute mechanism, Reuters reported.

The activation of this mechanism may make it impossible to return to implementation of the agreement, the ministry said.

U.S. President Donald Trump quit the nuclear deal in May 2018. So far Britain, France, Germany have failed to protect Iran’s interests in the deal.

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.

Any wrong step will harm Europeans: Rouhani

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — President Hassan Rouhani said on Wednesday that any wrong step toward the 2015 nuclear deal by the Europeans will be harmful to themselves.

“If you take a wrong step, you will be harmed. Take the right step which is returning to the JCPOA,” he said during a cabinet meeting.

The remarks by Rouhani came as France, Germany and the United Kingdom issued a joint statement on Tuesday announcing they have formally triggered the dispute mechanism in the nuclear deal.

Rouhani said, “The Europeans say that Iran has taken fifth nuclear step and we should take a step. The step you must take is returning to your commitments.”

On January 5, Iran suspended all limits under the JCPOA in accordance to paragraph 36. It was the fifth and the final step by Iran.

Paragraph 36 provided a mechanism to resolve disputes and allows one side, under certain circumstances, to stop complying with the deal if the other side is out of compliance.

After waiting for a year that the European signatories to the JCPOA take practical measures to protect its economy from U.S. sanctions, Iran announced on May 8, 2019, that its “strategic patience” and started to reduce its JCPOA comments at bi-monthly intervals.

The decision was taken exactly one year after the U.S. abandoned the deal and reintroduced sanctions on Iran. In each step senior officials in Iran announced if the European side take concrete measures to shield the country’s economy from sanctions it will reverse its decision.

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

■ **‘What Trump has done except violating law?’**

In response to British Prime Minister Boris Johnson’s remarks about replacing the nuclear deal with the “Trump deal”, Rouhani asked,



“What [U.S. President Donald] Trump has done except violating law?”

“Apologize the Iranian people for your weakness and also your fear of the United States. We invite you to return to the JCPOA,” he noted.

Rouhani also said, “Today, you must understand that you made a mistake toward the JCPOA, assassination of Martyr Soleimani, the region, Iraq, Yemen and imposition of sanctions on Iran’s oil sale. Abandon making mistake and return. We are prepared if you return and take a path which is beneficial to regional stability and security.”

■ **‘Soleimani was Iran’s border guard’**

Rouhani also said that General Soleim-

ani was Iran’s “border guard” and symbol of “courage and martyrdom”.

“We knew the United States is very criminal. However, we did not think that it would hit a great general fighting terrorism who was a guest of another country with missile,” he said.

Soleimani was assassinated in a U.S. airstrike in Baghdad on January 3. He was a guest of the Iraqi prime minister. The Pentagon announced that Soleimani was targeted upon direct order by Trump.

Rouhani praised the IRGC for taking a revenge on the United States by targeting its airbase in western Iraq with dozens of ballistic missiles on January 8.

“The Armed Forces and the Guards (IRGC),

“The Armed Forces and the Guards (IRGC), by striking Ain al-Assad, showed that we do not back down in the face of the U.S. and that if they commit a crime they will surely receive the proper response,” Rouhani says.

British ambassador leaves Tehran

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — British Ambassador to Iran Rob Macaire has left Tehran, media sources reported on Wednesday, adding the envoy’s departure had been previously announced to the relevant bodies.

The sources said that Macaire left Iran according to regulations.

The sources did not reveal any information about the time of his departure and his destination.

Based on diplomatic protocols, any ambassador or diplomatic agent in the host country is entitled to return to his own country for vocation or any other issue after submitting an official note on his departure.

The British ambassador’s participation on Saturday at a gathering of students inside Amir Kabir University of Technology, who were protesting the accidental downing of a Ukrainian passenger plane, has enraged Iranian officials.

The Foreign Ministry has called his behavior “unlawful”, “unprofessional”, “suspicious” and a violation of the 1961 Vienna convention.

The ambassador was detained temporarily at the scene but was released immediately as diplomats enjoy diplomatic immunity. He was summoned to the Foreign Ministry on Sunday to hear Iran’s protest. A number of MPs also called for his expulsion.

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

In a statement on Monday, the Iranian Foreign Ministry said Macaire’s attendance at the gathering was a blatant interference in the internal affairs of Iran.

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, the statement added.

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 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 measures and warned that if such behavior continues, the ministry will not be satisfied just by summoning the ambassador.

Zarif, Modi confer on pressing issues

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi held talks on Wednesday over pressing regional and international issues.

The meeting was held on the sidelines of the Raisina Dialogue 2020 in New Delhi.

Earlier in the day, Zarif also met Indian National Security Adviser Ajit Doval.

The meetings took place 12 days after the United States assassinated top Iranian military commander Qassem Soleimani in Baghdad in an air raid and pushed the region closer to a direct military confrontation between Iran and the United States.

Addressing the Raisina forum, Zarif said U.S. President Donald Trump, Secretary of State Michael Pompeo are celebrating the death of General Soleimani.

He said 430 cities in India were watching millions of people in Iran were protesting the assassination of Qassemi.

The chief diplomat said the United States looks at the world from its own perspective rather than the perspective of the region.

“The killing of Qassem Soleimani shows



ignorance and ignorance,” Zarif said, according to The Times of India.

Soleimani was the “single most effective force” against ISIS and that is why the U.S. “did not like” him.

The foreign minister said Iran fired missiles at the U.S. airbase in Iraq in “self-defense” in retaliation to the assassination of its top military commander.

The senior diplomat also vehemently dismissed claim by Trump that Soleimani was orchestrating attacks on U.S. embassies.

Prior to his meeting with Modi, the top Iranian diplomat held separate meetings with Estonian Foreign Minister Urmas Reinsalu, Afghanistan’s National Security Adviser Hamdollah Moheb.

Iran probing possible U.S. disruption in radar system that caused plane downing: military

1 → The passenger plane was shot down on the morning of January 8, nearly four hours after Iran fired dozens of missiles at a U.S. airbase in Iraq in retaliation to the assassination of Iran’s top general Qassem Soleimani in Baghdad on January 3.

The Iranian military announced on Saturday morning that the plane had been mistaken for a cruise missile.

Abdollahi said there had been a report about a U.S. cruise missile attack in the wake of Iran’s missile launches. He said the operator who fired missile at the plane had difficulty in receiving the message of the command center.

There was a widespread criticism for the late announcement that the plane had been downed unintentionally by Iran.

However, Abdollahi said, the investigation that led to the announcement was conducted in the least possible time.

“The commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps Aerospace Force was on a mission in the west of the country and after an hour, he was informed (about it) and reported this to his superior,” he said, according to Tasnim.

by striking Ain al-Assad, showed that we do not back down in the face of the U.S. and that if they commit a crime they will surely receive the proper response.”

■ **Rouhani urges the U.S. to leave the region**

Rouhani also warned the United States to end its military intervention in the region, saying it will both help restore regional security and serve Washington’s own interests.

The “intolerable” insecurity currently afflicting the region menaces Asia, Europe, and even America itself as it can lead to all sorts of incidents, Rouhani told the cabinet session.

The American forces in the region are today faced with insecurity, which may come to threaten the European troops as well in the near future, he added.

“Restore this security. We want you to leave the region... not by means of war, but by taking the wise move [to do so],” he said. “You [yourself] will stand to benefit from this. Go down the path that benefits the region and the entire world,” the president added, Press TV reported.

■ **‘Armed Forces must not be undermined for the mistake’**

Pointing to the Ukrainian plane crash, Rouhani also said that those who mistakenly shot down the passenger plane are the ones who make efforts in line with protecting the country’s security. However, he said that they must apologize to the people and such incidents must not happen again.

The president added despite this “great mistake” the armed forces should not be undermined.

“We have needed, need and will need armed forces such as army, Guards, Basij and police.”

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

Rouhani 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.



Iran Air Force makes new key progress in electronic warfare: commander

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — The lieutenant commander of the Iran Air Force for coordination affairs said on Wednesday that his force has recently attained new cutting-edge progress in the field of electronic warfare.

Electronic warfare (EW) is any action involving the use of the electromagnetic spectrum (EM spectrum) or directed energy to control the spectrum, attack an enemy, or impede enemy assaults.

Brigadier General Mahdi Hadian said that electronic warfare is among the most important influential techniques and equipment in reinvigoration of combat might.

He further said, “The Air Force has gained important achievements in this field,” assuring the Iranians about the Air Force’s deterrent power which can counter the enemies’ state-of-art weapons.

Iran has increased its defense power in recent years by developing different types of weapons and equipment.

In March 2019, Commander of the Iranian Air Force Brigadier General Aziz Nasirzadeh and Vice-President for Science and Technology Sorena Sattari officially opened the mass-pro-

duction lines of Kaman-12 unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) and Akhgar missiles.

In the ceremony, also the first aeronautical center, equipped with laser technology of Launch Services Program (LSP), was inaugurated in Army Aerospace Force Self Sufficiency Jihad Organization (ASFSSJO).

General Nasirzadeh said these achievements were made in sanctions conditions, adding, “This technology is also applicable in the medical industry, energy industry (gas-powered turbines) and also automotive industry.”

Kaman-12, the first home-made wide-body drone with a jet engine, was unveiled in January 2019 in an exhibition held by Armed Forces in Tehran.

“(Anyone at) every level who reports (something) should make sure about (the accuracy of) the report,” he said, adding, “Naturally, the initial examination takes time.”

The scope of mission of the involved individuals was extensive and it was necessary to speak to all of them so the process lasted about 38 hours, he told IRNA.

No government tolerates subversive protests, says Motahari

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — No government would tolerate protests with subversive agendas, says MP Ali Motahari.

“In the event that these gatherings go on and protesters resort to acts of aggression and pursue subversive agendas, they need to be dealt with,” Motahari said on Wednesday, according to Mehr.

“These gatherings and chanting of slogans is natural to a certain degree,” he said, pointing to the recent accidental downing of a Ukrainian passenger plane by Iran’s military.

“Students are upset and they want to make their protest heard by the authorities and shout,” he said.

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.

The incident sparked sporadic rallies in some universities, including Tehran University, Amirkabir University of Technology, Shahid Beheshti University and Tehran University of Art.

Motahari said protests to this extent must be tolerated so that the protesters would be



able to voice their grievances.

However, he continued, if the gatherings are held to pursue subversive agendas, then no government would tolerate this.

He also commented on the presence of the British Ambassador Rob Macaire in the rallies, saying, “It is not clear why he participated in these gatherings.”

“His action was amateur, undiplomatic and unprofessional,” he added.

Macaire, who was arrested briefly by Iran during demonstrations in Tehran on Saturday, was summoned to the Foreign Ministry on Sunday afternoon.

According to the Foreign Ministry, the ambassador was summoned for his “uncon-

ventional behavior and presence” in the illegal gatherings.

The British diplomat was reminded that his presence in illegal gatherings has no conformity with his responsibility and that his behavior is in contrast to the 1961 Vienna convention on diplomatic relationship, the ministry said.

Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Abbas Araghchi said Ambassador Macaire was temporarily arrested for participating in the “illegal gathering” in Tehran.

“He wasn’t detained but arrested as an unknown foreigner in an illegal gathering. When police informed me a man’s arrested who claims to be UK Amb, I said IMPOSSIBLE! only after my phone conversation w him I identified, out of big surprise, that it’s him. 15 min later he was free,” Araghchi tweeted on Sunday.

The comments came in response to a recent tweet by head of European Union foreign policy Josep Borrell who expressed concerns over the envoy’s “temporary detention”.

“Very concerned about the temporary detention of the UK Ambassador @HMAtehran in Iran. Full respect of the Vienna convention is a must. The EU calls for de-escalation and space for diplomacy,” Borrell wrote.

Motahari said Britain must not be the one to complain, rather, it needs to apologize.

Russia, China slam decision to trigger Iran deal dispute mechanism

1→ Russia said on Tuesday that it sees no grounds to trigger the dispute mechanism, saying the activation of this mechanism may make it impossible to return to implementation of the agreement, TASS reported.

On Wednesday, China expressed regret over the decision as well.

“This decision will not help solve the issues or ease current tensions,” Foreign Ministry spokesperson Geng Shuang said at a press briefing in Beijing, China Internet Information Center reported.

China has always believed that Iran reduced its commitments to the JCPOA due to specific reasons, said Geng.

He said that the United States unilaterally withdrew from the JCPOA, while ignoring international law and its international obligations, imposing maximum pressure on Iran and obstructing other parties in keeping their commitments.



“Such practices are the root cause of current tensions,” he said.

China urged all relevant parties to stay calm and ex-

ercise restraint, resolve differences through dialogue and consultation within the JCPOA framework, take concrete steps to restore the balance of the rights and obligations of the JCPOA and try their best to safeguard and implement the deal, Geng added.

China will stay in close contact and coordination with relevant parties and make tireless efforts to this end, he added.

The JCPOA was struck between Iran and the five permanent UN Security Council members — the United States, Russia, China, France and the UK — as well as Germany and the European Union.

The accord came under increasing strain ever since U.S. President Donald Trump announced the U.S. withdrawal from it in May 2018 and unleashed the “toughest ever” sanctions against Iran despite worldwide objections.

Iran-Iraq solidarity grows amid U.S. threats

(Workers World) United States policy toward both Iran and Iraq is based not on “bad advice” or howling blunders by President Donald Trump, as Democratic Party pundits claim. It is not just a “mismanaged” foreign policy.

Washington’s miscalculations of the past two weeks have been driven by extreme frustration at all levels of U.S. ruling circles, military strategists and think tanks. They reflect developments U.S. imperialists have been unable to push back. In fact, their desperate efforts have had the opposite effect.

The U.S. imperialists are losing their overarching dominant influence in the region. Their ability to control events on several fronts — political, economic and even military — is slipping.

Their weakened position is likely to drive them toward deeper rogue actions, even more reckless threats and new war crimes.

But these criminal actions can also foster deeper anti-imperialist unity in the region. Recent massive demonstrations in Iran and Iraq reflect this. So does the willingness of Iraqi security forces guarding Baghdad’s Green Zone, home to the U.S. Embassy, to literally open the door on New Year’s Eve to thousands of angry people protesting U.S. missile attacks.

Then, on Jan. 7, Iran attacked two vast U.S. bases on Iraqi territory. This open challenge to the U.S. empire was a carefully calibrated response to the Pentagon’s assassination four days earlier of Iran’s highly respected military leader, Gen. Qassem Soleimani.

The implications of this successful strike by Iranian missiles launched from hundreds of miles away will resonate throughout the region. The U.S. has always boasted that its equipment is much more advanced and technically sophisticated.

U.S. collaborators among the corrupt [Persian] Gulf State monarchies may be having second thoughts about the hundreds of billions of dollars they have spent on U.S. weapons. They will be reevaluating the ability of U.S. promises to protect them, even from the wrath of their own populations. They might also be interested in re-evaluating their hostile relations with Iran.

This was the second time U.S. weapons didn’t achieve what Washington wanted.

In September, using low-flying drones, Houthi rebels in Yemen temporarily took out half of Saudi Arabia’s oil and gas installations. The U.S. blamed Iran. Billions of dollars of Patriot missile systems purchased from the Pentagon offered no protection.

According to many U.S. and Israeli claims, the same missiles and drones are shared with the highly organized Hezbollah forces in Lebanon.

General Soleimani’s Jan. 2 state visit to Iraq, to discuss Saudi peace overtures after

40 years of aggressive hostility, may have been due in part to the successful Houthi drone attack in Yemen.

■ NATO pulling out
On Jan. 10, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo refused to even discuss with the Iraqi prime minister a vote in the Iraqi Parliament telling U.S. troops to leave Iraq. But U.S. and NATO collaborators got the message.

As Trump called for NATO to step up its involvement in Iraq, NATO allies instead announced their departures. Canada stated it was withdrawing some 500 troops. Germany was next, announcing a partial withdrawal of its troops. Then Sweden, Denmark, Hungary, Romania and Latvia all suspended their training missions with Iraqi forces. Many other countries — including Britain, France, Italy, Spain, Australia, Denmark, Norway, Portugal and Bulgaria — have already withdrawn their troops from Iraq.

