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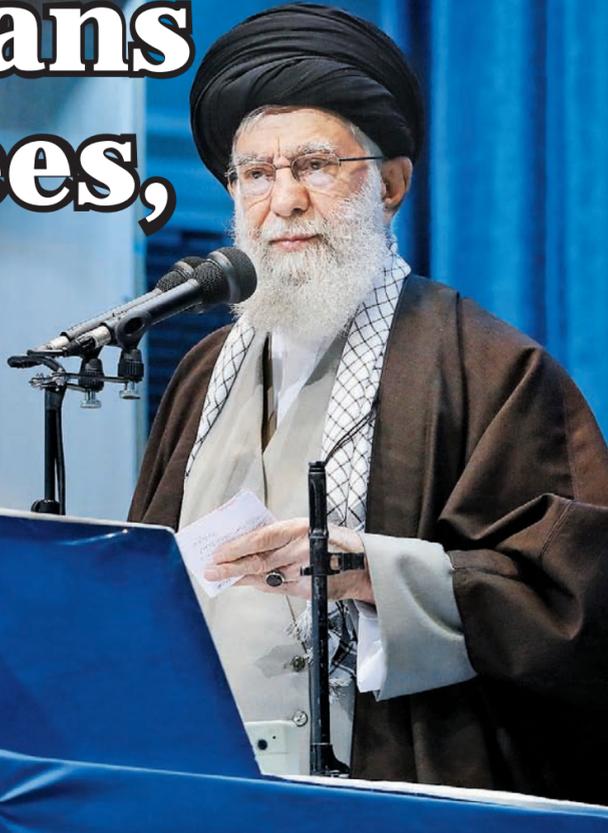
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CBI officially launches open market operation system

TEHRAN — The Central Bank of Iran (CBI) officially launched an open market operation (OMO) system on Thursday, as part of its monetary policy to curb inflation, control interest rates in the interbank market and manage liquidity, IRIB reported.

According to CBI Governor Abdolnaser Hemmati, the main purpose

of the open market operations is to control liquidity and inflation in the market.

"Typically, central banks conduct open market operations or buy and sell securities to achieve their macroeconomic goals, namely inflation control and economic growth stability", Hemmati wrote on his social media. **→4**

Tehran now enriching more uranium than before 2015 deal: Rouhani

TEHRAN (Press TV) — President Hassan Rouhani says Iran is now enriching more uranium than it did before inking a nuclear deal with world powers in 2015, as the remaining signatories of the landmark accord fail to fulfill their commitments.

Addressing the 59th annual meeting of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) on Thursday, Rouhani said Tehran faces no restrictions today when it comes to atomic energy.

"Today, [uranium] enrichment is carried out more than that time [before the deal was reached] and we did not stand idly by. If they [the other deal parties] reduced their commitments, we did so as well," Rouhani added.

He said when US President Donald Trump chose to pull his country out of the multilateral nuclear deal, Iran remained patient and refused to make the same "mistake." **→3**

Russia says E3 decision on nuclear deal is 'worrisome'

By staff and agency

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said on Friday that the decision adopted by the European Union trio, known as E3, on the 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the JCPOA, is "worrisome".

"The three European countries' decision on the JCPOA and start of the dispute mechanism are worrisome," IRNA quoted him as saying

in a press conference.

He also noted that Iran's nuclear activities are "transparent", adding that Iran is being inspected more than any other country.

According to UrduPoint News, Lavrov also suggested to hold a meeting on the JCPOA among its member countries in order to understand the future fate of the agreement. **→3**



EDITORIAL
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How did it start "Mr. Trudeau"? Who fueled the tensions?

In a statement on the Ukrainian plane crash, the Canadian prime minister described the incident as a result of the escalation of tensions between the U.S. and Iran, but he did not say how the situation has been sparked.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has become an important figure for Iranians, especially social media users, since the crash of the Ukrainian plane in Iran, with most of his remarks and actions about the victims of the crash being shared on social media.

Trudeau, who is currently meeting the families of victims of the tragic crash, said in one of his latest comments that the reason for the crash was tensions between the U.S. and Iran, without mentioning that why the tensions have been formed or which countries have caused them.

How did it start?

The JCPOA, the official name for the Iran nuclear deal, whether good or bad, caused the de-escalation of the tensions between Tehran and Washington, and the parties sought to benefit the deal. This continued until Donald Trump took office.

From the very beginning, even before his victory in the November 2016 election, Trump declared his hostility with Iran, announcing that he would tear up the deal if he became the president. Trump kept his promise and abrogated the deal in May 2018. Following the decision, the sanctions that had been lifted under the deal were reimposed and tensions between Iran and the U.S. started to rise once again.

In response to the U.S. action, Iran initially gave the European countries, which are signatories of the deal, the chance to fulfill their commitments. The hesitation of these countries and their hope for INTEX, which was never executed, led Tehran to gradually decrease its commitment to the nuclear deal.

In the meantime, Trump, who had been incited by the B Team and had increased his anti-Iran measures, has been intensifying the tensions and imposing new harsh sanctions against Iran under various pretexts. In such a situation, European countries have accompanied the White House and remained silent. **→2**

Israeli aircraft bomb Gaza Strip for 2nd time in 24 hours

PRESS TV — Israeli military aircraft have carried out a fresh round of airstrikes against targets in the northern part of the Gaza Strip as the Tel Aviv regime continues with its acts of aggression against the besieged Palestinian coastal sliver.

The Israeli military said in a statement that a combat helicopter attacked infrastructure used for by the Hamas resistance movement late on Thursday. No immediate reports of casualties in the aerial assaults were available.

The statement added that the attack was conducted after two balloons with explosives were flown from the Gaza Strip into Israeli-occupied territories earlier in the day.

Video published by Israel's Kan news network purported to show Hamas members leaving a post ahead of the strike.

Israeli police said at least two clusters of balloons carrying explosive devices were launched from the Strip into the southern sector of Israeli-occupied territories earlier in the day.

One of the clusters apparently landed in an open field and the other got tangled in a tree. Sappers were called to the scenes in the Sdot Negev region east of Gaza.

One of the devices purportedly went off as the sappers arrived at the scene. The explosion caused no injuries or damage.

Late on Wednesday, Israeli warplanes carried

out several airstrikes in the Gaza Strip, targeting a number of areas in the north and the northwest of the coastal enclave.

Palestinian media reported that one of the airstrikes targeted a Hamas position. The attack caused an explosion and material damage to nearby buildings.

Another attack targeted areas in Jabalia and Beit Lahia in Gaza's north.

Gaza has been under Israeli siege since June 2007.

Since 2008, Israel has waged three wars against Gaza, where about two million Palestinians live under a 12-year Israeli blockade. Thousands of Gazans have been killed in each of these deadly wars.

Turkey starting troop deployment to Libya, Erdogan says

PRESS TV — President Recep Tayyip Erdogan says Turkey is starting deployment of troops to Libya in support of the embattled United Nations-recognized Government of National Accord (GNA) and in line with agreements relating to maritime border demarcation and enhanced security cooperation.

"We signed an agreement with Libya to delineate maritime borders. It is no longer legally possible to conduct exploration and drilling activities or to run pipelines in the region between the Turkish and Libyan coasts without the approval of both countries," Erdogan announced in the Turkish capital Ankara on Thursday.

He added, "In 2020, we are licensing these areas and starting the search and drilling as quickly as ever. After the licensing work, for

the first time the Oruc Reis seismic research vessel will conduct seismic studies in the region. We are sending our troops to this country to ensure the survival and stability of the legitimate government in Libya."

Erdogan remarks came only two days after Libya's renegade military commander Khalifa Haftar left Moscow without signing a binding truce that would have halted his nine-month campaign to seize the GNA's base of Tripoli, and would have formalized a tentative ceasefire in the war-ravaged North African country.