That leaves U.S. positions more exposed. Despite the vote in the Iraqi Parliament for the U.S. to leave, the Pentagon has yet to announce its decision.

■ Threat of sanctions on Iraq backfires

Trump responded to the Iraqi vote with new threats.

Beginning in 1990, and continuing in part even today, the U.S. has imposed sanctions on Iraq. The UN estimated that, in the first four years of these sanctions, half a million Iraqi children under the age of five died of malnutrition and preventable diseases.

Trump has now threatened that if U.S. troops are told to leave, he will reimpose the sanctions on Iraq “like they have never seen before” — so harsh they would “make Iranian sanctions look somewhat tame” by comparison.

Rather than help Iraq in its desperately needed reconstruction of essential civilian water and electric infrastructure destroyed in the U.S. war, Trump now threatens that Iraq must pay the U.S. back for the “billions of dollars” it spent building air bases for its military operations.

■ U.S. sanctions on Iran

It was Trump’s decision in 2018 to withdraw from an agreement with Iran, signed by five permanent members of the UN Security Council and Germany in 2015, and instead impose harsh new unilateral sanctions. This led to the regional crisis.

The new U.S. sanctions created enormous hardship in Iran. But they did not, as had been

predicted, lead to Iran’s collapse. However, they did have far-reaching, unintended consequences throughout the region, forcing all political forces to actively turn, for their survival, away from U.S. domination and toward regional cooperation.

■ Iraq-Iran trade expands
A growing number of joint Iraqi-Iranian projects now include setting up industrial parks along the south, central and northern borders and increasing commercial links to \$20 billion a year in trade.

The most interesting joint project, signed in May 2019, involves the dredging of a common waterway, known in Iraq as the Shatt al-Arab and in Iran as the River Arvand, to facilitate shipping, commerce and tourism. Iran and Iraq had waged war throughout the 1980s over control of this vital artery, which forms a natural border between the two countries. Due to hostilities, the waterway has not been cleared since the mid-1970s.

Iran and Iraq are also planning on developing the Naft Shahr and Khorramshahr natural gas fields. Plans to link the Iraqi and Iranian railway networks together are also moving forward. This will help U.S.-sanctioned Iran ship goods to U.S.-sanctioned Syria, which has seaports on the Mediterranean coast.

These cooperation developments have been covered by both Arab and Iranian news services.

After high-level meetings in May, Iraq is increasingly using Iran’s refined petroleum products for needed gas and electricity, helping the disrupted economies in both countries.

Trump’s bellicose threats of harsh sanctions on Iraq will only strengthen these regional decisions and trade agreements.

■ Chinese projects in Iraq

Threats of U.S. sanctions are also reinforcing the drive for wider relations. China is already Iraq’s largest trading partner, while Iraq is now China’s second-largest oil supplier. The relationship exceeds \$30 billion in annual two-way trade.

Prime Minister Abdul Mahdi headed a large delegation to China this past October to discuss mega projects in infrastructure, education and health. The meetings were described as “a quantum leap” in bilateral relations.

Trump’s reaction? He demanded that Mahdi cancel the contracts.

Meanwhile, extensive signed agreements for railway projects and building new international roads, bridges, schools and health clinics came out of the meetings.

China’s Hilong Oil Service & Engineering Co. and the Iraqi Drilling Co. agreed to a joint venture to exploit numerous oilfields throughout the country, including the Majnoon field — one of the world’s largest.

■ Chinese projects with Iran
China’s economic relations with Iran are more advanced than those with Iraq.

China and Iran in 2016 signed a \$600 billion, 25-year trade agreement based on the international agreement to end sanctions on Iran.

The U.S. illegally abrogated this agreement and has demanded that every other country also cancel its trade. But China has not complied with U.S. demands. Under its Belt and Road Initiative, sometimes called the New Silk Road, trade with Iran has expanded.

Extensive new rail lines through Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan connect China and Iran, cutting delivery time to half that of ocean trade. Future rail lines from Urumqi in Xinjiang province to Tehran will further shorten trade time and expand economic ties.

These two formerly colonized and oppressed countries, Iran and China, are increasingly targeted by U.S. imperialism. In response, they are expanding exchanges in defensive military technology and advanced technical support.

In 2018 the U.S. ordered Canada to arrest and detain Meng Wanzhou, the chief financial officer of the Chinese tech company Huawei. The charge was “illegally dealing with” Iran, allegedly violating U.S.-imposed sanctions. China has continued to ignore U.S.-imposed sanctions on Iran.

■ Attacks breed resistance

On the same day that U.S. drones assassinated Iranian Gen. Soleimani in Iraq, the first joint naval exercises of Iran, China and Russia were underway in the Gulf of Oman, off the Iranian coast.

Wall Street’s ruthless and expanding efforts to starve every country into compliance need to be met with such class-conscious, anti-imperialist solidarity.

The struggle is far from over and the growing desperation of capitalist exploiters and Pentagon war planners means many crises lie ahead. However, there are a new, determined mass mood and new means to confront a decaying system built on piracy, looting and occupation.

The leader of Lebanon’s highly organized Hezbollah said the U.S. killing of Gen. Soleimani will impel the entire region into a “completely new phase.”

Speaking before thousands of supporters at a rally in southern Beirut, Hassan Nasrallah called the U.S. killing of Soleimani a “clear, blatant crime that will transform the region.”

Parliamentary candidates’ vetting not final: Jannati

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Ayatollah Ahmad Jannati, head of the Guardian Council, said on Wednesday that the vetting of parliamentary candidates are not final and they can file complaints.



“Eventually, the first phase of vetting the candidates for the eleventh term of the Majlis was completed,” Jannati said.

“The announced results about the candidates’ qualification are not final and it is still possible for the Guardian Council members to review and revise their initial judgments,” he added.

The comments by Jannati come as 90 sitting MPs who had fielded candidacy for the elections have been found ineligible to run.

The Guardian Council released on Sunday the list of candidates who are considered competent to run for parliamentary elections.

Abbas Ali Kadkhodaei, the spokesman for the Guardian Council, said in a tweet late on Saturday that the process of studying qualification of the candidates has ended.

The council announced on Sunday that the candidates who oppose the result of the study can file a complaint from January 12 to January 16.

The next parliamentary elections will be held on February 21. To be able to run for parliament, the candidates must be finally confirmed by the Guardian Council.

The candidates will have 8 days to spend on the campaign trail, ending on February 19.

The Iranian parliament has 290 members who are elected by the people for four-year terms.

The parliamentary elections will be held in over 200 constituencies across the country’s 31 provinces.

The midterm elections of the Assembly of Experts will also be held on the same date in Tehran, Khorasan Razavi, North Khorasan, Fars and Qom provinces.

Trump ‘flat-out lied’ about Soleimani assassination: Biden

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — U.S. Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden has said that Donald Trump “flat-out lied” when offering justification for the assassination of Iran’s top general, Qassem Soleimani.

“Quite frankly, I think he’s flat-out lied about saying, the reason he made the strike [on Soleimani] was because our embassies were about to be bombed,” Biden said while speaking at a Democratic debate in Des Moines, Iowa on Tuesday night.

Trump ordered the drone strikes that targeted Lieutenant General Soleimani, chief of the IRGC’s Quds Force, and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the second-in-command of Iraq’s Popular Mobilization Units (PMU) as well as eight other companions on January 3.

Trump told Fox News Friday that “four embassies” would have been targeted had the U.S. not carried out the operation, but failed to provide any details to substantiate his claims.

American officials have made confusing remarks about what prompted Trump to order the assassination.

After the president claimed that the strikes were conducted to prevent an “imminent” attack, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said the operation was part of a “bigger strategy of deterrence.”

Pentagon Chief Mark Esper, on the other hand, said there was “no intelligence forewarning of imminent attacks on embassies,” contradicting Trump.

On Monday, Trump in a tweet alleged any imminent threat Soleimani posed “doesn’t really matter because of his horrible past!”

Biden also criticized the president for pulling the U.S. out of a nuclear deal with Iran, a move which he said alienated Washington’s allies.

“We have lost our standing in the region, we have lost the support of our allies. The next president has to be able to pull those folks back together, reestablish our alliances and insist Iran go back into the agreement.”

During the debate, Biden and Senator Amy Klobuchar said they would leave U.S. troops in the Middle East, while other candidates suggested they would withdraw American forces from the region. “We should stop asking our military to solve problems that cannot be solved militarily,” Sen. Elizabeth Warren said. “Our keeping combat troops there is not helping.”

The U.S. has nearly 5,000 U.S. troops in Iraq and about 800 in Syria in addition to 14,000 in Afghanistan. Also, around 14,000 more troops have been deployed throughout the Middle East since the summer.

Sen. Bernie Sanders insisted that Americans do not want “endless wars” anymore, noting the conflicts “have cost us trillions of dollars.”

“In America today, our infrastructure is crumbling, half of our people are living paycheck-to-paycheck, 87 million people have no health care or are underinsured, we have 500,000 people sleeping out on the streets tonight,” he said.

Meanwhile, former South Bend, Ind., Mayor Pete Buttigieg, suggested that the U.S. should remain engaged in the region “without having an endless commitment of ground troops.”

“The very president who said he was going to end endless war, who pretended to have been against the war in Iraq all along — though we know that’s not true — now has more troops going to the Middle East,” Buttigieg said of Trump.

Warren also said instead of U.S. military presence, Washington should rely on allies and economic tools there.

She also talked about U.S. troops present in Afghanistan, saying, “No one has a solution and an end point.”

“We need to get our combat troops out. They are not helping create more safety for the United States,” Warren added.

STOCK MARKET	
TEDPIX	399445.3
IFX	5110.91

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES	
USD	42,000 rials
EUR	46,761 rials
GBP	54,723 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES	
Brent	\$64.58/b
WTI	\$58.33/b
OPEC Basket	\$66.07/b
Gold	\$1,553.70/oz
Silver	\$17.88/oz
Platinum	\$1,009.70./oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

Tehran hosting 2 international exhibitions

1 → As for the Iran Agri Show 2020, the exhibition’s opening ceremony was attended by senior officials including Iran’s Acting Agriculture Minister Abbas Keshavarz, Iranfair.com reported.

Several Iranian and foreign exhibitors gathered together in this event to showcase their latest products and services in the field of agriculture and related machinery.



Presenting the capabilities of Iranian companies and their latest industrial and technological achievements, creating opportunities for domestic and foreign participants to get to know each other and exchange experiences in order to introduce the world’s latest technological achievements into the country, as well as presenting domestic and foreign investment opportunities were reported to be some of the main goals of these four-day exhibitions which will wrap up on Friday.

Exports Expansion Headquarters to be set up in coming days

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — The head of Iran’s Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) announced that the Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade will establish the Exports Expansion Headquarters in the coming days, IRIB reported on Wednesday.

Hamid Zadboum said the mentioned headquarters will be set up by the order of First Vice President Es’haq Jahangiri and its structure will be like that of the previously established Market Regulation Headquarters (which is in charge of controlling prices at the commodity markets).

TEDPIX up 3,532 points

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN**- TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), rose 3,532 points to 399,445 on Wednesday, IRNA reported.

As reported, some 6.262 securities valued at 34.784 trillion rials (about \$828 million) were traded at TSE.

IFX, the main index of Iran’s over-the-counter (OTC) market known as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB) also climbed 16 points to 5,110 on Wednesday, the same report confirmed, adding that 1.896 billion securities worth 14.628 trillion rials (about \$348.2 million) were traded at this market.

Furniture, home appliances expo underway in Tehran

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — A specialized exhibition of furniture and home appliances is being held in Tehran’s Goftogu Park with the participation of 150 domestic producers for five days.



As reported by IRIB, aiming to support domestic production and to introduce the Iranian producers’ capabilities and capacities, the exhibition kicked off on Tuesday.

The exhibition also offers discounted items such as furniture, bedding, chandeliers and decorative lights, as well as carpets and home appliances.

Manufacturers of furniture, bedding, chandeliers and decorative lights, carpets and home appliances are presenting their latest products and services in this exhibition.

Trade centers in target markets to facilitate plastic products exports

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iran’s Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) will issue permits for the country’s plastic and polymer industries unions and associations to set up trade centers in the target countries in a bid to facilitate exports of these products to those markets, a deputy head of TPO announced.

Making the remarks in the first meeting of the Plastic Products Desk of TPO, Farhad Nouri emphasized the important role of private sector in exports of Iranian non-oil products and said his organization welcomes and investigates any suggestion for expansion

of these products exports, IRIB reported.

The meeting, which was held with the aim of investigating the problems in the way of exports, was participated by some top export companies and also Iran National Plastic and Polymer Industrial Association (INPIA).

During the meeting, the status of Iran’s plastic products exports and imports was discussed and Iraq was recognized as the major export destination of Iranian plastic products as 70 percent of these products go to the market of this neighbor.

The participants also mentioned the necessity of establishing some centers



in countries like Kenya, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, in addition to more supportive policies for entering the markets

of neighboring countries, and also offering preferential tariffs on the exports of industrial products.

‘Active shipping line, a necessity for bolstering Iran-Qatar trade’

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Deputy Head of Iran-Qatar Joint Chamber of Commerce says having an active direct shipping line between the two countries is a necessity for expansion of trade ties between them.

“The boom in trade between Iran and Qatar, particularly in the areas of export and tourism, is in dire need of activation of the Grand Ferry on the Bushehr-Qatar route,” Khorshid Gazderazi told IRNA.

Back in August 2019, Iran’s southern port of Bushehr launched a cargo and passenger shipping line with Qatar using a cargo/passenger ship called Grand Ferry, however, according to Gazderazi, the line hasn’t been much active due to the lack of support from the two governments.

According to the official, the shipping line was scheduled to operate once a week carrying both passengers and cargoes, but it couldn’t operate upon that schedule due to the heavy fuel costs.

“Considering the fact that the Qatar World Cup is ahead, the mentioned ship with its 2,000-passenger capacity should be active in the tourism sector from now on,” Gazderazi said.

Since 2017, when Qatar was sanctioned by countries such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the



United Arab Emirates, Iran has had a great opportunity for a stronger presence in the country’s market, according to the official.

“Over time, however, issues pertaining to quality and quantity of products, have affected Iran’s position among the rival exporters to Qatar and the Iranian Chamber of Commerce should pay special attention to this issue,” he added.

Iran has recently established or reactivated a number of sea travel routes, which is expected to lend a hand to the tourism sector that has fallen victim to a foreign currency crisis caused by sanctions.

As unilateral U.S. sanctions against Iran snapped back, pressuring the country’s limited foreign currency reserves, the Islamic Republic is increasingly paying attention to marine travel as a major way of boosting its underdeveloped tourism sector.

Eurozone industrial output growth points to brighter end of 2019

The eurozone enjoyed a broad-based uptick in industrial production that points to a slightly brighter end to last year after a slowdown that had lasted about 12 months.

Industrial output expanded 0.2 percent in December from the previous month, following two months of contraction, Europe’s statistical office revealed on Wednesday.

The “fourth quarter is set up for another contraction in production,” said Bert Colijn, a senior economist at ING. The “industrial recession is set to continue for a little while longer but green shoots are noteworthy.”

The improvement was geographically widespread, with Germany, the region’s industrial powerhouse, reporting a 0.9 percent expansion over the previous month, Eurostat said.

Growth in Spain was above the area’s average, while in Italy the figure swung positive, albeit weak at 0.1 percent, after months of contractions.

France was the only eurozone economy to report three months of uninterrupted growth, which makes it likely that the sector has added to the country’s fourth-quarter



economic expansion.

The data was a “reminder that the French economy is doing fine”, said Claus Vistesen, chief eurozone economist at Pantheon Macroeconomics.

But elsewhere, the increase was not enough to shift the

sector’s poor outlook for the last quarter of the year. Despite a solid increase over the month, output in the German auto sector was 10 percent below the level in November 2018.

Industrial output in the 19-member currency union was down 1.5 percent, compared with the same month a year ago, marking an uninterrupted fall since November 2018. Output in the car sector was 7 percent down.

In Germany, the eurozone’s biggest economy and the one hit the most by the international industrial downturn, output was 4 percent below the level in November 2018.

The German office for national statistics revealed on Wednesday that growth has slowed to 0.6 percent in 2019, from 1.5 percent in 2018.

“While we still think that the bloc’s industry is gradually bottoming out, we call for caution against becoming overly optimistic,” said Daniela Ordóñez, economist at Oxford Economics. A “marked industrial pick-up should not be expected as external demand is set to remain subdued.”

(Source: ft.com)

Latin American steel trade advances amid falling imports and stable consumption

At a moment of low dynamism in the world economy (thanks to the slowdown in developed and developing countries) long-term regional factors and political transitions in several countries have contributed to a very challenging environment in Latin America.

According to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), excluding Venezuela, the average GDP growth in Latin America is increasing, but only 1% per year, partly reflecting the largest recession since World War II experienced by Brazil, the largest economy in the region.

The stagnation of the economy in Mexico since the beginning of 2019 and also the macroeconomic imbalances observed in Argentina, in addition to the global financial crisis, unrest in countries such as Ecuador, Bolivia, and Chile, also undermined the economic performance of Latin America.

In this context, the consumption of rolled steel in October was 5% lower than the total registered in the same period of 2018. Despite the 4% increase compared to September 2019, the accumulated until October remained 5% lower than in the same period of the previous

year. Even so, it was 0.3% higher than the average for the first 9 months.

The balance had a slightly positive trend, totaling 202 thousand tons, 4% above the result observed in September. The growth is due in large part to the consumption of Guatemala (26%), Argentina (24%), Brazil (17%), Mexico (16%) and Ecuador (14%).

■ Lower than the same period

In November 2019, crude steel production totaled 4,828 Mt, 10% less than November 2018. The accumulated until November (55,722 Mt) was 8% lower than the same period of the previous year. The result was 5% below the average of the first 10 months. Mexico was responsible for the largest part of the fall (58%) and registered the worst indicator since March 2016.

Roller steel production reached 3,971 Mt, 10% less than November 2018. The accumulated until November also fell 8% compared to the same period of the previous year. Upon reaching the lowest level in 35 months, the total decreased by 4.3% compared to October and showed a 6% lower result than the average of the first 10 months of 2019. Much

of the negative regional balance is due to the deficit of Brazil (75%) and Argentina (36%), which experienced decreases in their annual and monthly productions.

“We cannot expect markets to solve socio-economic problems by themselves. Governments should review their public policies to stimulate growth and prioritize sustainable development, taking advantage of the current low cost of financing. We need to refocus our efforts towards exports,” says Francisco Leal, General Director of Alacero.

With a total of 1,929 Mt, October imports were 6% lower than the same month of 2018. The accumulated until October remained 3% below the equivalent period in 2018. However, there was a 10% increase in comparison to September, which had already registered a punctual decrease due to the volatility of the Mexican market.

■ The largest increases in imports

The result was 0.4% higher than the average for the first 9 months of 2019. The largest increases in imports were observed in Guatemala (54 thousand t), Ecuador (30 thousand t), Brazil (23 thousand t), Argen-

tina (17 thousand t) and Chile (12 thousand t). In the first 11 months, China’s rolled steel imports fell 27% in Latin America. In January, the total imported was 559 thousand tons, while in November it was 410 thousand tons.

October exports reached 836 thousand tons, 9% above the result seen in the same month of 2018. Although the accumulated (7,655) was 4% lower than the same period of 2018, the total registered a 14% growth compared to October of the previous year, the best indicator since May 2019. The result of exports was 9% above the average of the first 9 months. Brazil expanded its exports by 12%, followed by Mexico (15%) and Argentina (20%).

In October, the trade balance registered a 15% lower deficit than the same month of the previous year and presented a 3% drop in the accumulated deficit until October compared to the same period of 2018. Although in October the deficit was 7% higher than in September, the total was 6% lower than the average of the first 9 months of the year.

(Source: hellenicshippingnews.com)

World Bank, Moody’s see Philippine’s economic growth below six percent

The repercussions of last year’s squabbles among the Philippines’ lawmakers fighting for their pork continue, with both multilateral lender World Bank and debt watcher Moody’s Investors Service declaring that the country’s 2019 economic expansion was below six percent.

In its January 2020 Global Economic Prospects Report, the World Bank said it was expecting the Philippines’ gross domestic product (GDP) to have grown by 5.8 percent last year, below the government’s already downscaled six to 6.5 percent target.

The government will disclose the country’s fourth-quarter

and full-year 2019 performances on January 23.

Last year, “some commodity importers operating at or above capacity have experienced a cyclical moderation of activity, such as Cambodia, the Philippines and Thailand”, the World Bank said.

“Weak export growth has added to the slowdown, especially in the economies that are deeply integrated into global and regional production networks, including Thailand and the Philippines,” the World Bank added.

Separately, Moody’s said in its report titled Passage of Philippine Budget Supports Robust GDP Growth that

economic growth last year likely settled also at 5.8 percent.

As the 3.7 trillion peso (\$73 billion) 2019 national budget was signed only in April and the government had operated using re-enacted 2018 appropriations, Moody’s said “national government spending excluding interest payments contracted 1.9 percent in the first half of last year compared with the year-earlier period and weighed on economic growth.”

It said the 27.2 percent contraction in real public construction ate up more than one percentage point from the real GDP.

(Source: phnompenhpost.com)

3.2m barrels fuel storage facility to be launched in Qeshm Island

ENERGY **TEHRAN** — Head of

Iran's Qeshm Free Trade Zone, Hamid-Reza Mo'meni said the island's first fuel storage facility with the capacity of 3.2 million barrels will be launched by the next 20 days, IRIB reported on Tuesday.

Speaking on the sidelines of the second specialized conference on introducing Qeshm investment opportunities in the fields of oil, gas, and petrochemicals, the official said the capacity of this facility could be increased to six million barrels in the next phase and up to 20 million in its third phase.

Noting that this facility can be used for supply fuel to the country's shipping fleet, Mo'meni said with a capacity of 52,000 tons, the fuel-supply unit of the facility is currently operational.

Noting that there are 17 hydrocarbon fields in and around Qeshm Island, the official said, "These fields hold significant reserves which can help feed



the petrochemical and refinery units." Mo'meni also announced the launch of

two docks, one with 70,000 tons and the other with 35,000 tons capacity, in Qeshm

Free Zone within the next five months.

"Construction of five petrochemical complexes and four refineries in the island is also on the agenda for the upcoming Iranian calendar year of 1399 (starts on March 19)," the official said.

According to organizers, the second specialized conference on introducing Qeshm investment opportunities in the fields of oil, gas, and petrochemicals, focuses 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.

At this year's conference, officials, executives, and experts from all over the country discuss and explore issues pertaining to the 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.

'NIOC supplies enough low-sulfur fuel for maritime fleet'

ENERGY

TEHRAN — Secretary general of Iran Ship Owners Union (IRSOU) says enough low-sulfur fuel has been supplied for the country's maritime fleet, Tasnim reported on Wednesday.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Line [IRISL] and National Iranian Tanker Company [NITC] are cooperating for storing tin [low-sulfur] fuel," Yahya Ziaei, who represents IRSOU, said.

Mentioning the new regulations introduced by the International Maritime Organization, Ziaei said in recent years, Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) has had many negotiations with the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) and the Oil Ministry for the production and supply of low-sulfur fuel, but unfortunately the Oil Ministry has neglected the issue.

Earlier this week, Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh was summoned to the parliament to answer some questions



about the oil ministry's negligence regarding the production of enough low-sulfur fuel for the country's maritime fleet.

Zanganeh said modification and improvement of the country's refineries need \$10 billion of investment, and securing

the mentioned \$10 billion for modification of the country's refineries is impossible under the sanction condition.

The minister, however, said that the plan for modification of the refineries so that they can produce low-sulfur fuel is currently underway in Abadan Refinery, in southwest of the country, but the plan was halted in Isfahan Refinery.

The International Maritime Organization (IMO) introduced new regulations to reduce air pollution resulting from the use of high-sulfur fuels by vessels.

Based on the new regulations, sulfur will be cut drastically from global shipping transport fuels in 2020.

From 1 January 2020, ships have been allowed to use only fuel oil with very low sulfur content, under rules brought in by the International Maritime Organization. This cut in sulfur content has been more than a decade in the planning, and almost all shipping around the world is expected to comply, or face penalties.

Oil drops on concerns that U.S.-China trade deal may not stoke demand

Oil prices slipped on Wednesday on concerns that the pending Phase 1 trade deal between the United States and China, the world's biggest oil users, may not boost demand as the U.S. intends to keep tariffs on Chinese goods until a second phase.

U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said late on Tuesday that tariffs on Chinese goods will remain in place until the completion of a second phase of a U.S.-China trade agreement, even as both sides are expected to sign an interim deal later on Wednesday.

Brent crude LCOc1 was down 16 cents, or 0.3%, at \$64.33 per barrel by 0745 GMT. U.S. West Texas Intermediate crude futures CLc1 were down 15 cents, or 0.3%, at \$58.08 a barrel.

A "pickup with global demand for crude may struggle as U.S.-Chinese tensions linger after some hardline stances from the Trump administration," said Edward Moya, analyst at brokerage OANDA.

"Financial markets are disappointed that the Trump administration ... signaled tariffs will remain in place until after the 2020 U.S. Presidential election, depending on whether China comes through on their promises with the phase-one agreement."

U.S. President Donald Trump is slated to sign the Phase 1 agreement with Chinese Vice Premier Liu He at the White House on Wednesday. That agreement is expected to include provisions for China to buy up to \$50 billion more in U.S. energy supplies.

U.S. crude inventories rose by 1.1



million barrels, data from the American Petroleum Institute showed, countering expectations for a draw.

U.S. oil production is expected to rise to a record of 13.30 million barrels per day in 2020, mainly driven by higher output in the Permian region of Texas and New Mexico, the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) said.

Key members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and its allies, a group known as OPEC+, have started discussions on possibly delaying until June a decision on extending an existing output cut, Russia's TASS news agency said on Wednesday, citing an unnamed source.

With the deal set to expire at the end of March, pushing back the meeting to June with no extension to the deal will be bearish for the oil market because of an expected second-quarter oil surplus, analysts from ING Economics said in a note.

But keeping the deal until a June meeting "would be seen as much more constructive for the market," they said.

(Source: reuters.com)

Industry giants join forces in ocean-based renewable energy coalition

An international Ocean Renewable Energy Action Coalition has been formed to advance sustainable deployment of ocean-based renewable energy and mitigate the harmful impacts of climate change.

The aim is to bring together civil society, intergovernmental institutions and industry, to represent the offshore wind sector in the global dialogue on climate action.

The group will prepare a vision for 2050, highlighting the actions that industry, financiers and governments can take to sustainably scale-up offshore wind, and thereby contribute to the UN Sustainable Development Goals and global decarbonization goals. Initial outputs will be announced at the UN Ocean Conference in Lisbon in June 2020.

The coalition will be spearheaded by Ørsted and Equinor and will also include; CWind, Global Marine Group, JERA, MHI Vestas, Mainstream Renewable Power, Shell, Siemens Gamesa, TenneT and The Crown Estate.

The Action Coalition was formed in response to the September 2019 Call for Ocean-Based Climate Action made by the High-Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy, with additional partners including Global Wind Energy Council and the UN Global Compact.

"If we're serious about fighting the climate crisis, it's vital we decarbonise the world's energy use as quickly as possible through technologies like offshore wind. The Ocean Renewable Energy Action Coalition will work together to accelerate the opportunity presented by ocean renewables to achieve the Paris Agreement goals," says



Benj Sykes, vice president at Ørsted.

Ocean-based renewable energy — such as offshore wind, floating solar, tidal and wave power — could meet nearly 10% of the annual greenhouse gas emissions reductions needed by 2050 to keep global temperatures under 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, according to a report released by the High-Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy. Most of this climate change mitigation potential is expected to come from offshore wind.

"Collaboration between nations and companies is needed to accelerate the sustainable deployment of ocean renewable energy. This Action Coalition includes leading industry players in offshore wind and we are working together to unleash the full potential of offshore wind globally," says Stephen Bull, senior vice president for wind and low carbon at Equinor.

Driven by a small number of countries initially, offshore wind is now on a spectacular cost reduction path. It is capable of producing clean energy at tremendous scale and will be a key technology to enable the energy transition and to support a sustainable future.

(Source: smart-energy.com)

A new 'Barents Stream' pipeline could fuel Europe with Arctic gas

By Thomas Nilsen

"New infrastructure could contribute to a stronger drive for further exploration in the Barents Sea South area," said Director General of the Norwegian Petroleum Directorate, Ingrid Solvberg, one of the collaboration partners to the study presented on Monday.

The main contributor to the study (pdf) is Gassco, the state owned operator of the pipelines further south on the Norwegian continental shelf.

The northernmost leg of the subsea network of pipelines from the gas fields in the North Sea and Norwegian Sea is currently the Polarled, bringing gas from the Aasta Hansteen field just north of the Arctic Circle.

Previously, extending the pipeline all the way up north to the Barents Sea has been believed to be too expensive. The new study, however, highlight new pipelines as a serious alternative for bringing the gas from the Barents Sea to the markets, mainly in Europe.

The other options are to increase the capacity at the Melkøya LNG plant and building a new LNG plant.

Building a pipeline and connecting it to the existing transport systems in the Norwegian Sea could be done either by developing a traditional processing plant in connection with the Melkøya LNG plant or develop a simpler processing plant.

Estimated length of a pipeline from Melkøya near Hammerfest on the Barents Sea coast to the current Åsgard Transport pipe is about 1,000 kilometers and to Polarled pipe some 830 kilometers.



The study has calculated the costs to be minimum 4.2 billion Norwegian kroner (€400 million) for the new pipeline, while the costs for a processing plant for the gas would range from 12 to 23 billion kroner (€1.2 to 2.3 billion).

Kjell Gjøver, General Manager of Petro Arctic, says in an e-mail to the Barents Observer that the conclusions in the report are good news, and a "proof that the gas resources in the north can contribute with huge outcome for the industry in northern Norway."

Petro Arctic is a network for businesses in Northern Norway's supply industry.

"We in Petro Arctic hope this report from Gassco can bring a continued positive petroleum development in the north," Gjøver states. He adds that this will be important for further exploration in the Barents Sea.

The need for transport solutions has matured since the previous study was done five years ago, mainly because many new fields are under development and investment decisions have been made for one field already.

This makes it clearer which gas transport needs the fields in the Barents Sea have, both in regards to oil and gas.

Norway's first large pipelines were laid early in the 1970s, and since then the Norwegian gas transport system has been developed to meet ever-expanding needs, today exceeding 8,800 kilometers.

From the three processing plants on the westcoast of Norway, the pipelines are heading to the Netherlands, United Kingdom, Germany, Belgium and France.

Norway provides about 28% of the natural gas to the EU countries, second largest after Russia.

(Source: thebarentsobserver.com)

Wind farms in Africa aim to power new era of clean reliable energy

Senegal is preparing to take a large step in the emerging market of African renewable energy with the construction of the 340 million euro Taliba N'diaye Wind Farm.

Almost all of the 46 wind turbines planned for the site have been completed, with the first trickle of totally renewable energy finally flowing into the capital city of Dakar.

The "first megawatts of energy are today entering Senegal's grid, giving the country its first taste of clean, renewable wind power," said Massaer Cisse, General Manager for Senegal at Lekela Power, the farm's manager.

"This is an exciting time and it brings us a step closer to our ultimate goal of providing power for millions of Senegalese".

Located 100 kilometers (60 miles) north of Dakar, the turbines and substations erected so far are already generating 50 megawatts of the proposed total of 158 to be added to the grid when Taliba N'Diaye is finished.