"The draft [agreement] ignores many of the Libyan army's demands," Haftar was quoted as saying by the Saudi-owned and Arabic-language al-Arabiya television news network.

Fayez al-Sarraj, the heads of the GNA, had

already signed the truce proposal after indirect talks in the Russian capital on Monday.

Last week, Turkey and Russia urged Libya's warring parties to declare a ceasefire after a recent escalation in fighting around Tripoli and the strategic coastal city of Sirte.

Erdogan has said Turkey would not refrain from "teaching a lesson" to Haftar if his eastern-based forces continue attacks against the Tripoli-based GNA.

"If the putschist Haftar's attacks against the people and legitimate government of Libya continue, we will never refrain from teaching him the lesson he deserves," the Turkish president said in a speech to his AK Party legislators in parliament on Tuesday.

"It is our duty to protect our kin in Libya," he said. **→10**



ARTICLE
Martin Love
Political analyst from North Carolina

The U.S. now: Widespread thuggery

For those who remember a time when U.S. leaders and especially those in the White House appeared at least nominally dignified and worthy of some respect, the appearance now is one of outright immoral, widespread thuggery and its attendant ills like blackmail and murder, the latter for which Trump may be liable in the International Criminal Court provided Iran presents the case of Soleimani's assassination along with his comrades' demise to the court. Donald Trump is an unfolding disaster for the entire world, and nothing he has done as President seems honorable. He has wrecked numerous Washington agencies, denigrated public education, shows no concern for the environment and so on. Nothing he did before he became President was based on honest dealing, whether in his personal or business life. This is not one man's opinion: the record is there for all to see. And he has neglected his campaign promises regarding foreign policy.

The most obvious question is that even while most of the world rejects Trump as an adequate U.S. President, slightly more than half of Americans may not — which tells one something about the caliber of the judgement of "average" Americans. One might be thankful for NOT living in the U.S. nowadays, despite the fact of relative prosperity, which in fact may not last much longer for a variety of reasons.

But here we witness the dean of West Asia correspondents from the West, Beirut-based Robert Fisk, writing this week that Iran's leaders at first concealed the truth about who and what downed the Ukrainian airliner near Tehran. The Iranian public rejected this concealment quickly and so the truth of the disaster was quickly exposed. Fisk suggest that Iran has been changed "forever", that no longer can Iran's religious leaders claim infallibility.

One begs to differ with Fisk's views. First, no one in Iran has claimed infallibility. Because none CAN claim infallibility without becoming quite fallible. This is akin to declaring one's self a god (if not the ONLY God) which is utter blasphemy. (Al-Hallaj, a Sufi in Baghdad in the 10th century. **→10**)



Worshippers rally in support of the establishment's power

TEHRAN — After the Friday prayer ceremonies, worshippers across the country held rallies to express support for the power of the Islamic Republic system.

The rallies were held as the Iranian military fired dozens of missiles at a major U.S. military base in Iraq in retaliation to the Jan. 3 assassination of top military commander General Qassem Soleimani in Baghdad.

The attack on the military base disputed the U.S. power and discredited the U.S. across the world. In a statement issued after the rallies, the people supported the resistance front against the U.S. plots.

Nuremberg war crimes prosecutor calls Soleimani assassination violation of national and intl. law

By staff and agency

Benjamin B. Ferencz, a former lawyer and Nuremberg war crimes prosecutor, has said that the United States' assassination of Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani is a clear violation of national and international law.



"The administration recently announced that, on orders of the president, the United States had 'taken out' (which really means 'murdered') an important military leader of a country with which we were not at war. As a Harvard Law School graduate who has written extensively on the subject, I view such immoral action as a clear violation of national and international law," Ferencz wrote in a letter to The New York Times on Wednesday.

Ferencz, 99, who was a lawyer who helped prosecute Nazi leaders at the post-World War II Nuremberg trials, said, "The public is entitled to know the truth. The United Nations Charter, the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice in The Hague are all being bypassed. In this cyberspace world, young people everywhere are in mortal danger unless we change the hearts and minds of those who seem to prefer war to law."

General Soleimani was assassinated in a U.S. airstrike in Baghdad on January 3.

He was a legendary commander in leading the resistance movement against terrorist groups, especially Daesh, in both Syria and Iraq.

Leader hopes for speedy recovery of Ayatollah Sistani

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, in a message on Friday, prayed for a speedy recovery of Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani who had undergone surgery on Thursday.

"News regarding your physical health problem was cause of worries. I pray the almighty God to grant you speedy recovery," the Leader said.

Also on Friday, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani expressed hope for a speedy recovery of the leading Iraq cleric.

In a tweet in Arabic, Zarif expressed content about the result of the cleric's surgery and asked God for his good health.

Larijani, in a phone conversation with the head of Ayatollah Sistani's office in Tehran, also hoped for the grand ayatollah's health.

Ayatollah Sistani had an incidental strain to his left leg which resulted in a fracture to his thigh bone. A surgery was performed on him under the supervision of an Iraqi medical team.

German minister admits Trump pressure over Iran

Germany's defense minister has acknowledged that her country and two other European nations changed their policy on Iran because U.S. President Donald Trump threatened to impose auto tariffs unless they did.



The US newspaper Washington Post reported on Thursday that Trump had threatened the countries with a 25-percent automobile tariff if they did not take a step that could lead to re-imposing sanctions against Tehran.

Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer said during a visit to London on Thursday that the threat "does exist." But she stressed that the European nations will not join the U.S. policy of putting maximum pressure on Iran.

Germany, Britain and France announced on Tuesday that they triggered a dispute resolution mechanism after Iran said it would no longer abide by the 2015 agreement with global powers aimed at curbing its nuclear program.

It also marked a policy turnaround for the European signatories that maintained negotiations with Iran after the U.S. unilaterally withdrew from the deal in 2018.

(Source: NHK)

How did it start "Mr. Trudeau"? Who fueled the tensions?

➔ Cases such as the explicit support of Trump and his allies for the unrest in Iran in Dec. 2017-Jan. 2018 and November 2019 are just few examples of his efforts for intensifying current tensions.

But what intensified the tensions so much? Most Western experts believe Trump's move to assassinate General Qassem Soleimani, a top Iranian military commander, was actually a declaration of war on Iran. Many referred to the terrorist act as a turning point in history or the beginning of WWII.

In response to the terrorist act, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution promised a "hard revenge" and January 8 Iran launched a missile attack on the Ain al-Assad air base, where the U.S. troops were stationed.

Iran's hard revenge from the U.S. put the region in a state of alert. The readiness to counter Trump's insane actions caused Iran to be in a state of alert, which accidentally led to the tragic downing of the Ukrainian passenger plane.

Yes, the Canadian prime minister is right, and the main cause of the crash is the tensions between the U.S. and Iran, but the significant point that only a few officials have pointed out is the role of Trump and his allies in escalating these tensions.

Perhaps the incident makes the officials in different countries to think that whether they really want to de-escalate the tensions or they are just talking about it to evade their responsibilities.

Easing the tensions between Tehran and the Washington requires action that must be taken by Western nations to restore Iran's lost confidence in the West.

Leader: E3 cannot bring Iranians to their knees, as America could not

'The gentlemen behind the negotiating table are those terrorists of Baghdad airport'

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said on Friday that the three European countries that are part of the 2015 nuclear deal cannot bring the Iranian nation to their knees.

"The three European countries showed that they are America's lackeys. They will not be able to bring the Iranian nation to their knees," Ayatollah Khamenei said, addressing hundreds of thousands of worshippers in Tehran.

This was the first time in eight years that the Leader delivered a sermon at the Friday Prayers in Tehran's Mosalla mosque.

The last time Ayatollah Khamenei led Friday prayers at Mosalla mosque was in February 2012, on the 33rd anniversary of the Islamic Revolution.

"These three countries are the same three countries which, during the imposed war against us, helped Saddam Hussein as much as they could," the Leader said.