This will serve to increase the power supply of Senegal by 15% as well as save 300,000 tons of carbon from entering the atmosphere annually.

Africa Happenings reports that the lack of reliable access to electricity is a major contributor to unemployment and low manufacturing output, as power shortages often stall heavy machinery, making investments into capital goods such as electric forklifts or other construction equipment risky.

Portable backup generators

They estimate that 500 million Africans don't have reliable access to electricity. For instance, Nigeria, another West African country, could be losing as much as 5% GDP per year due to power shortages. People resort to portable backup generators, which often run on dirty diesel fuel, contributing mightily to falling air quality due to the fumes.

With recent successes in Senegal, Lekela Power has also recently secured financial investments worth \$325 million for its 250 megawatt West Bakr Wind project in Egypt. Expected to be fully operational by 2021, West Bakr will produce over 1,000 gigawatts per hour, per year, of clean energy for the Egyptian grid.

Egypt's 'Build, Own, Operate' plan is an ambitious project aimed at establishing an Egyptian-managed energy infrastructure that will be made up of 20% renewables by 2022.

The Suez Gulf is a high-traffic area for migrating birds, sometimes at risk from the windmill blades. Lekela and Egyptian Electricity Transmission Company have planned the West Bakr project to be more bird-friendly through the development of a "shut down on demand" program.

(Source: goodnewsnetwork.org)

In rural Bangladesh, solar power is changing lives

In Bangladesh, more than a quarter of the rural population still do not have access to electricity. For millions of people, daily activities like cooking, working and studying are difficult, or even impossible, after sundown.

Bangladesh has one of the world's largest domestic solar energy programs. The World Bank and other development organizations, along with the private sector, are working with the government to bring affordable, solar-powered electricity to places where the traditional grid doesn't reach.

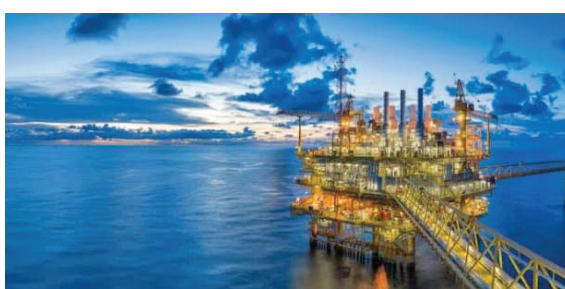
Small-scale solar home systems now provide electricity to more than 4 million households and about 20 million people in rural areas, roughly one-eighth of the country's population.

With people able to continue their lives after dark, Monpura is thriving. "Markets are abuzz, households can power TVs, fans and even refrigerators, and streets are lit up at night," according to a World Bank article.

Solar irrigation pumps enable farmers to improve crop yields. Shops and restaurants can stay open after dark. Families no longer have to rely on polluting firewood and kerosene. Girls can improve their literacy by studying at night. And not least, avoiding fossil fuels reduces greenhouse gas emissions.

A low-lying country, Bangladesh is already suffering the impacts of climate change, such as rising sea levels and flooding.

What's the World Economic Forum doing about the tran-



sition to clean energy?

Moving to clean energy

Moving to clean energy is key to combatting climate change, yet in the past five years, the energy transition has stagnated. Energy consumption and production contribute to two-thirds of global emissions, and 81% of the global energy system is still based on fossil fuels, the same percentage as 30 years ago.

Effective policies, private-sector action and public-private cooperation are needed to create a more inclusive, sustainable, affordable and secure global energy system.

Benchmarking progress is essential to a successful transition. The World Economic Forum's Energy Transition Index,

which ranks 115 economies on how well they balance energy security and access with environmental sustainability and affordability, shows that the biggest challenge facing energy transition is the lack of readiness among the world's largest emitters, including U.S., China, India and Russia. The 10 countries that score the highest in terms of readiness account for only 2.6% of global annual emissions.

To future-proof the global energy system, the Forum's Shaping the Future of Energy initiative is working with projects including the Partnering for Sustainable Energy Innovation, the Future of Electricity, the Global Battery Alliance and Scaling Renewable Energy to encourage and enable innovative energy investments, technologies and solutions.

The country wants to decarbonize and is opening major new solar parks in addition to expanding the use of solar home systems. Wind power plants are also in the works.

But renewables are part of a broader energy mix, which includes natural gas and coal. To meet its soaring energy needs, Bangladesh plans to expand its coal-fired capacity.

Last year, UN Secretary General António Guterres said countries in Asia are among the most vulnerable to global warming and the region must step up efforts to end dependence on fossil fuels.

(Source: europeansting.com)

TEHRAN TIMES

Iran's Leading International Daily

Advertising Dept



Tel: 021 - 430 51 450

times1979@gmail.com



tehrantimesdaily



tehrantimes79

ELAHIEH

500 sq.m, 5 bedrooms, penthouse, big terraces with amazing view of garden and city, housekeeping, fully furnished, pool, sauna, Jacuzzi, spa

Ehsan (0912 43 88 634)

ELAHIEH

260 sq.m, 3 bedrooms, master room, saloon, fully furnished, with brand new materials, lots of light, with full facilities, pool, gym, health road

Ehsan (0912 43 88 634)

ELAHIEH

360 sq.m, 3 master bedrooms (Royal Room), fully furnished, all materials are brand new, 5th floor with the amazing city view, full facilities, pool, gym, car wash, health road

Ehsan (0912 43 88 634)

Modern Stadium of
Martyrs of Khuzestan
Football Club (KSC)

PIC-COLLAGE



English page of Mehr News provides you
with great opportunity to advertise.

Get in touch

www.mehrnews.com

Cath up with the latest news in Iran and beyond with



Mehr News English



en.mehrnews.com



@Mehrnewscom

Imam Khomeini had a rather practical turn of mind: Falk

➔ It was in this context that I received as chair of the Committee an invitation from Mehdi Bazargan to visit Iran in a delegation of three persons for a period of two weeks. The stated purpose of the visit was to convey to several Americans a better understanding of the revolution underway. I felt that it was important to accept this invitation precisely for the reasons given in the letter of invitation. Our objective, then, was to achieve this better understanding of the revolution movement in Iran, and do our best after returning to share the experience and our impressions as widely as possible, and this is what we did.

In this spirit I did my best to find two persons who would benefit from such a visit, possessed an open mind toward the challenge being posed to imperial rule in Iran, and had some access to media and influential audiences back in the United States. My first two choices both agreed to become members of the delegation along with myself. Ramsey Clark was my first choice. He had been prominent in government, having been Attorney General, was part of a well-known political family, and had previously been considered a possible candidate for the American presidency. Besides being extremely intelligence, Ramsey had a high profile that generated great media interest and had a reputation for telling unpleasant and inconvenient truths.

My second choice was Philip Luce, a prominent religious activist who achieved world fame by his public acts of opposition to the Vietnam War. He was a person of the highest integrity, and fearless in searching for the truth in controversial political settings.

The three of us made the trip without deep prior personal associations, but we got along very well throughout our time together in Iran, and subsequently.

■ How different was what you witnessed from the US media narratives of the Iranian revolution's developments?

A: The differences were spectacular. The US media conveyed very little understanding of the character of the movement in Iran, and was perplexed by its strength and outlook. At the time, the Shah's government was a close ally of the United States in the midst of the Cold War, and Iran's strategic location with respect to the Soviet Union made it very important to Washington to keep the Shah's regime in control of the country. As well, the US Government, having played an important role by way of covert intervention in the 1953 coup that restored the Shah to the Peacock Throne, there was a particularly strong commitment made in Washington to doing whatever was necessary to defeat this nonviolent mass movement led by a then still rather obscure religious figure. It was deemed unthinkable within the United States government that such a seemingly primitive movement of the Iranian people could produce the collapse of the Iranian government that had mighty military and police capabilities at its disposal, possessed a political will to use lethal ammunition against unarmed demonstrators, and gained the geopolitical benefits of a 'special relationship' with the most powerful state in the world deeply invested in upholding its regional interests. In such a setting the media reflected the propaganda and ideological outlook of the government, and was not a source of independent and objective journalism.

It was in such an atmosphere that we hoped that we could bring some more informed and realistic commentary on the unfolding revolutionary process in Iran, including identifying its special character as neither left nor right, seemingly led by a religious leader who remained virtually unknown in the West. It was even unclear to us at the time of our visit whether Ayatollah Khomeini was the real leader or only a figurehead, a temporary phenomenon. We hoped to provide some insight into such questions, as well as to understand whether the new political realities in Iran would produce confrontation or normalization. Was the United States prepared, as it was not in 1953, to live with the politics of self-determination as it operated in Iran or would it seek once more to intervene on behalf of its geopolitical agenda?

Indeed, we did have some effect on the quality of Western media coverage of the developments in Iran. Ramsey Clark and myself were invited to do many interviews and asked for to describe our impressions by mainstream TV channels and print outlets. As a result, at least until the hostage crisis, discussion of Iran Politics became more informed and some useful political debate emerged, at least for a while.

■ You met the then Prime Minister of Iran Shapour Bakhtiar on the same day when Mohammad Reza Pahlavi left Iran. What was Bakhtiar's assessment of the developments including Shah's departure?

A: We had the impression from our meeting that the Prime Minister was uncertain about



the situation and his own personal fate. Of course, we met with Mr. Bakhtiar at a tense time, only a very few hours after the Shah was reported as having left the country. Bakhtiar had a reputation, of being hostile to intrusions of religion in the domain of politics, and had a personal identity strongly influenced by French culture along with its very dogmatic version of secularism. When we met, the city of Tehran was in a kind of frenzied mood, with cars blowing their horns in celebration, and posters of Khomeini appearing everywhere. We had trouble maneuvering through the traffic so as to keep our appointment.

We found Mr. Bakhtiar cautious and non-committal, and possibly intimidated, not by us, of course, but by the dozen or so others in the room who were never introduced, and wore the clothes associated with security personnel. We assumed that at least some of these anonymous individuals were from the SAVAK, and maybe explained partly why Bakhtiar seemed so uncomfortable. When we asked his help in arranging a visit to prisoners confined in Evin Prison, he seemed unable to answer until he received guidance from one of these advisers present in the room. After a short, whispered instruction, the Prime Minister told us that a visit could be arranged on the following day to the political prisoners, but that we would not be allowed to enter the part of the prison reserved for common criminals. After being at the prison, we felt that the political prisoners were treated well, seen as possibly of a future ruling elite, while the ordinary criminals held no interest for past or present, and lived in crowded cells often with no windows.

Overall, we were left with not much clarity about how Bakhtiar viewed the future of his caretaker government. We had no real opinion on whether what he was saying to us with the others in the room was what they wanted him to say, or expressed his real views, or maybe reflected some sort of compromise. Would he be soon replaced, and his own role challenged as unlawful, or even criminal? We had the impression of a frightened bureaucrat lacking in leadership potential. Maybe our impressions were distorted by the reality that our visit took place at such a tense and difficult moment, which turned out to be transformative for the country and its people. As a result these impressions of a sad and entrapped individual may leave too negative a picture.

■ What was the Central Intelligence Agency's assessment of the Iranian revolution's developments? Did CIA have a lucid exact assessment of the revolutionary forces and Iran's future political system?

A: We had no contact with the CIA, but did meet with the American ambassador to Iran at the time, William Sullivan, who had a counterinsurgency background with a militarist reputation. He gave us a briefing that was much more illuminating as to Iranian developments than was our meeting with the Prime Minister. Sullivan acknowledged that the U.S. was caught off guard by both the character and the strength of the movement, and was struggling to keep up with events. He told us that the Embassy had previously constructed no less than 26 scenarios of political developments that might threaten the Shah's leadership, but not one was concerned about a threat to the established order mounted by

Islamically oriented opposition. The American preoccupation, reflecting Cold War priorities, limited its concerns to containing the Marxist and Soviet-oriented left, and the belief that to the extent there was a political side to Islam it was aligned with the West in its anti-Communist agenda as evident in the setting of the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan.

Somewhat to our surprise, Sullivan spoke of his acute frustrations in dealing with the Carter presidency, especially with the National Security Advisor, Zbigniew Brzezinski, who he claimed to be unwilling to accept the finality of the Shah's loss of power or of the outcome of the revolutionary movement. Sullivan advocated coming to terms with the emerging new realities as representing America's national interests, but he spoke very clearly of the resistance to this view at the White House. Sullivan partly attributed this stubbornness to the influence of the Iranian ambassador on. Brzezinski, a view later supported by State Department officials.

■ What were the issues discussed at a meeting you had in Neauphle-le Chateau with the late Islamic Republic's founder Ayatollah Khomeini and how would you describe his personality?

A: We met for a long time, maybe three hours, and covered many issues. During the conversation, after some rather long introductions on our sides about our experience in Iran, we listened and responded to concerns expressed by Ayatollah Khomeini. After that we posed a series of questions. I will mention here a few topics discussed that have a lasting interest.

Ayatollah Khomeini's first and understandable concern was whether the US Government would try to repeat the intervention of 1953 or live with the outcome of the revolution. Of course, we were not in a position to give a clear answer. We did think there was less disposition by the US to intervene than 25 years earlier, but we knew of the strategic importance attached to keeping Iran allied to the US in Cold War contexts and of the personal as well as ideological closeness between Carter and the Shah, especially after the Carter family spent New Year's Eve in Tehran as the Shah's guest in 1978, and Carter made his famous toast about the Shah being surrounded by the love of his people.

Ayatollah Khomeini was also concerned about whether the military contracts with the United States would be fulfilled now that there would be a change of government in Iran. This line of questioning gave us a sense that Ayatollah Khomeini had a rather practical turn of mind.

At the same time, he volunteered the view that he hoped that soon he would be able to resume his religious life, and explained taking up residence in Qom rather than Tehran seemed consistent with such an intention. Ayatollah Khomeini told us that he has reluctantly entered politics because in his words 'there was a river of blood between the Shah and the people.'

When we asked for his hopes for the revolutionary government, this religious leader made clear that he viewed the revolution as an Islamic rather than an Iranian occurrence. He stressed this issue, but without any sectarian overtones. He did go on to say that he felt that the basic community for all people in the

Islamic world was civilizational and religious, and not national and territorial. Ayatollah Khomeini explained in ways I subsequently heard from others, that territorial sovereign states built around national identity did not form a natural community in the Middle East the way it did in Europe.

Ayatollah Khomeini also made clear to us that he viewed the Saudi monarchy was as decadent and cruel as was the Shah, and deserved to face the same fate. He felt that dynastic rule had no legitimate role in Islamic societies.

We also asked about the fate of Jews and Bahais in the emergent Islamic Republic of Iran, aware of their close working relationships with the Shah's governing structure. We found the response significant. He expressed the opinion that Judaism was 'a genuine religion' and if Jews do not get too involved in support for Israel, they would be fine in Iran. His words on this, as I recall them, were 'it would be a tragedy for us if they left.' He viewed Bahais differently because of their worship of a prophet after Mohammad, leading him to adopt the view that Bahais were members of 'a sect' and did not belong to 'a true religion,' and thus its adherents would not be welcome in the new Iran. Afterwards, I learned that Ayatollah Khomeini intervened to oppose and prevent genocidal moves being advocated in relation to the Bahai minority living in Iran, but I have no confirmation of this.

■ What was the last US Ambassador to Iran William Sullivan's mission? He is known to be an anti-riot man. Did he give any intellectual help to Iran military or SAVAK (the secret police, domestic security and intelligence service in Iran during the reign of the Pahlavi)?

A: Of course, Sullivan never would tell us about his covert activities. He had the reputation of being 'a counterinsurgency diplomat' as he had served in Laos as an ambassador during the Vietnam War. It was at a time that the embassy was being used to take part in a Laotian internal war that included directing US bombing strikes against rebel forces.