"I said from the beginning, right after the U.S. withdrawal from Barjam (the Iran nuclear deal) that these three countries, which only talk and talk ... I said that I don't trust them; that they won't do anything; that they will serve the U.S."

"Today, after nearly one year, it is clear that these are literally the lackeys of America," Ayatollah Khamenei reiterated.

U.S. President Donald Trump quit the nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), in May 2018 and imposed the harshest ever sanctions in history on Iran as part of his administration's "maximum pressure" campaign against Iran.

The three European parties to the deal promised to fulfill their commitments to the deal and secure Iran's economic benefits from it, but Iran says they have failed to do so.

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 steps.

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

Meanwhile, France, Britain, and Germany confirmed on Tuesday that they had triggered the dispute mechanism in the nuclear deal, but said they were not joining the United States campaign to exert maximum pressure on Tehran.

Leader: U.S. airstrike destruction is a 'Day of Allah'

In his sermon, Ayatollah Khamenei also said the knocking down of the U.S. airbase in Iraq should be considered a "Day of Allah (God)".

He explained that Days of Allah are when societies, humans and ethnicities rid themselves of the oppressors.

The Leader's remarks come two weeks after Trump ordered drone strikes that martyred Lieutenant General Soleimani, chief of the IRGC's Quds Force, and Abu Mahdi



"To the same extent we grieved over the plane incident, the enemies cheered."

al-Muhandis, the second-in-command of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), as well as eight other companions.

The Leader said the last two weeks were filled with adventures and were exceptional.

"Bitter adventures, sweet adventures and incidents happened that taught lessons to the Iranian nation," he said.

"The day that 10 million people in Iran and hundreds of thousands in Iraq and some other countries took to the streets to appreciate the Quds Force commander's blood and created the world's greatest farewell is a Day of Allah," Ayatollah Khamenei remarked. He said such days make history. "They're no ordinary days."

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

The burial ceremony was held on January 7 in Kerman, but it was postponed until later that night due to overcrowding and a stampede that killed tens of people and injured many more.

In the early hours of January 8, the IRGC attacked the U.S. airbase of Ain al-Assad in Anbar province in western Iraq as part of its promised "tough revenge" for the assassination of General Soleimani.

"Our nation is a grateful nation and has been grateful over the years for divine blessings," the Leader said.

The people saluted the soul of this martyr and burned the flags of the U.S. and Israel,

"This assassination was recorded as a scandal for the U.S. government ... They martyred a person who was the most powerful commander in the fight against terrorism in the region."

he added.

Ayatollah Khamenei said the media empire of the Zionists tried in vain to accuse "our general of terrorism, but God Almighty made their plan backfire."

"This assassination was recorded as a scandal for the U.S. government ... They martyred a person who was the most powerful commander in the fight against terrorism in the region," he added.

Gen. Soleimani assassination was cowardly, says Leader

Ayatollah Khamenei described the assassination of General Soleimani as a cowardly act that brought disgrace upon the United States.

"We should see Haj Qassem Soleimani as a school of thought and as a school of lessons in order for the significance of this matter to be clarified," he noted.

The Leader described the IRGC Quds Force as a humane body with great and clear humanitarian motivations.

"They are present whenever they are needed and protect the dignity of the oppressed people and sacrifice themselves for the sanctities."

"These forces put their lives on the line and go to the aid of regional nations ... and this is what keeps war and terror away from our own homeland," he added.

'Attack on U.S. airbase was a military blow to America'

He referred to Iran's revenge for Soleimani's assassination, saying, "This was a blow

to America."

"Of course, it was an effective military blow, but more importantly and higher than military blow, this was a blow to America's grandeur as a superpower."

"This blow cannot be repaired by anything," he asserted.

Ayatollah Khamenei further said the U.S. has been receiving blows in Syria, Iraq, Lebanon and Afghanistan for years.

Pointing to recent remarks by U.S. officials, the Leader said the Americans say they are with the Iranian people but they are lying.

"Even if they want to be with the nation, in fact it is because they want to thrust their dagger into the nation's body."

Dialog with enemy is mixed with deceit, says Leader

Elsewhere in his remarks, Ayatollah Khamenei ruled out the possibility of talks with the U.S., saying dialog with the enemy is mixed with chicanery and deceit.

"The gentlemen behind the negotiating table are those terrorists of the Baghdad airport," he said, adding that the only path ahead of the Iranian nation is to become stronger.

"We do not fear negotiations, however, not with America. First, we must make ourselves stronger and rid our economy of oil," he added.

Ayatollah Khamenei: Enemies cheered over plane crash

Commenting on the recent downing of a Ukrainian plane by Iran's military, the leader said, "The plane crash was a bitter incident. Losing Iranian youths and people is a bitter incident."

"To the same extent we grieved over the plane incident, the enemies cheered."

The passenger plane was shot down on the morning of January 8, nearly four hours after Iran fired dozens of missiles at the U.S. airbase in Iraq in retaliation for Soleimani's assassination.

The Iranian military announced on the morning of January 11 that the plane had been mistaken for a cruise missile.

The late admittance of responsibility for the plane crash received widespread criticism both from within Iran and from other countries.

"There are ambiguities in the plane incident," the Leader said. "We thank the commanders for explaining it to the people, but this issue must be pursued and recurrence of similar incidents must be prevented seriously."

Ayatollah Khamenei also expressed sympathies with the bereaved families of victims of the incident and thanked them for standing up to the enemy's conspiracy and speaking out against the enemy's desire.

"One of the mothers of the victims sent me a letter saying 'we are standing by the Islamic Republic; we are standing by your motivations.'"

"One feels a sense of reverence and respect for such characters," the Leader added.

Iranian, Ukrainian FMs discuss plane crash

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and his Ukrainian counterpart Vadym Prystaiko on Thursday exchanged views over the latest developments regarding the Ukrainian passenger plane, which was downed mistakenly by the Iranian military near Tehran on January 8.

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

Zarif who was talking to Prystaiko on the phone said Iran is

ready to transfer the bodies of the Ukrainians victims to Kiev.

Zarif also said that the ground is paved for participation of Ukrainian experts in analyzing the plane's black box.

Prystaiko, for his part, appreciated Iran for admitting responsibility for the downing of the plane.

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 January 3 assassination of Iran's top general Qassem Soleimani in Baghdad.

The Iranian military officially announced on January 11 that the plane had been mistaken for a cruise missile.

President Hassan 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 of the Ukrainian plane crash.

On Wednesday, Abbas Mousavi said that a special working group was established by the Foreign Ministry to facilitate consular affairs for the victims of the Ukrainian passenger plane.

E3 think they're living in the 19th century: Zarif

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has said that the European Union trio, known as E3, still think they're living in the 19th century when they did whatever they liked.

"E3 think they're living in the 19th Century, when they dictated to countries, lied, & got away with it," Zarif tweeted on Wednesday.

Zarif again urged the Europeans to fulfil their commitments under the 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the JCPOA, rather than submitting to the U.S. bullying.

"Forget about compensating for US: fulfill your own obligations. EVEN JUST ONE," he said.

The chief diplomat added, "IRAN is NOT the one emptying the accord of its substance—the E3 is."

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. However, after patiently watching for a whole year and seeing no clear action from the European signatories, Iran started to partially reduce its commitments.

Iran has said its decision is based on paragraph 36 of the JCPOA.

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.

Iran has been insisting that if the EU trio implements its commitments Tehran will reverse its decisions.

Rafsanjani's demise anniversary marked

POLITICAL TEHRAN — A ceremony was held in Tehran on Thursday to mark the third year that Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani passed away. A number of political figures and lawmakers attended the ceremony.

Mohsen Hashemi, the son of Rafsanjani, was one of the figures who addressed the ceremony held at Tehran's OIC Conference Hall.

"Akbar Heshemi was avoiding extremism," said Mohsen Hashemi, who is the current chairman of the Tehran City Council.

Masoumeh Ebtekar, the vice president for women's and family affairs; Ali Asqar Monesian, the minister of cultural heritage, handicrafts and tourism; Hossein Ali Amiri, the vice president for parliamentary affairs; Sorena Sattari, the vice president for science and technology; senior Lawmaker Ali Motahari; and some other officials attended the ceremony.

Ayatollah Rafsanjani passed away on January 8, 2017 of a heart attack. The body of the first-generation revolutionary figure was buried at the mausoleum

of Imam Khomeini, the founder of the Islamic Republic.

Rafsanjani's death anniversary was postponed due to unexpected events such as the U.S. assassination of General Qassem Soleimani on January 3, Iran's retaliation on January 8, and the subsequent tragic incident of the Ukrainian passenger plane.

Rafsanjani started his political career in the 1960s, acquainting himself with the views of the to-be founder of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Khomeini.

Rafsanjani became the first parliament speaker of the post-revolution Iran in 1980.

In 1980, Ayatollah Khomeini tapped Rafsanjani as commander of the war after Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein waged a war against the fledgling revolution.

He served the revolution in his capacity as parliament speaker (1980-1988), president (1989-1997), and chairman of the Expediency Council (1998-to his death). He was also the head of the Assembly of Experts from 2007 until 2011 and interim Friday prayer preacher of Tehran from 1981 to 2009.

Iran: Ukrainian plane crash should not be used for political objectives

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi reacted to the Thursday meeting of the foreign ministers of five countries whose citizens were accidentally killed in a Ukrainian plane crash near Tehran on January 8, noting that the incident must not be used as a pretext to serve political objectives.

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 January 3 assassination of Iran's top general Qassem Soleimani in Baghdad.

On Thursday, the foreign ministers of Afghanistan, Britain, Canada, Sweden and Ukraine held a meeting in London and demanded "full cooperation" from Iran in a transparent international inquiry into the crash.

In reaction to the London meeting, the Islamic Republic said it has established a very good and close cooperation with delegations sent from the countries whose citizens were killed in the plane crash.

Also on Wednesday, Abbas Mousavi said a special working group has been established by the Foreign Ministry to facilitate consular affairs for the victims of the plane crash.

Mousavi added on Thursday that his country calls on all sides not to turn the human issues, especially such sorrowful incident, into a political gesture to serve certain interests.

He further said let the case proceed as it has been continuing smoothly without any margin.

The foreign ministers of the five men-



tioned countries also said Iran must pay compensation.

Speaking on behalf of the group, Canadian Foreign Minister François-Philippe Champagne said, "We are here to pursue closure, accountability, transparency and justice for the victims - Ukrainian, Swedish, Afghan, British, Canadian as well as Iranian, through a full complete and transparent international investigation."

"In the wake of such a horrific tragedy there are many many questions. Families want answers, all of the countries assembled here today want answers, and the international community want answers. The world

is waiting for those answers and we will not rest until we get them."

The Iranian military announced last Saturday that the plane had been mistaken for an incoming U.S. cruise missile.

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

Top Iranian generals including IRGC Chief Hossein Salami and Amir Ali Hajizadeh, the commander of the IRGC Aerospace Force, wished they were in the plane to avoid the shame of making such a colossal mistake.

Major General Hossein Salami made

the remarks during a closed session of the parliament on Sunday.

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

"We are saddened more than anybody else and never thought we would carry out an action that could harm people."

President Hassan 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 of the plane crash.

Turkey voices concern over regional tensions

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar has voiced concerns over regional tensions in the aftermath of the U.S. assassination of Iranian commander Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, calling for concerted action to preserve stability and calm.

He made the remarks in a phone conversation with Major General Mohammad Hossein Baqeri, Iran's Armed Forces Chief of Staff.

Akar also offered his condolences to the Iranian government, nation and military over the assassination of General Soleimani, Tasnim reported.

"Unfortunately, the assassination and martyrdom of General Soleimani triggered successive and delicate incidents in the region, which could be greatly worrying," the Turkish defense minister added.

He also stressed the need for collective cooperation to maintain stability in the region and prevent terrorists from taking advantage of the situation.

For his part, the top Iranian commander denounced the



American assassination of General Soleimani as an "inhumane, unfair and immoral" move that violated all legal and international regulations.

He said the assassination, in addition to the U.S. attacks on the bases of Popular Mobilization Units (PMU) in Iraq or the military bases of Syria, have set off a new round of tensions in the region.

"While the Americans themselves had pushed the region to the brink of a broad skirmish by assassinating General Soleimani and his companions, they were sending messages to prevent an escalation of tensions. But the Islamic Republic of Iran displayed its decisive will to protect its rights with a retaliatory operation against the American military base of Ain al-Assad, and proved that if the U.S. acts of mischief continue, it will receive heavier responses," General Baqeri stated.

He emphasized that Iran does not favor escalating tensions, but it would harshly respond to any irrational and aggressive action.

"We hope that disorder and conflicts would be eradicated with the retreat of the U.S. from the region," the senior Iranian commander added.

Tehran now enriching more uranium than before 2015 deal: Rouhani

1→ Iran, instead, urged the remaining parties to the deal to compensate for Washington's exit and told them that "if they make up for [the US exit], we would stay in the JCPOA, and if they fail to do so, we will, in turn, reduce our commitments," Rouhani said.

Rouhani said Iran adopted the "right policy and did the right thing," prompting the entire world — even the Europeans themselves and Trump's own friends — to condemn the US president's move as "wrong."

The Iranian president added that Tehran proved with the JCPOA that it seeks interaction with the world.

Rouhani once again slammed the US president for violating the deal and unilaterally pulling out of it, saying Trump's "unpredictable" behavior has caused troubles not only for Iran, but the whole world.

The Iranian chief executive also criticized the US for threatening the European parties to the nuclear deal — France, Britain and Germany — and pushing them to withdraw from the accord.

Rouhani's remarks came after The Washington Post reported that Trump's administration had threatened to impose a 25-percent tariff on European automobile imports if the trio — known as EU3 or E3 — refused to formally accuse Iran of violating the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

The report was published shortly after the European trio said in a joint statement on Tuesday that they had triggered the JCPOA's dispute mechanism, which amounts to a formal accusation that Tehran had broken the terms of the deal.

The European measure could lead to the restoration of anti-Iran UN sanctions,

which had been lifted by the JCPOA.

The US under Trump left the JCPOA in May 2018 and restored the sanctions that it had lifted. The UK, France, and Germany also bowed to the sanctions and refused to meet Iran's business interests under the deal despite an earlier pledge to do so.

Trump has been critical of the agreement and called it the worst deal ever negotiated, proposing new negotiations to reach a "better" accord.

This comes as the JCPOA has been endorsed by the UN Security Council as a resolution.

Elsewhere in his Thursday's remarks, Rouhani said Iran has grown stronger than ever despite all the international pressure facing the country and will continue to tread the path of progress despite US plots and economic sanctions.

Rouhani further hailed Iran's recent



move to target the US airbase of Ain al-Assad in Anbar province in western Iraq in retaliation for the US assassination of senior Iranian military commander Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani.

It is very rare that a country "stands up to the US and openly launches missiles against an important American military base in the region," he said, adding the attack forced the US "to retreat from its threat."

Russia says E3 decision on nuclear deal is 'worrisome'

1→ "I think that it is necessary to hold some kind of meeting [on the JCPOA] in the near future in order to honestly understand the situation and understand who is thinking about what [on the deal]," he said.

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.

UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric said on Tuesday that all parties to the nuclear deal must 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.

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Tuesday that the Europeans are making a "strategic mistake" by triggering the dispute mechanism.

"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.

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 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."

Tehran has repeatedly announced it will reverse its decisions once the remaining signatories fulfill their commitments.

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.

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.