With this knowledge, I was invited to testify in the U.S. Senate to oppose his confirmation. Unfortunately, my testimony did not prevent him from being confirmed as ambassador to Iran, although several senators at the time indicated to me privately their agreement with my testimony, but were unwilling to reject President Carter's choice so early in his presidency. When in Iran I urged the meeting, and Ramsey Clark was skeptical at first, saying that he had had an unpleasant encounter with Sullivan some years earlier. I convinced Ramsey that the credibility of our trip would be compromised if we made no effort to get the viewpoint of the American Embassy. We did make an appointment, Sullivan's first words as we entered were "I know Professor Falk thinks I am a war criminal.." Yet he welcomed us, and talked openly and at length about the situation and his efforts to get Washington to accept what had happened in Iran. In retrospect, I think he hoped we would be a vehicle for making his views more publicly known.

He made the point that there were no social forces ready to fight to keep the Shah in power. The business community, or national private sector, was alienated by the Shah's reliance on international capital to fulfill his development plans. The armed forces were also not

favorable enough to the throne to fight on its behalf, complaining that the Shah's abiding fear of a coup mounted against him, created distrust of his own military commanders, and led him to frequently shuffle the leadership in the armed forces. This resulted in a low level of loyalty, and helps explain why the military watched the political transformation take place without showing any pronounced willingness to intervene, despite being nudged in an interventionary, especially in the context of a visit by an American NATO general at the height of the revolutionary ferment. The general was widely reported to be exploring whether it was plausible to encourage the Iranian military to defend the established order.

We also asked about what would happen to the surviving leaders from the Shah's government who had been accused of crimes against the Iranian people. Ayatollah Khomeini responded by saying that he expected that what he called 'Nuremberg Trials' would be held to hold accountable leading figures from the fallen government, and some from bureaucratic backgrounds, including SAVAK officials. We wondered why this plan was not later followed, and why those from the Shah's regime accused were often executed after summary, secret trials. We knew some of those who had led the revolution had received support from the CIA during their period as students overseas or even when serving as mosque officials, which would be damaging and confusing to make public at a time of such uncertainty. It is important to remember that until the Islamic Revolution in Iran, Western intelligence assumed that the anti-Marxist approach of those of devout Islamic faith would make all religiously oriented personalities strong allies of Western anti-Communism, a view that persisted to some extent until after the Afghanistan resistance to Soviet intervention which was headed by Islamic forces, and was only decisively shattered by the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon in the United States.

■ Why did the liberal-Islamist groups fail to secure the support of Ayatollah Khomeini at the end of the day?

A: It is difficult for an outsider like myself to comment on the internal politics in that revolutionary period. The situation in Iran was still fluid, and worries about a counterrevolutionary coup to bring the Shah back to his throne a second time were widespread. Added to this, the change in Iran came so quickly. Several secular personalities of liberal persuasion told us that 'the revolution happened too quickly. We were not ready.'

Ayatollah Khomeini while still in Paris, seemed originally to believe that liberal Islamically oriented bureaucrats would be needed to run the government on a day to day basis. He may have envisioned a governing process relying on technical experts, especially to achieve good economic policies and results that he thought necessary to keep the support of the Iranian masses. Such expectations seem to be not entirely consistent with the vision of Islamic Government set forth in his published lectures, available to us in English, that were written while he was living as an exile in Iraq. His insistent theme in the lecture was that a government consistent with Islamic values could not be reliably established on democratic principles without being subject to unelected religious guidance as the source of highest authority.

We also were aware of several other explanations for this about face on the governing process. Some in Iran believed that Ayatollah Khomeini only discovered his political popularity after he returned to the country, and this made him believe he had a mandate to impose a system of government that reflected his ideas. Others offered the opinion that he became convinced by his entourage of advisors that the revolutionary spirit and agenda was being lost by the liberals, and hence were urging him to take direct and visible charge of the government. And finally, there arose the view that the liberals were given a chance, and their performance disappointed Ayatollah Khomeini, leading him to reenter politics and move to Tehran to lead the country. As far as I know, this story of transition from the Pahlavi Era to the Islamic Republic remains veiled in mystery. Hopefully, before long the mystery will disappear with the appearance of more authoritative accounts of what transpired after the Ayatollah Khomeini returned to the country.

What we do know is that what was established in this transition period has survived for more than 40 years despite being faced with threats, provocations, harsh sanctions, and even a variety of covert interventions. Arguably, Iran has been as stable as any country in the region, and more stable than most. This is impressive, although it does not overcome some criticisms directed at violations of basic human rights of people in Iran.

Majlis approves handicrafts are VAT-exempt

HERITAGE **TEHRAN** — The Iranian parliament (Majlis) on Tuesday approved a bill to exempt craftspeople and handicraft producers from paying value-added tax (VAT). Domestic production of handicrafts is subject to article 1 of the law on the protection of artisans and craftspeople, CHTN reported.



However, the law is needed to be endorsed by the Guardian Council to take effect.

Handicraft exports from Iran reached \$146 million since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (started March 21, 2019), deputy tourism minister Pouya Mahmoudian said on December 31, 2019.

“Iraq and Persian Gulf littoral countries are among the main target markets for Iranian handicrafts,” she added.

Handicrafts exports of the country reached \$289 million in the past Iranian calendar year, showing three percent growth year on year, according to data announced by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts.

The exports included traditional ceramics, pottery vessels, handwoven textiles, glasswork, woodwork, metalwork, embroideries, personal ornamentations, as well as precious and semi-precious gemstones.

Dozens of Iranian handicrafts have gained the UNESCO Seal of Excellence during the past couple of years. Some 75 percent of Iranian handicrafts are produced by females, Masoumeh Ebtekar, vice president for women’s and family affairs, said in April 2018.

Wego registers record increase of 155% in MENA travel to Azerbaijan

Wego, the online travel marketplace in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), revealed that the bookings to Azerbaijan have increased by 155% in the last four months. This growth follows the recent partnership with Azerbaijan Tourism Board (ATB) to drive more GCC tourists to ‘take another look’ at the country’s tourism.

ATB has received around 2,921 million visitors from around 192 countries, showing an increase of 11.1% in the number of tourists during the period of January–November when compared to the same period in 2018. In terms of travel trends among the GCC residents, Wego reveals that 74% of the search volume was made for short-duration stays up to three days. Solos and couples are dominating the bookings to Baku with 63% followed by families with 37%.

Florian Sengstschmid, CEO of ATB said: “We witnessed an increasing number of bookings to Azerbaijan from MENA region as a result of this collaboration that aimed at raising awareness about what Azerbaijan has to offer all types of travellers from the GCC countries.”

With halal-friendly restaurants, delicious cuisine and warm hospitality, the number of tourists visiting this Caucasian country is expected to reach three million by the end of 2019. Mamoun Hmedan, managing director of MENA and India in Wego said: “We have recorded an increase of 55% in the search volumes to Azerbaijan.” (Source: Travel Daily Media)



ROUND THE GLOBE

Ujung Kulon National Park

Ujung Kulon National Park, located in Banten province on the extreme south-west tip of the highly populated island of Java, Indonesia, has the best and most extensive lowland forest remaining on the island.

The property, including the Ujung Kulon peninsula and several offshore islands retains its natural beauty and possesses a very diverse flora and fauna, demonstrating on-going evolution of geological processes since the Krakatau eruption in 1883.



The Krakatau volcano as part of the formation of the property, is the most well-known and studied of all modern volcanic eruptions, due primarily to the devastating effects (36,000 people killed) registered throughout the northern hemisphere.

The property is globally significant as the last and most important natural habitat of the critically endangered, endemic, single-horned Javan Rhinoceros (*Rhinoceros sondaicus*) along with several other species of endangered plants and animals.

Ujung Kulon is believed to sustain the last viable natural population of this species, estimated at approximately 60 individuals. It is not known how this compares to historical densities, but is a critically low figure from the point of view of species survival and viable genetic diversity.

Other notable mammals in the property include carnivores, such as leopard, wild dog (dhole), leopard cat, fishing cat, Javan mongoose and several species of civets. It is also home to three endemic primate species; the Javan gibbon, Javan leaf monkey and silvered leaf monkey.

Over 270 species of birds have been recorded and terrestrial reptiles and amphibians include two species of python, two crocodile species and numerous frogs and toads.

(Source: UNESCO)

Iran Air to resume flights to Rome on Feb. 3

TOURISM **TEHRAN** — Iran’s flag carrier Iran Air will resume direct flights to the Italian capital Rome on February 3.

The airliner will operate Tehran-Rome flights on Mondays and Thursdays from Imam Khomeini International Airport, IRNA reported on Tuesday.

Currently, Iran Air operates flights to Milan every Tuesday and Friday.

The idea of establishing the service was put forward last November, several days after Iranian aviation authorities confirmed that the Italian government had banned Mahan Air, Iran’s second largest airline, from the country’s airspace under pressure from the United States.

The ban came nearly two months after U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo paid a visit to Rome, urging the Italian government to comply with Washington’s sanctions on Iran and to stop accommodating Mahan flights.

The U.S. government has imposed sanctions on Mahan Air, accusing it of providing services to the IRGC, Iran’s elite military force which has also been blacklisted by Washington. Germany and France have both already banned flights by the airline. However, no similar decision has so far been made against Iran Air.

Last month, Italian ambassador to Iran Giuseppe Perrone said that the two countries are in talks to deepen bilateral cooperation, particularly in the field of cultural heritage, making the remarks on the sidelines of a



ceremony to launch a joint project for developing cultural heritage and tourism.

He described Iran “as a country that is

very rich in terms of cultural sites and archaeological sites... so there is a lot for people to discover,” adding “Iran is a country that

has a great and [un-]tapped potential and when it comes to tourism, cultural heritage, it has a lot to offer.”

Overnight stays in Ardebil province jump 40% yr/yr

TOURISM **TEHRAN** — Overnight stays in Ardebil province rose 40 percent during the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (started March 21, 2019) compared with the same period last year.

Some 4.2 million overnight stays were registered during the nine-month period, showing 40 percent rise year on year, provincial tourism chief Nader Fallahi said, CHTN reported.

Visits by foreign and domestic travelers rose 96.3 percent and 38.8 percent respectively, the official noted.

During the mentioned period, some 350,000 people visited Meshginshahr suspension bridge, which is the largest of its kind in the Middle East, Fallahi said, noting that the figure indicates 20 percent hike year on year.



Ardebil province is home to over 3,000 historical and natural attractions, including 14 summits of 3,000 meters or more, five forests, and over 40 wetlands.

In December 2019, Fallahi announced that seventeen tourism projects, worth 1,500 billion rials (some \$35 million at the official rate of 42,000 rials) would be inaugurated in the province in the near future.

Restored historical monuments, newly-built hotels, water treatment complexes, and tourism infrastructure facilities are amongst the projects which are scheduled to come on stream, he explained.

Sprawling on a high, windswept plateau, Ardebil is well-known for having lush natural beauties, hospitable people and its silk and carpet trade tradition. It is also home to the UNESCO-registered Sheikh Safi al-Din Khanegah and Shrine Ensemble.

Qeshm Island: A warm destination to escape the cold in winter



TOURISM **TEHRAN** — Iran’s southernmost Qeshm Island is a top destination for whom dreaming of having a wintertime holiday under the sun

in flip-flops and a swimsuit!

Less than two hours away from the capital Tehran by plane, you will enjoy the heat of the Persian Gulf when northern parts of the country are almost freezing. Sun and beach are ubiquitous in southern Iranian islands throughout the year.

Each of the islands has its own charms, colorful houses and truly virgin beaches. There are also highly recommended places for surfing, paragliding and to look for dolphins, go hiking, go fishing or even go shopping at giant malls.

Qeshm Island is a heaven for eco-tourists as it embraces wide-ranging attractions such as the Hara marine forests and about 60 villages dotted mostly across its rocky coastlines. Meanwhile, it is home to birds, reptiles, dolphins and turtles to name a few.

The island also features geologically eye-catching canyons, hills, caves and valleys, most of which are protected as part of the UNESCO-tagged Qeshm Island Geopark, itself a heaven for nature-lovers.

Many travelers to Qeshm believe that the Stars Valley or Valley of Stars is a “MUST SEE”. It is home to bizarre-shaped gorges, tall pillars, canyon-like paths, hollowed-out spaces as well as the smooth and round stones, which have been formed by the wind and rain



eroding the soil, rocks and stones. Locals believe that a star once fell on this area thereby creating the rocky shapes that make it seem as if from another planet.

On the trail of purple: Tracking ancient trade routes through purple dye

As part of a DFG-funded project, a German-Tunisian team co-directed by LMU archaeologist Stefan Ritter have surveyed the ancient city of Meninx on the island of Jerba and reconstructed its trading links in antiquity.

The port of Meninx was unusually situated and well protected. Incoming ships first had to negotiate a deep and broad submarine channel in the otherwise shallow bay, before approaching the city itself via another channel that ran parallel to the coast for much of its length. They then had to traverse a wide stretch of shallow water to reach the city’s wooden and stone quays, which extended seawards from the strand. From these piers, stevedores could readily unload cargoes and transport them to the nearby warehouses. We know all of this thanks to the work of LMU archaeologist Stefan Ritter and his team, which has allowed them to reconstruct the port facilities of Meninx on the island of Jerba off the coast of North Africa. The city was an important trading center in the time of the Roman Empire,

and had commercial links with many other regions throughout the Mediterranean.

In the course of a DFG-funded project that lasted up until the end of 2019, Ritter, together with his colleague Sami Ben Tahar (Institut National du Patrimoine, Tunis) and a joint German-Tunisian team, has surveyed and explored the remains of Meninx and its port facilities. With the aid of magnetometer surveys, the researchers were able to map the highly unusual layout of the city, whose main streets ran parallel to the coastline. In addition, on the basis of their mapping data, they carried out exploratory excavations on selected temples and shrines, as well as commercial and residential buildings. “We even discovered a well preserved private bathhouse, which dates from the Roman imperial period and included mosaic floors, splendid wall paintings and a range of statuary,” Ritter explains.

Based on their findings, Ritter and his collaborators believe that the city’s prosperity rested in large part on a single commodity—the purple dye, which was obtained from the



sea snail *Murex trunculus*. “We have good reasons to believe that the purple dye from Meninx was not exported as such, but was used locally to dye textiles, which were then sold further afield,” says Ritter. The material, which was highly valued, was apparently exported all around the Mediterranean littoral and beyond. In exchange, the inhabitants of Meninx imported foodstuffs, wine, fine domestic pottery and marble sourced from Italy, Spain, Greece, Asia Minor and Egypt.

The settlement was founded in the 4th

century BCE, when the Carthaginians were still the dominant force in the area. It reached its zenith during the period between the 1st and 3rd centuries AD, when Imperial Rome was at the height of its power and Meninx possessed its own theater and was adorned with other imposing urban structures. Owing to its location on the shores of a shallow bay, it was relatively well protected from attack. However, the harbor itself was accessible only via submarine channels that could be navigated only with the help of local pilots, says Ritter. The underwater investigations, which were carried out by the Bavarian Society for Underwater Archaeology, not only uncovered traces of the original harbor facilities and the tricky passage to the docks, they also brought to light a number of wrecks and the remains of piers. Together with their Tunisian colleagues, the LMU archaeologists now plan to extend their investigations on Jerba as part of a more comprehensive comparative study of the region’s ancient heritage.

(Source: phys.org)

Heavy rainfalls fill Jazmourian wetland by 80%

ENVIRONMENT **TEHRAN** – Recent heavy rainfalls have led Jazmourian wetland to be filled by 80 percent, Marjan Shakeri, head of Kerman province's department of environment has said.

Overflow of Jazmourian wetland has made the locals happy, she added, YJC reported on Tuesday.

Shakeri pointed out that Jazmourian has become one of the dust hotspots in the southern part of the country due to droughts, adding, while recent rains resulted in environmental and economic prosperity of the region.

The excessive withdrawal of groundwater resources and permanent drought over the past years along with low precipitation and high temperature rates, have led the wetland to dry up, he said, adding that the wetland has become a hotspot for sand and dust storms.

Nestled between the provinces of Kerman and Sistan-Baluchestan, Jazmourian is one of the two major wetlands in southeast Iran, which is on the knife-edge of complete desiccation as a result of climate change, excessive dam construction and the depletion of groundwater resources.

The area of Hamoon and Jazmourian basin stretches to 69,600 square kilometers, with the western part of 35,600 square kilometers in Kerman province and the eastern part of 34,000 square kilometers in Sistan-Baluchestan province.



1,000 ancient woodlands at risk of destruction by projects like HS2, conservationists warn

More than 1,000 ancient woodlands are at risk of damage or destruction from development, the Woodland Trust has warned.

Figures from the charity show it is aware of 1,064 ancient woods at risk from housing, infrastructure and other developments.

It is the highest number of woods at risk since the Trust started compiling data in 1999, and the first time it has topped the 1,000 mark.

Of the cases the Trust has identified, 801 are live planning applications, while the remaining 263 are included in council site allocation plans for areas outlined for future development such as housing or business.

The Woodland Trust says the rise in threatened woods is down to a growing number of road and rail infrastructure projects such as HS2, as well as a lack of awareness over changes to planning rules that strengthen protection for ancient woodlands and trees against inappropriate development.

It also warns that ancient woods – those where woodland has been in existence since at least 1600 in England and Wales and 1750 in Scotland – face other threats alongside development.

These include a growth in threats from tree disease from imported plants and wood, and nitrogen pollution from nearby poultry farms.

Director of conservation and external affairs Abi Bunker said that while political parties had made “welcome” promises on tree planting in the face of the nature and climate emergencies, the first step was to protect the woods the UK already has.



She said: “These new figures make for depressing reading. What’s even more depressing is these are only the cases we know about. There could be many more woods under threat.”

Ms Bunker called for “real protection” for irreplaceable ancient wooded habitats and trees, and legislation, policies and resources to address the challenges of tree diseases.

“Ancient woodland is one of our most precious natural habitats; these complex ecosystems have evolved over centuries and are home to thousands of species, many of which rely on it for their survival,” she said.

“Losing ancient woodlands is a travesty, especially to inappropriate developments that could go elsewhere.”

The Trust said current ancient woods at risk include:

* Nun Bank Wood, West Yorkshire, the supposed resting

place of Robin Hood, which will be affected if a relief road around Kirklees goes ahead

* Smithy Wood, next to the M1 at junction 35 near Sheffield that could be lost to a new motorway services

* Mileplain Plantation, Attlebridge, Norfolk, which will suffer direct loss if the county council approves plans for a sand and gravel quarry

* Coed Wern in Glasinfryn, Bangor, will suffer direct losses if plans for 39 holiday lodges are approved

The Trust said 800 ancient woods have suffered loss or damage from development since 1999, including felling of smaller parts of the woodland, or close encroachment of development which has put it at risk of pollution, disturbance or invasive species.

But 1,101 ancient woodlands have been recorded as being saved since that time.

A Local Government Association spokesman said: “Councils are determined to protect and enhance natural environments, such as ancient woodland and trees, and many have a long-term vision for increasing and diversifying local tree species, including working with volunteer groups to promote trees and woodland.

“When making decisions on new developments, they will always seek to strike a balance between protecting the environment and not restricting development in cases where it would have significant public benefits.”

(Source: The Independent)

Conservationists call for enforceable deer cull in Scotland

A coalition of Scottish conservation groups has called for legally enforceable culls of deer to be imposed on private landowners and stalking estates, while raising the prospect of local communities becoming more involved in shooting and killing deer for food.

The report, published by Scottish Environment Link (SEL), which includes the John Muir Trust, the National Trust for Scotland, RSPB Scotland and the Scottish Wildlife Trust, argues that a dramatic reduction in the country's wild deer population is needed to tackle accelerating climate and biodiversity crises.

The report says deer can cause significant damage to emerging woodlands through grazing,

and that they trample fragile peatlands, which are key to carbon absorption.

Scotland's deer population produces 5,500 tonnes of methane each year, the equivalent of 137,500 tonnes of CO2. The report also argues that more active culling could reduce accidents on rural roads.

With no existing natural predators, the red deer population reached a peak of 400,000 in 2010. Deer management groups, often on sporting estates, kill certain numbers, but SEL wants the Scottish government to set and enforce higher targets.

Higher cull targets could involve other people in the deer management, they say. Noting that

“for centuries, red deer stalking in Scotland has relied on paying clients and guests of private landowners, supplemented by professional stalkers”, the report suggests that in other parts of Europe communities are more involved in deer control.

“In Norway, for example, over half a million people – almost 10% of the population – are registered hunters. Hunting on state land is considered a communal source of sustainable food, and local people have priority use. Game meat is an important part of Norwegian food culture, rather than a byproduct of trophy hunting, as is often the case here.”

SEL argues that a similar culture could be encouraged in Scotland, moving away from the

kind of management that focuses on “wealthy clients seeking a pair of antlers”, which necessitates a much higher deer population and resultant environmental damage.

The report was published before the release of findings by the independent deer working group, set up by the Scottish government in 2017 to consider changes for management of the species.

Mike Daniels, head of land management at the John Muir Trust, said: “We believe there is a growing appetite for change in how Scotland's uplands are managed into the 2020s and beyond, and delivering sustainable deer management is a critical component.”

(Source: The Guardian)

5,555 unintentional crime prisoners released in 10 months

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** – Since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2019), benefactors have freed 5,555 prisoners who had committed unintentional crimes, head of Blood Money Organization has said.

The highest number of prisoners were released in provinces of Isfahan, Tehran, Gilan and East Azarbaijan, IRNA quoted Asadollah Joolaei as saying on Tuesday.

He went on to note that of all 5,555 inmates of involuntary crimes who are released, 230 of whom are women and mostly breadwinners of their families.

The largest proportion of prisoners were debtors owing to the issuance of checks or bail bonds, which accounted for 60 percent of the total population, he stated.

Currently, 14,664 unintentional crime prisoners are behind bars in the country, 7,000 of whom are subject to Blood Money Organization's support, Joolaei concluded.

Last year, charity fundraising events helped free more than 10 thousand prisoners and contributions totaled nearly 5.7 trillion rials (nearly \$135 million).

Iranian parliament, Majlis, has approved 2 trillion rials (nearly \$47 million) to be earmarked for releasing prisoners of unintentional crimes with the priority given to female prisoners.

Within the framework of the budget bill for the current year, the money which has seen 100 percent increase year-on-year, will be allocated to freeing prisoners mostly jailed for unintentional financial crimes.

\$25m allocated to meet urgent needs in flood-hit areas

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** – A budget of one trillion rials (nearly \$25 million at the official rate of 42,000 rials) was allocated to meet urgent needs in flood-hit provinces of the country, Mohammad Baqer Nobakht, head of Planning and Budget Organization, wrote on his Twitter account.

Unprecedented heavy rainfall which began on January 10 has led to flash flooding in the southern provinces of Sistan-Baluchestan, Kerman, and Hormozgan, IRNA reported.

Preliminary estimates indicate the incident has caused damage of up to 30 trillion rials (nearly \$715 million) to different sectors of Sistan-Baluchestan province.

According to the latest assessments, 500 villages and 14 cities are grappling with flooding and some 20,000 residential units have been destructed partially or completely.

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

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

Animal carcasses ‘every 10 metres’ in areas of Australia, says charity

Parts of Australia are littered with animal carcasses as wildfires continue to devastate the country, an animal charity has said.

“I can barely describe it,” says Evan Quartermain from Humane Society International. “In some places you can’t walk 10 metres without coming across another carcass.”

The charity has rescued animals on Kangaroo Island suffering from burns, smoke inhalation and mental trauma, as well as building food and water stations for unharmed animals.

The island – famous for its natural wildlife – is “utterly scorched with charred animal bodies everywhere”, according to the Humane Society International CEO.

“At one area, which was badly burned a week ago, the scenes were nothing short of apocalyptic,” Erica Martin said.

“There we only found one living koala amongst thousands of bodies of koalas, kangaroos, wallabies and birds.”

Conservationists have warned Australia's worst ever wildfire season – which is expected to continue for several months – has already devastated the country's wildlife.

(Source: The Independent)

WORDS IN THE NEWS

Microsoft into India

(November 11, 2002)

The American computer firm Microsoft has announced that it will invest four hundred million dollars in India over the next three years. The Chairman, Bill Gates, said the investments will include information technology education and the development of software for the local market in India. This report from Adam Mynott.

Twenty-four hours after announcing that his charitable foundation was donating a hundred million dollars to help fight AIDS in India, the richest man in the world has said his company, Microsoft, will be investing four hundred million dollars in information technology and education projects.

Bill Gates said that the money would be spent over the next three years. Part of the **investment** will be in **IT** education in schools, **affecting** three and a half million students and eighty thousand teachers. He made the announcement after meeting India's Information Technology Minister, Pramod Mahajan, on the second day of a four-day visit to India. There will also be three hundred more jobs created at Microsoft's computer **software** development center in the southern Indian city of Hyderabad. Bill Gates said this was the largest investment Microsoft had made outside the United States. India is **of strategic importance**, he said, as its developer and **skill base** continues to grow. He also **rejected** suggestions that the **worldwide growth** in the software industry would slow down.

Words

investment: money given as a donation

IT: means information technology or the theory and practice of using computers

affecting: touching the lives of, having an influence upon

software: computer programs

of strategic importance: very important, something that is strategic gives you an advantage

skill base: knowledge and ability in a particular area

rejected: did not accept, disagreed with

worldwide growth: economic improvement across the world

(Source: BBC)

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → ع

‘Playing to learn’ scheme piloted in elementary schools

A plan dubbed “playing to learn” aiming at using educational games toward deeper learning was implemented for first time in elementary schools across the capital, with the Education Minister in attendance, Fars reported on Saturday.

Through the first phase of the scheme, 1,000 schools from 10 provinces nationwide will implement the playing to learn scheme, including Tehran, Khorasan Razavi, Fars, Hamedan, Mazandaran, Kordestan, Kerman, West Azarbaijan, Qazvin, and Sistan-Baluchestan.

According to the report, schools regarding their proper environment and conditions volunteered and chose to hold game-based classes and assess the results, currently in each province 50 girls' schools and 50 boys' schools among state-run and private schools have piloted the scheme; 20 percent of which are private schools.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“hepato-, hepat-”

■ **Meaning:** liver

■ **For example:** There is no specific treatment for this disease and complete recovery from any form of **hepatitis** may take four months or longer.

HANG OVER

Hang over something/somebody

■ **Meaning:** if something bad is hanging over you, you are worried or anxious about it

■ **For example:** It's not very nice to have huge debts hanging over your head.

IDIOM

Have a brush with something

■ **Explanation:** when you have a brush with something, such as the law, you encounter or experience it briefly

■ **For example:** He had a brush with the law for speeding a few years ago, but he has had a clean record ever since.

Russian government resigns

The Russian government has resigned, Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev announced.

President Vladimir Putin thanked Dmitry Medvedev's government for its work. "For my part, I also want to thank you for everything that was done at this stage of our joint work, I want to express satisfaction with the results that have been achieved," the president told a meeting with the cabinet of ministers.

"Not everything was done, but everything never works out in full," Putin said.

The Russian leader noted that soon he planned to meet with all ministers of Medvedev's government. "I will meet with each of you," Putin assured.

The prime minister believes that it is right that the current government should step down in the wake of the presidential proposals to amend the constitution.

Meanwhile, Putin has instructed Dmitry Medvedev's outgoing government to perform its duties until a new Cabinet is formed.

"I ask you to fully perform your duties until the new government is formed," Putin said at a meeting with the Cabinet.

Putin born 14 September 1965, is a Russian politician who has served as prime minister of Russia between 2012 and 2020. From 2008 to 2012, Medvedev served as president of Russia.

Regarded as more liberal than his predecessor and later successor as president, Vladimir Putin (who was also prime minister during Medvedev's presidency), Medvedev's top agenda as president was a wide-ranging modernization programme, aiming at modernizing Russia's economy and society, and lessening the country's reliance on oil and gas. During Medvedev's tenure, the New START nuclear arms reduction treaty was signed by Russia and the United States, Russia emerged victorious in the Russo-Georgian War, and recovered from the Great Recession. Medvedev initiated a substantial law enforcement reform and launched an anti-corruption campaign, despite having been accused of corruption himself.

(Source: TASS)

Chins raps U.S.-based rights report, says HRW instigating riots

China has denounced U.S.-based reports accusing Beijing of posing a "global threat to human rights," saying they have provided a distorted view of the truth from the country.

Human Rights Watch on Tuesday accused China of "mass detention" of the Uighur community at home and of trying to influence and censor others abroad.



U.S. democracy watchdog group Freedom House released a similar report, accusing China of interfering in media overseas.

"Their China-related remarks and China-related reports have always ignored facts and confused right and wrong. There is no objectivity at all. So it is not worth refuting at all," said China's Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang on Wednesday.

China rejects claims of mistreating Uighurs, saying it has been taking anti-terrorism measures against separatists who are seeking to join Takfiri outfits such

as al-Qaeda.

Geng said, "The current human rights situation in China is at its best period in history."

"China has always guaranteed freedom of speech to its citizens in accordance with the Constitution as well," he said.

On Sunday, Human Rights Watch's global head Kenneth Roth called on the international community to push back against "the most brutal and pervasive oppression China has seen in decades."

Roth made the remarks at the UN Correspondents Association in New York after being denied entry to Hong Kong on Sunday.

He had been scheduled to release the report in the Chinese territory, which has been plagued by riots for months.

Geng said on Monday the plan indicated that Human Rights Watch is among the organizations supporting and instigating "anti-China activists ... to engage in radical violent crimes, and incite separatist activities hyping Hong Kong independence."

"It is China's sovereignty to allow one's entry or not," he added.

Beijing has constantly accused foreign powers, including the United States and Britain — the former colonial power in the city —, of stirring anti-establishment sentiments and interfering in the country's internal affairs by voicing support for rioters.

(Source: Xinhua)

UN sanctions experts warn - stay away from N. Korea crypto currency conference

United Nations sanctions experts are warning people not to attend a crypto currency conference in North Korea in February, flagging it as a likely sanctions violation, according to a confidential report due to be submitted to the UN Security Council later this month.

The warning comes after the independent UN experts told the council in August that North Korea generated an estimated \$2 billion for its weapons of mass destruction programs using "widespread and increasingly sophisticated" cyber attacks to steal from banks and crypto currency exchanges.

North Korea has been under UN sanctions since 2006 over its nuclear and ballistic missile programs. The 15-member Security Council has unanimously strengthened those measures over the years, prompting Pyongyang to look for alternative ways to make money.

In April last year, North Korea held its first block chain and crypto currency conference and an organizer told Reuters more than 80 organizations took part. An American who attended has been charged with violating U.S. sanctions.

The next conference is due to be held from Feb. 22-29, according to its website.

An excerpt from the upcoming annual report by the UN sanctions experts, seen by Reuters, warns that presentations at the conference "have included explicit discussions of crypto currency for sanctions evasion and money laundering."

It then spells out that UN sanctions require countries to prevent the provision of "financial transactions, technical training, advice, services or assistance" if they believe it could be contributing to North Korea's nuclear or ballistic missile programs or to the evasion of sanctions.

The full report is due to be submitted to the UN Security Council North Korea sanctions committee later this month.

North Korea's mission to the United Nations did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

(Source: Reuters)

7th U.S. Democratic debate: Iraq, trade, a female president

Six U.S. Democratic presidential hopefuls took the stage on Tuesday in the last debate before Iowa voters kick off the Democratic nominating race on February 3.

The debate saw clashes over foreign policy, trade and other issues.

On stage in Des Moines, Iowa, were U.S. Senators Bernie Sanders, Elizabeth Warren and Amy Klobuchar, former Vice President Joe Biden, South Bend, Indiana, Mayor Pete Buttigieg and businessman Tom Steyer.

Six other candidates failed to qualify for the debate.

For those on stage, the debate offered the candidates a final high-stakes chance to make their case to voters.