Defense Minister says U.S. surrenders to Iran's missile power and strong resolve

POLITICAL TEHRAN — During a speech at Imam Ali Military Academy on Thursday, Defense Minister Amir Hatami said that the U.S. has given in to Iran's "firm determination and missile power".

In retaliation to the U.S. assassination of top Iranian military commander General Qassem Soleimani near Baghdad on January 3, the Iranian military fired dozens of surface-to-surface ballistic missiles at a U.S. airbase in western Iraq on January 8. The retaliatory attack resonated throughout the world, showing that Iran responds strongly to any misadventure by the White House officials.

"Undoubtedly, if the enemy did not receive such response, it would take more aggressive action next time," the defense chief said.

He noted that Iran's missile attack on the U.S. base showed Iran's power and firm determination.

"I hope the enemies will not try to test the Iranian people's resolve, because what has been done was just a slap and a warning," Hatami noted.

■ Hatami says Iran prepared to respond to any new adventurism

Also in a phone conversation with Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar on Friday, General Hatami said Iran is prepared to give a powerful response to any new military adventurism.

"We are prepared to give a powerful response to any adventurism. We targeted the United States' military base by our domestic missile capabilities and in self-defense," Hatami explained.

"After this action, the United States realized that they will face a stronger response if they take a stupid action again," the defense minister added.

Elsewhere, he said the assassination of General Soleimani is a clear example of U.S. state terrorism.

"Once again, the United States showed its criminal image to the world and proved its terrorist nature," Hatami noted.

He described the assassination as "brutal" and noted that the Trump administration made a "strategic mistake."

"We ask all independent countries in the world, especially in the region, to strongly condemn this action of the United States," the defense minister added.

For his part, Akar expressed condolences over martyrdom of Soleimani.

The Turkish defense minister said, "Tension and instability are not beneficial to the regional countries."

"We have always sought to maintain security in the region," he added, calling for expansion of consultation with Iran.

General Soleimani was a legendary commander in leading the resistance movement against terrorist groups, especially Daesh, in both Syria and Iraq.

After his assassination, Iran vowed "harsh revenge". Iran pounded the military base from which the U.S. had flown drones to assassinate Soleimani.

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

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

11 Americans were hurt in Iranian strike, military says, contradicting Trump

Eleven American troops were treated for concussions after Iranian missiles struck two Iraqi bases where the servicemembers were stationed, the military said on Thursday, contradicting earlier statements by President Trump that no Americans had been injured.

The Jan. 8 attack on bases near Baghdad and Erbil, Iraq, were launched in retaliation for the killing of Maj. Gen. Qassem Soleimani, a senior figure in Iran's military, in a drone strike ordered by Trump.

"While no U.S. servicemembers were killed in the Jan. 8 Iranian attack on Al Asad air base, several were treated for concussion symptoms from the blast and are still being assessed," Capt. Bill Urban, a spokesman for United States Central Command, said in a statement.



In a speech, Trump had said that no Americans were hurt in the strike, in which at least a dozen missiles were fired.

"I'm pleased to inform you the American people should be extremely grateful and happy," the president said on Jan. 8. "No Americans were harmed in last night's attack by the Iranian regime."

Captain Urban said the injured troops were taken to American military sites in Germany and Kuwait to undergo screening, and that "when deemed fit for duty, the servicemembers are expected to return to Iraq."

The lack of American deaths in the strikes was a welcome relief to American officials, who had feared General Soleimani's killing could set off a larger regional conflict. By Jan. 9, the day after the strike, both countries had publicly said they would de-escalate direct military action.

The general's death and the subsequent missile strike, however, set other events in motion, including the accidental downing of a Ukrainian passenger jet in Tehran by the Iranian military, in which 176 people were killed, and a resolution by the Iraqi Parliament calling for the expulsion of foreign forces from the country.

(Source: The New York Times)

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	399.445
IFX	5110.91

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	46,845 rials
GBP	54,807 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$65.02/b
WTI	\$58.83/b
OPEC Basket	\$65.32/b
Gold	\$1,558.25/oz
Silver	\$18.12/oz
Platinum	\$1,026.45/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

CBI officially launches open market operation system

The main task of this system is the purchase and sales of government bonds, particularly short-term securities such as treasury documents with banks and credit institutions, the official explained.



In general, OMO is a financial instrument through which central banks buy and sell securities in the open market to expand or reduce money supply.

Earlier this month, CBI placed a notice on its website, saying that lenders can manage their need for liquidity or offer their surplus liquidity in the interbank market within the new CBI monetary framework.

According to the notice, the "operating instruments" to inject liquidity into the interbank market include trading in government

securities, repurchase agreements backed by foreign currency and government bonds, giving credit in return for collateral (gold, currency and bonds) and lenders' parking liquidity in deposits with the central bank.

CBI has asked lenders to allocate a portion of their assets to trade in bonds. "Given that in the new framework the CBI manages liquidity of banks and non-bank credit institutions based on the issued Islamic bonds, they need to allot a portion of their assets to [buying] bonds," the CBI said.

The policy is also backed by the provisions of the budget bill for the next Iranian calendar year (March 2020-21).

In Note 5 of the budget bill for the forthcoming fiscal year, the government has envisioned the launch of OMO for "implementing monetary policy, managing interest rates and controlling inflation".

Global economy anemic and incomes likely to suffer, UN says

People in a number of countries, mostly in Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa, will see their incomes stagnate or decline this year, the United Nations said.

A decade after the financial crisis, the global economy remains sluggish, and trade and geopolitical tensions could further derail recovery, the UN said.

The world economy expanded by just 2.3% last year, its slowest pace in a decade, and could grow by 2.5% in 2020 if downside risks are kept at bay, it said in a report.

"For this year there is a hope of a pick-up, but downside risks and vulnerabilities remain very significant," said Richard Kozul-Wright, head of globalization and development strategies at the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and co-author of the report.

"A lot of the pick-up that we see for this year hinges on the performance of large emerging economies," Kozul-Wright told a news briefing, naming Argentina, Mexico, Turkey and Russia.

The United Nations expects growth to remain "anemic" in most advanced economies, including the United States. Japan may do better, because of the Olympics, Kozul-Wright said.

"Quite a large number of countries will actually see stagnation or decline in per capita incomes this year, predominantly in Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa," he said, flagging the burden of debt repayment and interest payments.

The World Bank last week trimmed its global growth forecast for 2019 and 2020 because of a slower-than-expected recovery in trade and investment. It also forecast 2020 growth at 2.5%.

The United States and China signed Phase 1 of a trade agreement on Wednesday, defusing an 18-month row that has hit global growth.

The "direct impact of tariffs on the slowdown is probably not that great ... but the knock-on effects of the breakdown of supply chains and other parts of that story on investment seem to be more significant," Kozul-Wright said.

The World Bank's concern over "policy uncertainty" appeared to be a euphemism for U.S. President Donald Trump's trade policies, he said.

"Because the only explanation of policy uncertainty that they have is tariff tantrums and problems in the trading system," he said.

"We think there are very serious systemic problems that have not been dealt with properly that were to some extent the cause of the crisis and have continued in the decade since," he said. (Source: hellenicshippingnews.com)

TSE posts highest ever weekly growth

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE) witnessed the highest ever weekly rise of its main index, TEDPIX, in the past Iranian calendar week (ended on Friday), which was the last week of Iran's tenth calendar month of Dey, Tasnim news agency reported.

The index rose 45,638 points, or 12.9 percent, during the past week to stand at 399,445 points.

As reported, 27.689 billion securities valued at 149.793 trillion rials (about \$3.56 billion) were traded through 2.151 deals at TSE in the past week, experiencing growth of 12.9 percent and 33.7 percent in the number and value of traded securities, respectively, while 54.2

percent rise in the number of trades.

The first market's index rose 33,270 points, or 13.11 percent, to 286,972, and second market's index increased 92,359 points, or 12.57 percent, to 827,378, at TSE in the previous week, the same report confirmed.