Here's what was said on some of the top issues:

■ Foreign Policy

The evening began with the candidates clashing over Iraq, war and foreign policy, although they were largely united against President Donald Trump's leadership on such issues.

Sanders, a longtime antiwar advocate who voted against the 2002 authorization of war in Iraq, criticized Biden for supporting the war and said they heard the same arguments from officials in former President George W. Bush's administration before coming to different conclusions.

"I thought they were lying, I did not believe them for a moment," Sanders said. "I did everything I could to prevent that war. Joe saw things differently."

Biden, a former chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee who touts his security credentials, acknowledged the vote "was a big, big mistake" and said that



as President Barack Obama's vice president, he worked to bring the troops home.

"It was a mistake to trust that they weren't going to go to war," Biden said of the Bush administration. "It was a mistaken vote, but I think my record overall on everything we have done, I'm prepared to compare it to anybody's on this stage."

Several candidates condemned Trump's recent decision to order the killing of Iran's top general, Qassem Soleimani, and his decision to keep U.S. troops in the region.

"We have to get combat troops out," declared Warren, who also called for reducing the military budget.

Others, including Buttigieg, Biden and Klobuchar, said they favored maintaining a small military presence in the Middle East. "I bring a different perspective," said

Buttigieg, who was a military intelligence officer in Afghanistan. "We can continue to remain engaged without having an endless commitment to ground troops."

■ 'Fundamental difference' on trade

The night also saw clashes on trade. Sanders said he and Biden had "a fundamental difference" on the worth of regional free trade agreements like Trump's new agreement with Mexico and Canada, called the USMCA, which Sanders opposes and Biden backs.

"I don't know that there's any trade agreement that the senator would ever think made any sense," Biden said.

Sanders said the agreements "were written for one reason alone, and that is to increase the profits of large multinational corporations." Klobuchar and Warren said they planned

to vote in favor of the USMCA.

■ A female president

Warren made a vigorous case for a female president following a pre-debate feud with progressive rival Sanders.

"Look at the men on this stage. Collectively they have lost 10 elections," Warren exclaimed, "The only people on this stage who have won every single election that they've been in are the women."

Sanders vehemently denied Warren's accusation that he said in 2018 a woman could not beat Trump.

"Does anybody in their right mind think a woman can't be elected president?" Sanders asked. "Of course a woman can win."

He added: "I don't know that that's the major issue of the day."

The feud came as Democrats try to navigate broader debates over how to reflect and embrace the crucial role female and minority voters will play in 2020.

For the first time, not a single candidate of color appeared on stage. All six candidates who met the party's polling and donor thresholds were white, and four were men. To defeat Trump at the end of this year, Democrats need to ensure black, Latino and suburban voters are excited to vote against the Republican president.

"The biggest mistake we can make is take black votes for granted. I never will," Buttigieg said when questioned about his lack of support among African Americans.

Candidates also discussed climate change, healthcare and what kind of candidate they would be against Trump. (Source: al Jazeera)

Trump distorts data during reelection campaign speech



U.S. President Donald Trump has used misleading data to claim he's created an economic "boom," while Democratic candidates seeking to replace him twisted the facts in their latest presidential debate.

Trump distorted his record on the economy and fell back on an old false claim about making Mexico pay for his border wall that served as a counterpoint to Tuesday's Democratic presidential debate, The Associated Press said in an analysis on Wednesday.

Speaking at a reelection campaign on Tuesday in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Trump claimed he's created a "blue collar boom" for low income workers in the U.S.

"More than 300,000 people under Obama, 300,000 people, left the workforce. Under just three years of my administration, 3.5 million people have joined the workforce," Trump said at the rally.

The AP said Trump is wrong about former President Barack Obama's economic record. More than 5 million people joined the U.S. labor force during Obama's presidency, according to Labor Department figures.

Trump also claimed that the updated trade between the U.S., Canada and Mexico will pay for a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border because of economic benefits he predicts will come from the agreement.

The USMCA deal, which will replace NAFTA, has been signed by the three nations but not yet ratified. The agreement preserves the existing liberalized environment of low or no tariffs, with certain improvements for each country.

However, nothing in the trade agreement would cover or refund the wall construction cost or require a payment from Mexico, the report said.

Instead, Trump is assuming a wide variety of economic benefits that can't be quantified or counted on. For example, he has said the deal will dissuade some U.S. companies from moving operations to Mexico and he credits that possibility as a payment by Mexico.

Turning to the US economy during the rally, Trump said: "The lowest-paid earners are reaping the biggest, fastest and largest gains. Earnings for the bottom 10% are rising faster than earnings for the top 10%, proportionally."

The AP said Trump's claim that the biggest pay hikes are going to the poor is also misleading. The top 10% of U.S. earners saw the biggest raises of any income bracket over the past year, according to the U.S. Labor Department.

When the Labor Department looked at the gains by quartile, weekly earnings grew at faster rates at the top levels than the bottom 25%.

"We've created 7 million jobs since the election including more than 1 million manufacturing and construction jobs. Nobody thought that was possible," Trump said.

But the AP said those figures are less impressive than what Trump claims. Government figures show that the job gains under Trump over the past three years were lower than during the final three years of Obama's presidency.

(Source: AP)

ICJ to rule on emergency measures on Myanmar over 'genocide'



The Gambia says the International Court of Justice (ICJ) will announce its decision next week on a request to impose emergency measures on Myanmar over genocide against the Rohingya Muslims.

The ICJ will issue its decision on emergency measures on January 23, the Gambian Ministry of Justice announced on Twitter early Wednesday.

Last month, the UN's top court at The Hague opened a historic three-day hearing into accusations of genocide brought against Myanmar over its brutal 2017 crackdown against the Rohingya Muslims.

It was the first major legal attempt to bring the country to justice over horrific atrocities committed against the persecuted community.

It followed lawsuit filed by the Gambia in November. The West African country had called on the ICJ to take emergency measures to halt Myanmar's ongoing genocidal actions against the Rohingya.

The Gambia accused Myanmar of violating the 1948 Genocide Convention at the December hearing.

It also alleged that Myanmar was committing "an ongoing genocide" against Muslims, calling for emergency measures to prevent the Buddhist-majority country from committing any further atrocities.

"All that the Gambia asks is that you tell Myanmar to stop these senseless killings, to stop these acts of barbarity that continue to shock our collective conscience, to stop this genocide of its own people," Gambian Justice Minister Abubacarr Tambadou told the judges.

Myanmar's de facto leader Aung San Suu Kyi defended her country's atrocities against

at the ICJ.

She claimed that the military's actions were in fact a "clearance operation" in response to militant attacks against police stations in Rakhine State.

Suu Kyi then accused the Gambia, acting on behalf of the 57-nation Organization of Islamic Cooperation, of making "incomplete and misleading" accusations and said the case should not be heard by The Hague.

Suu Kyi said while disproportionate military force may have been used and civilians killed, the acts did not constitute genocide.

If the court rules in the Gambia's favor, this would be just the first step in a case likely to take years.

A United Nations fact-finding mission has previously found that "the gravest crimes under international law" have been committed in Myanmar and called for genocide trials.

The International Criminal Court (ICC) recently approved a long-awaited full investigation into the crimes against the Rohingya minority.

Myanmar has long considered the Rohingya to be "Bengalis" from Bangladesh even though their families have lived in the country for generations.

In 2017, a military-led crackdown in Myanmar, which UN investigators have said was conducted with "genocidal intent," prompted some 740,000 Rohingya to flee to Bangladesh, which was already hosting some 200,000 Rohingya when the exodus began.

Thousands still remain in Myanmar under apartheid-like conditions, confined to camps and villages and denied access to healthcare and education.

(Source: Press TV)

Too early to say Libya ceasefire has collapsed: Turkish defense minister

Turkey said on Wednesday it was too early to say whether a ceasefire in Libya had collapsed after Khalifa Haftar, commander of eastern Libyan forces, failed to sign a binding truce accord at talks this week.

Russo-Turkish talks in Moscow have aimed to halt Haftar's nine-month campaign to seize the Libyan capital Tripoli from forces aligned with the internationally recognized government of Fayez al-Serraj.

Serraj, whose embattled government has struggled to repel the nine-month campaign, signed the truce proposal but Haftar left Moscow without adding his signature. He has not commented since then whether he will sign it or not.

Since veteran dictator Muammar Gaddafi was toppled in a 2011 uprising, the North African country has been in turmoil, with outside powers providing support to rival factions.

Turkey backs Serraj's government, while Haftar has received support from Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Jordan and Russian mercenaries.

"We cannot say that the ceasefire has collapsed, it's much too early for such an interpretation," Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar told reporters in Ankara. He added that Ankara was awaiting the outcome of diplomacy by Moscow, which has relations with Serraj even as it has given support to Haftar.

Turkey has sent a training and cooperation team which is now active in Libya, Akar said. Turkey committed to military support for the Tripoli government in December after the arrival of Russian mercenaries helped Haftar's Libya National Army (LNA) make some small gains along the Tripoli frontline.

President Tayyip Erdogan said on Tuesday Turkey would

"teach a lesson" to Haftar if his attacks on the Tripoli-based government continued.

On Sunday, Germany will host a summit on Libya involving the rival camps, their main foreign backers and representatives from the United Nations, the United States, Russia, Britain, France, China, Turkey and Italy. Haftar and Serraj have also been invited but it is unclear whether they will come, a German government spokeswoman said on Wednesday.

The nine-month war over Tripoli is just the latest bout of chaos in Libya, an OPEC oil exporter that has become a hub for human traffickers to ship migrants by boats to Italy, while Islamist militants have exploited the widespread disorder.

The conflict also risks disrupting oil production, the state oil firm has warned.

(Source: Reuters)

Iran knocked out of AFC U23 Championship

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iran U23 football team failed to bring an end to a 44-year Olympic qualification drought.

After wasting a string of chances, Iran defeated China 1-0 but it wasn't enough to extend their stay in the competition, with Uzbekistan advancing on goal difference despite their 2-1 loss to Korea Republic in Pathum Thani.

Omid Noorafkan scored the solitary goal of the match from the penalty spot in the 87th minute after Mehdi Ghaedi was brought down by China defender in the penalty area.

With Uzbekistan level with Korea Republic at the interval in Pathum Thani, Iran emerged from the dressing room in need of a significant turnaround on both sides of the country, and Estili looked to boost their attacking stocks with the introduction of Mehdi Ghayedi.

A four-pronged frontline meant Iran continued to threaten, but Team Melli Omid came close to falling behind themselves when a thunderous Chen Pu drive rattled the crossbar in the 66th minute.

But most of the chances came in Iran's attacking third, and they were given a lifeline when they awarded a late penalty, with captain Noorafkan stepping up to stroke them into the lead.

Estili's side poured forward in search of the all-important second, but Ghayedi headed wide when Chen had left an open net, squandering one of the last opportu-



nities of the game as Iran's Olympic dream was dashed.

South Korea qualified for the next round with nine points.

Uzbekistan and Iran earned four points but the titleholders advanced to the quarters on goal difference.

China stayed at the bottom without any points.

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

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

Estili issues apology after Iran's AFC U23 C'ship exit

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Hamid Estili has apologized to the Iranian fans after his team failed to book a place at the AFC U23 Championship Thailand 2020 quarterfinals.

On Wednesday, Iran were knocked out of the competition despite a 1-0 win over China PR at Tinsulanon Stadium.

After wasting a string of chances, Iran finally took the lead through Omid Noorafkan's 87th minute penalty, but it wasn't enough to extend their stay in the competition, with Uzbekistan advancing on goal difference despite their 2-1 loss to Korea Republic in Pathum Thani.

Korea qualified for the quarters with nine points.

Uzbekistan and Iran earned four points but the titleholders advanced to the quarters on goal difference.

China stayed at the bottom without a point.

"I apologized to the Iranian fans due to our elimination

from the competition. My players did their best in the competition. They worked hard and dedicated a lot to playing well and that is what matters to me," Estili said.

"These players are Iran football's future and the officials have to take care of them. I wish all the best for Korea Republic and Uzbekistan. We didn't deserve to loss against Korea and had to beat Uzbekistan," he added.

"We had 25 shots at goal against China and created eight goalscoring opportunities but our players squandered their chances. We could have won by more than the 3-0 scoreline. We could not advance to the next stage just because of goal difference and I am sorry for that," the ex-Iran midfielder went on to say.

"I want to say a huge thank you to everyone who supported us so far. We were excellent against China but we wasted our chances, yet I believe that these players can help Iran football in the future," Estili concluded.



Montenegrin Miodrag Radulovic named Zob Ahan coach



S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Montenegrin coach Miodrag Radulovic has been confirmed as new head coach of Zob Ahan on Tuesday.

Radulovic, who succeeded Alireza Mansourian, has signed a one-and-a-half-year deal with the Iranian team.

The 52-year-old started his coaching career as an assistant at Montenegrin team Zeta. He has also coached Montenegro U19, Pakhtakor Tashkent, Ka-

zma of Kuwait and Lebanon national football team.

Radulovic has most recently coached Myanmar national football team and was sacked in October 2019 following the team's poor performance at the 2022 World Cup qualification.

Zob Ahan are nine points above the relegation zone in Iran Professional League after a run of just three wins in their last 16 matches.

Iran to meet New Zealand at Asian Handball Championship opener



S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iran will kick off the 2020 Asian Men's Handball Championship with a match against New Zealand on Friday.

Team Melli will play New Zealand in Group A at the Shaikh Saad Al-Abdullah Sports Hall Complex in Kuwait City and face Bahrain a day later.

Group B consists of Qatar, Japan and China.

South Korea, Australia and Saudi

Arabia are in Group C and Kuwait, Iraq, the UAE and Hong Kong are drawn in Group D.

The 2020 Asian Men's Handball Championship will be the 19th edition of the championship held under the aegis of Asian Handball Federation at Kuwait City, Kuwait from Jan. 16 to 27.

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

Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Ticket Designs Unveiled

The Tokyo Organizing Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games (Tokyo 2020) on Wednesday (15 January) unveiled the designs of the tickets for the Olympic and Paralympic Games Tokyo 2020.

Each ticket features a sport pictogram that corresponds to the specific discipline, a venue pictogram, the Tokyo 2020 Games emblem, and is color-coded according to the venue and the city hosting the ticketed event.

A total of 59 Olympic tickets and 25 Paralympic ticket designs for all competition events were unveiled. Delivery of the tickets will start in May.

The design of the tickets is based on the Look of the Games, the visual identity of the Olympic and Paralympic Games Tokyo 2020.

It is inspired by the three types of rectangular shapes that form the Tokyo 2020 Emblems and the Japanese technique known as kasane no irome, a color scheme used in the creation of fabrics used for kimonos during the Heian Period (794-1185).

Having been traditionally used in the design of costumes for celebratory occasions, this color scheme reflects the overlapping natural colors representative of each of Japan's four seasons.



The designs of the tickets use four traditional Japanese colors:

Kurenai (red): Since ancient times, red has been used often during celebratory occasions and is a symbolic color of Japan.

Ai (blue): Widely familiar to the people of Japan and globally known as a color representing Japan. The color of the Tokyo 2020 Emblems is also categorized under the ai color.

Fuji (purple): This is the color of the Japanese wisteria and has been regarded as a beautiful Japanese flower since ancient times.

Matsuba (green): This is the pine needle green color that is often used for celebratory occasions.

The tickets also include the official Tokyo 2020 sport pictograms, designed to subtly communicate the characteristics and athleticism of each sport, as well as artistically highlights the dynamism of athletes.

Olympic Games sport pictograms were first introduced at the Tokyo 1964 Games, which arose from a need to communicate visually to an increasingly international group of athletes and spectators. Since then, pictograms have been created for every edition of the Games.

"We are very proud of the design of the Tokyo 2020 tickets, embodying as it does Japanese traditions and skills, and we hope they will please both Japanese and international spectators at the Tokyo 2020 Games. These tickets will not just be the door-opener to the venues for them; they will become memorabilia that they will cherish long after the Games come to an end," said Tokyo 2020 spokesperson Masa Takaya.

(Source: Paralympic)

100 foreign athletes participating in Zurkhaneh Sports World Cup

IRNA — Some 100 foreign athletes will participate in the 3rd Zurkhaneh Sports and Koshti Pahlavani World Cup to be hosted by Bojnourd, North Khorasan province.

The athletes are from 23 countries; 12 Asian states, seven European and four African states, said Director General of North Khorasan Sports and Youth Department Koroush Bahadori.

Participating countries include Poland, Estonia, Turkey, Cyprus, Hungary, South Korea, Ukraine, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Iraq, Afghanistan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zimbabwe and Cameroon, he said.

Third Zurkhaneh Sports and Koshti Pahlavani World Cup will be held at the University of Bojnourd from January 18 to 22.

Koshti Pahlavani (heroic wrestling) is a type of Iranian wrestling dating back to ancient times is practiced in the Zurkhaneh .

(home of strength)

Algerian Okacha Hamzaoui linked with Tractor

Tasnim — Algerian forward Okacha Hamzaoui has been linked with a move to Iranian football club Tractor.

The 29-year-player has joined Tractor in Turkey's training camp.

Hamzaoui started his playing career at IRB Sougueur in 2008 and has also played in Algerian teams USM Bel-Abbès, JS Saoura, USM Alger and MO Béjaïa and Portuguese team Nacional.

In 2015, Hamzaoui was a member of the Algeria military national football team that won the gold medal at the 2015 Military World Games.

Tractor, who sit third in Iran Professional League, are going to win the title for the first time.

Esteghlal, Shahr Khodro learn opponents at 2020 ACL Preliminary Stage

MNA — Iranian football clubs Esteghlal and Shahr Khodro have learned their fate at the 2020 AFC Champions League Preliminary Stage Two.

Kuwait SC defeated Jordan's Al Faisaly 2-1 on Tuesday in the Preliminary Stage One to book a ticket to Tehran as they will have to face Iran's Estghlal at Azadi Stadium on January 21.

The winners of Jan. 21 matches will advance to the final stage of playoff and take on Qatar's Al Rayyan SC on January 28.

Eventually, the winners will sit in ACL's Group A along with Al Wahda FSCC of the UAE, Iraq's Al Shorta and another team from the qualifying stages.

The other Iranian team, Shahr Khodro, will host Bahrain's Riffa on Jan. 21 at Mashhad's Imam Reza Stadium in the Preliminary Stage Two. The Bahraini team defeated India's Chennai City FC 1-0 in the previous stage.

The winners of Iran-Bahrain tie will take on Qatar's Al Sailiya SC on January 28 in the next stage and the ultimate winners will advance to Group B alongside Al Hilal SFC of Saudi Arabia, the UAE's Shabab Al Ahli Dubai and Pakhtakor of Uzbekistan.

Iran's Persepolis and Sepahan have already secured their place in the group stage of the 2020 ACL.

Australian forward Bernie Ibini fails Esteghlal medical

Tasnim — Esteghlal football club announced that Bernie Alpha Ibini-Isei, also known simply as Bernie Ibini, has failed in the club's medical tests.

The Nigerian-Australian striker traveled to Tehran to join the Iranian club in the January transfer window but failed in medical tests.

The 27-year-old forward will leave Iran tonight.

Bernie Ibini-Isei immigrated to Australia from Nigeria when he was a child and grew up in Sydney's Canterbury-Bankstown region.

Esteghlal are favorites to win the Iran Professional League after seven years.

Federer, Nadal kick in \$170,000 for Australian bushfire relief

MELBOURNE (Reuters) — Tennis greats Roger Federer and Rafa Nadal pledged A\$250,000 (\$172,000) towards the Australian bushfire relief efforts at a charity event on Wednesday in the leadup to the Australian Open.

World number one Nadal made the announcement at Melbourne Park's Rod Laver Arena during the "Rally for Relief" event where top players including Serena Williams and Australian Open defending champion Novak Djokovic led fundraising efforts.

"Hopefully that will keep inspiring the people to support this terrible disaster that we're going through and helps to recover all the things that we need," Nadal said on court after an exhibition match.

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

Smoke from bushfires blanketed Melbourne in a thick, gray haze on Wednesday before a clearing rain-storm, disrupting the Australian Open's qualifying matches for a second successive day.

The ATP on Sunday pledged \$500,000 to the WWF Australian Wildlife and Nature Recovery Fund as part of the bushfire relief efforts.

A number of players have made individual pledges including American Williams who said she would donate all her prize-money from winning a tournament in Auckland on Sunday.

Australian Nick Kyrgios has pledged A\$200 for every ace he hits this month.

The Australian Open, the first Grand Slam of the year, starts in Melbourne on Monday.

INTERNATIONAL DAILY
www.tehrantimes.com

■ Managing Director: Mohammad Shojaeian
■ Editor-in-Chief: Mohammad Ghaderi

» Editorial Dept.: Fax: (+98 21) 88808214 — 88808895
editor@tehrantimes.com
» Switchboard Operator: Tel: (+98 21) 43051000
» Advertisements Dept.: Tel: (+98 21) 43051450
» Public Relations Office: Tel: (+98 21) 88805807
» Subscription & Distribution Dept.: Tel: (+98 21) 43051603
» www.eshterak.ir Distributor: Padideh Novin Co.
Tel: 88911433
» Webmaster: webmaster@tehrantimes.com
» Printed at: Jame Jam Barta Born - 4419737



Tehrantimes79



Tehrantimesdaily

No. 18, Bimeh Alley, Nejatollahi St., Tehran, Iran
P.O. Box: 14155-4843
Zip Code: 1599814713



GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Justice puts everything in its place, and liberality brings out things from a special direction. Justice is a statesman who gives everyone his right, and liberality is a habit belonging to one person only. Therefore, justice is worthier.
Imam Ali (AS)

Fajr poetry festival launches book donation campaign for flood-stricken Sistan-Baluchestan

CULTURE **TEHRAN** — The executive secretary of the 14th Fajr International Poetry Festival announced on Wednesday that the organizers have launched a campaign to collect books to donate to the flood-stricken people in Sistan-Baluchestan.



Flood victims unload food and relief material from an IRGC Air Force helicopter near Jask in Hormozgan Province, January 14, 2020. (Mehr/Morteza Akhundi)

“Although we know that books are not among the flood-hit people's basic needs, everybody in every business should take some steps toward supporting the flood-stricken people,” Mehdi Qezeli said in a press release.

He also said that all books submitted to the festival will be sent to the region in the campaign.

The members of the festival jury and scientific committees will donate some books from their personal libraries to the campaign.

Qezeli, who is also the secretary of the 12th Jalal Al-e Ahmad Literary Awards, said that all submissions to the awards, which were held last December, will be given to the campaign.

Qezeli also asked other cultural figures and people to join the campaign by sending their books the festival's office in Tehran at 6 Araabi Alley, Sanai St. of Karim Khan Ave.

The flood disaster, arising from extremely heavy rainfall since last Thursday has killed several people and inundated some 500 villages and 14 towns in Sistan-Baluchestan, Kerman and Hormozgan.

“The Virtuous Burglar” to come to Tehran theater

A R T **TEHRAN** — Iranian director Mohammadreza Jamal plans to stage Italian playwright Dario Fo's “The Virtuous Burglar” (“Non tutti i ladri vengono a nuocere”) at Tehran's Neauphle-Chateau Theater on January 21.



A poster for “The Virtuous Burglar” by director Mohammadreza Jamal.

The 1958 play is about a burglar, who is interrupted by the owner of a flat and his mistress while he is burgling their house. When the owner's wife arrives, the burglar is forced to pretend the mistress is his wife.

Things get more twisted when the burglar's wife arrives and thinks her husband has an affair. Meanwhile, another burglar enters the home and starts collecting things.

Damun Bastak, Asadollah Purhamzeh, Huri Kazemiha, Hamidreza Shabahang, Sogol Seyedsadr and Fatemeh Noruzi are the main members of the cast for the play, which will remain on stage until February 5.

Cultural center sets up library and museum for writer Nader Ebrahimi

A R T **TEHRAN** — The House of Poetry and Literature in Tehran has established a library and museum for Nader Ebrahimi, the writer of the acclaimed stories such as “Tomorrow Is Not Like Today”, “Ibn Mashghaleh”, “A Quiet Loving” and “Dragon's Tale”.

The Nader Ebrahimi Library and Museum, which has been set up at the House of Poetry and Literature, is scheduled to open to the public during a special ceremony on Friday.

The opening ceremony set for January 3, but it was postponed due to the assassination of Quds Force chief Qassem Soleimani, the house announced on Wednesday.

The library contains 5,000 titles, which all have been donated by Ebrahimi's family from his personal library. A collection of his personal effects, including his prizes, notes and mountaineering equipment, have been showcased at the museum.

A large number of literati and cultural officials have been invited to attend the opening ceremony.

In 2011, the Seventeenth Street of Kargar Avenue was renamed Nader Ebrahimi by the Tehran City Council. Ebrahimi lived the last twenty years of his life in a home located on the street. He died at 72 from Alzheimer's disease in June 2008.

He is also known as a director and screenwriter. As a filmmaker, he directed the TV series “Fire without Smoke” in the early 1970s based on his novel of the same title. He also made a screen adaptation called “The Sound of the Desert” in 1975.



Iranian writer Nader Ebrahimi.

His second and last feature was “The Day When the Air Stopped”.

He also directed “Hami and Kami in

Long Journeys to Their Homeland”, another TV series that was broadcast by Iranian state TV before the victory of the Islamic

Revolution in 1979.

Ebrahimi's career ended in 2001 when he was afflicted with Alzheimer's disease.

Istanbul to host Iranian film days



A scene from “Crazy Castle” by Abolhassan Davudi.

A R T **TEHRAN** — A lineup of nine Iranian movies will be reviewed during a special program named “Iranian Film Days” at the Beyoglu Academy in Istanbul.

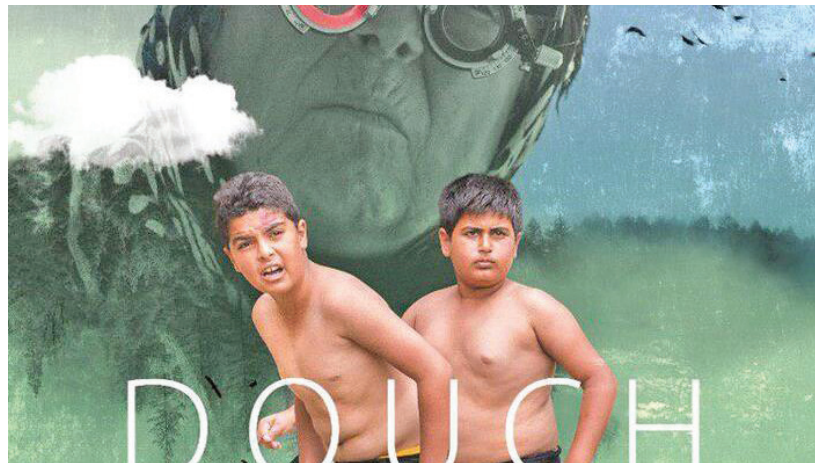
The three-day festival, which will open on Friday, will screen “Today” by Reza Mirkarimi, “Azar, Shahdokht, Parviz and Others” by Behruz Afkhami, “Sweet Taste of Imagination” by Kamal Tabrizi, “Where Are My Shoes” by Kiumars Purahmad and “Track 143” by Narges Abyar.

The lineup also includes “Bodyguard” by Ebrahim Hatamikia, “Crazy Castle” by Abolhassan Davudi, “Mazar-i-Sharif” by Hassan Barzideh and “Once Upon a Time Love and Hatred” by Davud Bidel.

Iranian filmmaker Abolhassan Davudi and Turkish director Faysal Soysal are also scheduled to attend the festival.

Iran's Cultural Office in Istanbul organizes the festival in collaboration with the Beyoglu District Municipality.

Iran's “Douch” to go on screen in Japan



A poster for “Douch” by Iranian director Amir Mashhadiabbas.

A R T **TEHRAN** — “Douch” by Iranian director Amir Mashhadiabbas will go on screen in a special program at the Ryukyu Shimpo Hall on Okinawa Island, Japan on February 8, Iran's Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (IIDCYA) that is the producer of the film announced on Wednesday.

“Douch” is about Gholamreza, a teenage boy who wants to have a new bicycle but he cannot afford to buy it. Therefore, he attends a contest organized by the Literacy

Movement Organization to teach the last illiterate person in a village to raise funds for the bicycle. But the last illiterate person is a 90-year-old woman with bad hearing and poor eyesight.

The film has been dubbed into Japanese by a number of Japanese voice actors.

“Douch” has screened at several Iranian and international festivals.

It received the prize of the International Centre of Films for Children and Youth (CIFCY) at the 49th Roshd International Film Festival in Tehran last November.

Billie Eilish to sing theme song for 25th James Bond film

NEW YORK (AP) — Breakthrough singer Billie Eilish is set to sing the theme song for the upcoming James Bond film, becoming the youngest artist to write and record a song for the iconic film franchise.

Eilish, who turned 18 in December, recorded the song for the 25th Bond film, “No Time to Die,” which debuts in U.S. theaters on April 10. She wrote the song with her brother Finneas; the two created her entire debut album together.

The untitled new song does not have a release date. “It feels crazy to be a part of this in every way. To be able to score the theme song to a film that is part of such a legendary series is a huge honor,” Eilish

said in a statement Tuesday. “James Bond is the coolest film franchise ever to exist. I'm still in shock.”

Eilish is riding high off her successful 2019 debut album, “When We All Fall Asleep, Where Do We Go?”, which featured the No. 1 hit “Bad Guy.” She's competing for six Grammy Awards at this month's show, including the top four prizes: album, song and record of the year, and best new artist. She was 17 when she earned those four top nominations, making her the youngest artist in Grammy history to achieve the feat.

“When We All Fall Asleep, Where Do We Go?” was Spotify's most-streamed album of 2019.



This Nov. 2, 2019 file photo shows singer Billie Eilish at the 2019 LACMA Art and Film Gala in Los Angeles. (Photo by Jordan Strauss/Invision/AP, File)

‘Game of Thrones’ actors among Amazon’s ‘Lord of the Rings’ cast

PASADENA, Calif. (Reuters) - Amazon.com Inc unveiled the first cast of actors for its highly anticipated “The Lord of the Rings” streaming television series on Tuesday, including two “Game of Thrones” veterans, and said production would begin in New Zealand next month.

Among the 15 cast members are the British actors Robert Aramayo, who portrayed a young Ned Stark, and Joseph Mawle, who played Benjen Stark on HBO's medieval fantasy hit “Game of Thrones.” Others coming to “Lord of the Rings” include British theater actor Owain Arthur, British-Iranian actress Nazanin Boniadi, Australian actor Tom Budge, British actress Morfydd Clark, and Slovak-American actress Ema Horvath, the company said.

“After undertaking an extensive global search, we are delighted finally to reveal



The Amazon.com logo and stock price information is seen on screens at the Nasdaq Market Site in New York City, New York, U.S., September 4, 2018. (Reuters/Mike Segar)

the first group of brilliant performers who will take part in Amazon's “The Lord of the Rings” series,” showrunners J.D. Payne

and Patrick McKay said in a statement.

“These exceptionally talented women and men are more than just our actors,

they are the newest members of an ever-expanding creative family that is now working tirelessly to bring Middle-earth to life anew for fans and audiences worldwide,” they added.

The TV adaptation will explore new storylines preceding author J.R.R. Tolkien's “The Fellowship of the Ring,” the first installment in the famed fantasy trilogy set in the fictional land of Middle-earth.

Amazon announced the cast at a Television Critics Association event where TV networks preview upcoming shows.

The series still has a “few key roles left to cast,” said Vernon Sanders, Amazon's co-head of television.

The company did not reveal details about the roles the actors would play or the storyline.