As previously announced, TEDPIX rose 49,000 points, or 16.7 percent, to stand at 353,997 points at the end of the past Iranian calendar month of Azar (ends on December 21, 2019).

Reportedly, some 82.215 billion securities worth 432.151 trillion rials (about \$10.29 billion) were traded through 10.153 million deals at TSE during the previous month,



with growth of 61 percent and 76 percent in the number and value of traded securities, respectively, while 71 percent rise in the number of deals.

'Iran capable of boosting exports to neighbors up to \$100b'

ECONOMY TEHRAN — The head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) says the country has the capacity to increase exports to its 15 neighbors up to \$100 billion, IRNA reported.

Speaking in the meeting of an expert desk on exports to Qatar and Oman in the southern province of Hormozgan on Thursday, Hamid Zadboum said "Pakistan and Turkey have the highest capacity to import Iranian goods, which is good news for Iranian businessmen and exporters."

He further pointed to the Persian Gulf states, as good markets for some Iranian-made commodities, adding that large markets such as Russia and China should also be considered by exporters.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the official put Iran-Qatar, and Iran-Oman trade turnovers at \$230 million and \$1.16 billion, respectively, saying that the figures could be increased much more.

The TPO head further announced that the Iran-Qatar Joint Economic Committee meeting is due to be held in



TPO Head Hamid Zadboum

Tehran in the upcoming months in which the two sides are going to explore ways of expanding economic ties.

An exhibition of the two countries' economic capabil-

ities is also scheduled to be held on the sidelines of the committee meeting.

Back in November 2019, Head of Iran's Planning and Budget Organization (PBO) said that the government is seeking to double the value of non-oil exports to the neighboring countries in the next Iranian calendar year (March 2020-March 2021).

"Based on the targets set, we (have to) bring the non-oil exports to \$48 billion from the \$24-billion that we currently have," Mohammad-Baqer Nobakht said.

Iran shares border with fifteen countries, namely the United Arab Emirates, Iraq, Turkey, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Russia, Oman, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Kuwait, Qatar, Kazakhstan, Armenia, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia whose total value of annual imports exceed \$1000 billion.

Based on the data published by TPO, the value of trade with the neighboring countries stood at over \$36.5 billion in the past Iranian calendar year; that is about 41 percent of the country's total non-oil trade in the mentioned time span.

'Govt. should count on private sector to boost exports'



ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iranian industry, mining and trade minister said the government should activate and exploit all the capacities of the country's private sector in order to boost the non-oil exports.

Speaking in a meeting with senior officials from Trade Promotion Organization (TPO), Reza Rahmani said exports is the leading factor in the country's economic development and "We need to activate all the capacities of the country's private sector for improving exports."

"Whenever, private bodies such as Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA), the Chamber of Co-operatives and Iran Chamber of Guilds are fully active in the field and are shown the necessary support, we can safely say that Iran's export has entered a developmental phase," Rahmani stressed.

The official further suggested some solutions for increasing the exports by the private sector including regional segmenta-

tion, creation of legal and competitiveness platforms, and elimination of unnecessary regulations.

Mentioning some of the restrictions imposed on the country's economy by U.S. sanctions, Rahmani said: "Expansion of [non-oil] exports can break even the toughest sanctions, and I assure you that we will pass through these tough conditions as well."

Since the re-imposition of the U.S. sanctions, Iranian industry ministry has been taking necessary measures for supporting domestic production and increasing exports.

Back in August 2019, Rahmani unveiled a master plan for promoting domestic production and increasing exports in the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 20, 2020).

Coming under seven major axes, the ministry's program mainly focuses on developing and supporting domestic production as well as expanding exports to the neighboring countries.

TPO to hold meeting on introducing Afghanistan's markets on Tuesday



ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) plans to hold a meeting on introduction of Afghanistan's markets to the Iranian traders and businessmen on Tuesday, TPO website published.

The meeting is to be participated by the members of Iran-Afghanistan Joint Chamber of Commerce.

The neighbor Afghanistan is a major export destination of Iranian products, and as Iran is seriously pursuing the objective of boosting non-oil exports to its neighbors, making the exporters acquainted with this country's markets is an agenda.

Afghanistan Ambassador to Tehran Abdul Ghafoor Liwal has said that his country plans to increase commodity transit through Iranian Chabahar Port.

Making the remarks in a meeting with the Chairman of the Board of Chabahar Free Trade-Industrial Zone Organization Abdolrahim Kordi in last November, Liwal said, "Expansion of all-out relations won't

be possible without stronger economic ties and we are determined for stronger presence of our businessmen and traders in Chabahar Port."

"Chabahar is an economic and a transit bridge for Afghanistan and we are going to expand our economic relations through increasing exports and imports through Chabahar," he said.

According to the official, following the country's plans for boosting trade in Chabahar, setting up an Afghan bank branch in the port is one of the plans that Afghanistan is pursuing along with other programs to resolve issues like residency and certification problems.

Afghanistan officially started exporting goods to India through Chabahar port in a ceremony held in early February, 2019.

The event was attended by Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, along with Iranian Ambassador to Kabul Mohammadreza Bahrami and Indian Ambassador to Afghanistan Vinay Kumar.

ECB policymakers strike optimistic note with Lagarde at helm

By Valentina Romei

The European Central Bank struck a more optimistic tone in its first monetary policy meeting with Christine Lagarde as president, noting signs of economic stabilization in the eurozone and an uptick in investor sentiment.

"Overall, business surveys since mid-September suggested a stabilization in output growth at moderate rates," the ECB said in its account of December's meeting, which was published on Thursday.

While the risks to the growth outlook "remained tilted to the downside", "these risks had become somewhat less pronounced", the minutes of the meeting said.

In the later months of 2019 concerns grew among economists that the downturn in the eurozone's industrial sector might affect its so-far resilient services sector. But "there appeared to be tentative indications that industrial production might bottom out before these spillovers became more generalized", policymakers noted.

Governing council members "broadly agreed" that incoming data "pointed to continued weak euro area growth dynamics, although there were some signs of stabilization". "Since the last governing council meeting, economic news, as perceived by market participants, had become less negative."

The ECB restarted its asset purchase program in November at a monthly pace



of €20b and the minutes revealed that the "measures ... had been effective and were reaching the economy, although more time was needed for their full effects on economic outcomes to unfold."

Policymakers remain concerned about the persistent risks to the outlook for the eurozone economy, according to the minutes of the December 12 meeting, at which the council decided to leave monetary policy unchanged.

■ Weighing on the euro area

The "ongoing weakness of international trade in an environment of persistent global uncertainties in combination with sector-spe-

cific domestic factors continued to weigh on the euro area manufacturing sector and was dampening investment," the minutes said.

The minutes also noted the "persistence of uncertainties related to trade tensions and to the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the EU" as another key risk.

Some policymakers expressed concern about the "potential impact of negative interest rates on euro area households, with savings and consumption dynamics also requiring close monitoring," the minutes said.

However they recognized that "while the negative interest rate environment was damping banks' net interest income", the

"overall effects on bank profitability had remained positive".

There was "some discussion" in the meeting about how climate-related policies, including the European Commission's Green Deal package, should be taken into account in its economic projections, "with members contending that there was a need to step up efforts to understand the economic consequences of climate change", the minutes said.

"It was argued that while such policies could be considered a negative supply shock, the response to climate change could also lead to significantly higher investment, while the impact on oil and energy prices was uncertain," the minutes said.

The ECB publishes an account of the governing council's monetary policy discussions four weeks after each monetary policy meeting.

The central bank will next meet on January 23, when it is expected to launch the strategic review that Ms Lagarde announced at the December meeting. The review, which finishes by the end of the year, will examine the effectiveness of all the ECB's monetary policy tools.

Although policymakers "suggested that some broad guidance be communicated about the forthcoming strategy review, including the likely timeline", the minutes noted that they had decided it was advisable not to discuss the strategy prior to its launch. (Source: ft.com)

ICOFC aims to boost Danan oil field's output

E N E R G Y TEHRAN - Iranian Central Oil Fields Company (ICOFC) has installed the first drilling rig of Danan oil field's development project, aiming for the field's maintenance and enhancing its oil production, Shana reported.

According to Parviz Salehvand, the director of Naft Shahr, Saadat Abad and Danan oilfields' development projects at ICOFC, the rig will start operation in a few days.

Two other rigs will also be deployed in the field, in west central province of Ilam, over the next two months, the official said. He noted that the purpose of this projects

is to increase the output of the field by 10,000 barrels per day (bpd).

Drilling of 11 new wells (including appraisal and development wells) has been provisioned in the development project of this field, he said.

"The project also includes geophysical technical services like designing, collecting, conducting three-dimensional seismic studies, constructing a Skid Mounted Desalination plant with a capacity of 10,000 bpd, constructing access roads and wells as well as construction of a two-kilometer pipeline," Salehvand added.



Back in July 2019, ICOFC also started the development project of Sa'adat Abad oil field in central Iran.

Danan oil field is located in western Iran. Discovered in 2007, Danan started producing oil in 2014 and its current output stands at 30,000 b/d, which is carried to Dehloran

production unit for sweetening and compression.

The field is situated 30 kilometers southeast of Dehloran and 80 kilometers northwest of Andimeshk. The main reservoirs in this field are Asmari and Bangestan (Ilam and Sarvak formations).

Iran to produce \$125m of petchem catalysts annually by Mar. 2022

E N E R G Y TEHRAN - Iran plans to produce \$125 million worth of petrochemical catalysts annually, by the end of the Iranian calendar year of 1400 (March 20, 2022), Shana reported on Wednesday, quoting a petrochemical official.

Speaking in the inauguration ceremony of Takht-e-Jamshid petrochemical plant in southern Iran, the Managing Director of the country's Petrochemical Research and Technology Company (PRTC) Ali Pajouhan said all the mentioned catalysts will be consumed by petrochemical plants inside the country.

Noting that the country's petrochemical industry is currently using 40 different types of catalysts which cost the industry \$260 million annually, the official added: "Currently, the knowledge for producing 16 of the mentioned 40 types has been indigenized which would save the country \$105 million every year."

Earlier on Thursday, National Petrochemical Company



(NPC) held a seminar on the indigenization of petrochemical industry catalysts in Kish Island.

According to the seminar's Executive Secretary Mohammad-Amin Ebrahimi, the mentioned seminar was aimed to create a common language and synergy between catalyst

producers and consumers and also to provide a platform to discuss and evaluate the performance of the native catalysts.

Back in September 2019, Pajouhan had said that the country's petrochemical complexes were keen on utilizing domestic catalysts in their operations.

The official noted that significant steps were taken for the domestic production of catalysts used in petrochemical processes in Iran.

Petrochemical is Iran's most important industry after oil and gas. The National Petrochemical Company hopes to lift output capacity to 120 million tons per annum by 2022.

The petrochemical industry has played a key role in domestic economic growth as it creates value-added and reduces the sale of oil and gas on which the economy has been dependent for decades.

With abundant hydrocarbon reserves and new private sector investments, Iran is working hard to maintain its global status in the key sector and broaden its scope.

Global clean power investment 'hits £282b'

Global investment in renewable energy capacity hit \$282 billion last year boosted by a string of offshore wind deals, according to BloombergNEF.

The figure was up 1% from \$280.2 billion in 2018, thanks to a second busier half of the year.

A late surge in offshore wind financing took investment in the sector to \$29.9 billion, up 19% on 2018.

Offshore wind farms reaching financial close in the fourth quarter of 2019 included the 432MW Nearth na Gaoithe project off the Scottish coast at \$3.4 billion, the 376MW Formosa 2 Miaoli development off Taiwan, at \$2 billion, and the 500MW Fuzhou Changle C installation in the East China Sea, at \$1.5 billion.

The first of France's offshore wind projects to be financed, the 480MW, \$2.5 billion Saint Nazaire, got its go-ahead in the third quarter.

BNEF wind research Chief Tom Harries said: "Offshore wind developers in China brought forward 15 projects to beat a scheduled expiry of that country's feed-in tariff. We expect the sector's global momentum to continue in 2020, with the focus on gigawatt-scale projects in the British North

Sea and the first commercial arrays off the U.S. east coast."

Combined, onshore and offshore wind monopolized investments with \$138.2 billion globally, up 6%. Solar followed at \$131.1 billion, down 3%.

Falling capital costs in wind and solar meant that the two combined are likely to have seen around 180GW added last year, up some 20GW on 2018, BNEF found.

China was the biggest investor in renewables, at \$83.4 billion in 2019, but this was 8% down on 2018 and the lowest since 2013.

The U.S. was the second-largest investing country in renewable energy capacity, at \$55.5 billion, up 28% on 2018, as wind and solar developers raced to qualify for federal tax credits.

BNEF Americas head Ethan Zindler said: "It's notable that in this third year of the Trump presidency, which has not been particularly supportive of renewables, U.S. clean energy investment set a new record by a country mile."

The tax credit step-down

"These technologies are more cost-competitive than ever, and the fact that there was a tax credit step-down on

the horizon made the market particularly busy in 2019."

Europe slipped behind the U.S. in 2019, investing \$54.3 billion in renewables capacity, down 7%. Spain led the way with \$8.4 billion, up 25% on 2018 and the highest annual figure for that country since 2011.

The UK invested \$5.3 billion, down 40% and its lowest since 2007. Germany was down 30% at \$4.4 billion, its lowest since 2004. The Netherlands was up 25% at \$5.5 billion, France was 3% higher at \$4.4 billion, and Ukraine 56% up at \$3.4 billion.

Japan invested \$16.5 billion in renewable capacity, mainly solar, in 2019, down 10%, while Australia committed \$5.6 billion, down 40%. India put \$9.3 billion into green energy, 14% less than in 2018.

The United Arab Emirates invested a record \$4.5 billion almost all of it for the 950MW Al Maktoum solar thermal and photovoltaic complex in Dubai.

In Latin America, Brazil lifted renewable energy capacity investment by 74% to \$6.5 billion last year, while Mexico committed \$4.3 billion, up 17% and Chile \$4.9 billion, up fourfold.

(Source: renews.biz)

Oil steady ahead of data seen confirming sluggish China growth

Oil prices were steady on Friday as investors braced for data expected to show China's economic growth last year slid to its slowest pace in 29 years, holding on to gains for now after Washington and Beijing inked a long-awaited trade deal.

Brent LCO1 was 3 cents higher at \$64.65 by 0123 GMT, after gaining nearly 1% on Thursday. U.S. crude CL1 was up 6 cents at \$58.58 a barrel, having risen more than 1% the previous session.

The Phase 1 accord between the world's top two economies helped boosted the outlook for global trade, pushing oil prices higher on Thursday. That mood was further boosted after the U.S. Senate approved changes to the U.S.-Mexi-



co-Canada Free Trade Agreement following the signing of the Phase 1 deal.

The impact of the trade row between Washington and Beijing last year is likely to show up in China's official 2019

economic data, set to be released at 0200 GMT.

The "next big move for crude may need to come (from) an improving global outlook that may require further stimulus from Europe," where growth has been less than stellar, said Edward Moya senior market analyst at OANDA.

Still, prices are being held back after the International Energy Agency (IEA) forecast that oil supply would exceed demand for crude from the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, even if members are fully compliant in their agreement with Russia and other producers to curb output.

(Source: reuters.com)

Brent/Dubai spreads back above \$2/b amid discounted market

Benchmark Dubai crude futures' discount to ICE Brent widened in mid-morning trading hours in Asia on Friday, as trading for the March loading cycle in the Middle East sour crude market showed firmly discounted price levels for most spot cargoes.

At 11 am in Singapore (0300 GMT), the March Brent/Dubai Exchange Futures for Swaps spread was pegged at \$2.09/b, up from \$1.98/b assessed at the close of trading in Asia at 0830 GMT Thursday.

Spot market activity kicked off midweek, with cargoes for most light, medium and heavy sour crude grades loading from the Persian Gulf seen in discounts to their respective official selling prices.

Qatar Petroleum's tender for Al-Shaheen crude was reportedly awarded in a range of \$2.50/b to \$2.90/b over Platts front-month Dubai crude assessments, effectively setting a ceiling for the medium sour basket for the month.

Cargoes of light sour grades such as Murban, Das Blend and Umm Lulu were trading in deep discounts to their respective OSPs, said traders.

The Platts Market on Close assessment process on Thursday saw five offers for various cargo grades, with four offered down to discounts ranging from minus 30 cents/b to minus 60 cents/b to their respective OSPs.

(Source: Platts)

Why OPEC is a classic cartel and could regain its power over oil markets

By Ellen R. Wald

Is OPEC a cartel? The Saudi Oil Minister, Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman, says no.

In a speech at a petroleum technology conference in Dhahran, he pushed back against this long-held assumption, explaining that the media formulated the notion of OPEC being a cartel and that it "in no way has the connotations of a cartel."

The argument that OPEC is not a cartel is based primarily on the organization's several historical failures to set oil prices. However, the group indeed operates as a cartel. Even during times when OPEC is largely ineffectual, it's valuable for traders to recognize the scenarios in which it could manipulate prices—in the near and long-term.

Does the definition fit?

A cartel is formed when two or more producers of a product collude in order to restrict supply or set prices.

OPEC is often considered a classic example, seemingly fitting this definition. In the 1970s, the producing countries that made up OPEC controlled over 70% of the global oil supply and by conspiring to restrict it, they increased the price of oil. The group exhibited quintessential traits of a cartel, like coordination and working in concert to limit production and lift prices.



For example, in the weeks preceding the oil shocks in 1973, OPEC countries negotiated as a single entity with major international oil companies for a set oil price. When they were unsuccessful in their negotiations, OPEC decided to assign prices unilaterally. In 1973, OPEC actually set the price that its members would charge, not only the amount of oil produced or exported.

At the time, some OPEC producers sought the highest price they could attain while others campaigned for a more reasonable number. Then Saudi oil minister, Zaki Yamani, argued that it was in the organization's best interest to keep prices somewhat appropriate because if they were too lofty they risked discouraging global economic development and even potentially causing a recession in which less oil would be purchased.

Selling non-OPEC oil

He argued that prices that were too high could also urge more competitors to arise when they saw the opportunity to produce and sell non-OPEC oil at equally high prices. Zaki Yaman ultimately lost that argument, and instead of establishing prices at \$7 or \$8, OPEC set the price at \$13 per barrel.

Successful price manipulator?

Historically, many OPEC producers have cheated on their quotas and over-produced in order to increase their country's revenue. This is one of the arguments used to suggest that OPEC is not a cartel, but it is actually typical behavior and a key reason it is so difficult to maintain a cartel, especially when there are no real consequences for over-producing.

In the case of a drug cartel made up of criminal organizations, coordinating to set global drug prices, members are theoretically kept in line with threats of violence. Since OPEC does not employ these measures, the greatest threat the group has in its arsenal is expulsion.

Today 40% of global oil production is ruled by OPEC countries. Challenges to OPEC's status as a cartel arise from its historically futile attempts at setting prices through supply restrictions and that, at times, OPEC decides to increase supply in order to slash prices rather than reduce supply to boost prices.

The fact that OPEC doesn't always succeed does not mean that it isn't designed to function as a cartel. Moreover, intentionally increasing production and dropping the price is a cartel strategy, as it was in 2014 when then Saudi oil minister Ali al-Naimi led a plan to flood the market with OPEC oil and regain some of the group's position of strength amid the shale revolution in North America. In 2014, OPEC caused the price of oil to drop, but it was working as a successful cartel to do so.

The powerful countries in OPEC

Today, OPEC oil ministers generally refuse to answer when asked what price they would like to see for oil. Saudi Arabia and the UAE, two of the most powerful countries in OPEC, have long asserted their support of a stable, sustainable oil market and don't have price targets.

These published statements do not necessarily reflect the private meetings between ministers. OPEC has an especially bad public image in much of the world, in part because of the role its oil shocks played in sending the developed world into a recession in the 1970s, in part because its activities are contrary to free market ideology, and, in part, because its member countries generally operate under non-democratic governments.

OPEC is less effective at managing and manipulating the oil market today than it once was, although it wasn't able to achieve precise control even in its best years. Today, smaller producing countries see fewer benefits in belonging to the organization and are leaving to pursue their own production policies. After all, if OPEC succeeds in raising prices, even the producers that do not belong to the group can prosper.

Perhaps this is part of the reason the Saudi oil minister is so concerned about rebranding the organization. He recently said that he believes OPEC should be seen as a group of "responsible producers" rather than a cartel.

Don't be fooled by OPEC's shift towards a more inclusive brand. OPEC is actively seeking to increase its membership and bolster the compliance rates of participating members with the ultimate goal of improving its ability to manipulate global oil prices.

Why pay attention?

Its decisions are still important to the oil market even if it cannot influence prices as effectively as it sometimes did in the past. Some of OPEC's decisions today have most impact in the very short term, as an announcement from Vienna can still move the market at the moment.

Yet the market appears quite skeptical that OPEC and its current partners, like Russia, are really succeeding at manipulating supply in any meaningful way. However, change is inevitable and as most large oil firms have decreased investment in exploration and production of new sources of oil, it is key to note that in the not-too-distant future OPEC might again control over 50% of the global oil market. Then, we will likely see a more powerful OPEC cartel again.

(Source: investing.com)

Second Announcement



1398.6387

NATIONAL IRANIAN SOUTH OILFIELDS COMPANY AHVAZ-IRAN

TENDER NO. : 01-31-9450090

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

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

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

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

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

NO ADVANCE PAYMENT WILL BE PAID

FOREIGN PURCHASING DEPARTMENT
Bldg. No. 104, Material Procurement Management Complex
Kouy-e-Fadaeian Islam (New Site), Ahvaz, Iran
E.MAIL: KALA.F.P@nisoc.ir Tel. No.: 061 341 23455 Fax No.: 061 3445 7437
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Declaring use of trigger mechanism is E3's top perfidy

Britain, France and Germany, the European signatories to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA or 2015 Iran Nuclear deal), issued a joint statement in Brussels on Tuesday by which they declared utilizing of "trigger mechanism" under the deal.

This article is trying to shed light on the move by the European troika.

First of all, it should be mentioned that the E3's measure to declare utilizing of the trigger mechanism is a passive move which is rooted in the troika's weak stance. It was Iran that resumed reconciliation process under the JCPOA approximately one and a half year ago via sending official letters Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif to the JCPOA's coordinator, so, the E3's move is not a new measure neither in terms of processing nor in terms of practical approach.

In fact, following the U.S. illegal withdrawal from the JCPOA and re-imposing of sanctions which had been removed under the deal, the JCPOA found itself in an unbalanced unsustainable situation.

Accordingly, Iran, based on the JCPOA's paragraph 36, embarked on resuming reconciliation process and submitted its complaint before the JCPOA's joint commission. Afterward, the commission held several sessions and found out that the major cause of the then complicated condition had been the illegal withdrawal of Washington from the deal.

The commission further approved some breakthroughs to narrow down negative impacts of the U.S. move.

Unfortunately, the European signatories of the deal, in spite of their undertaking under the JCPOA as well as the obvious commitments they accepted officially to fulfill according to the commission's breakthroughs, could not perform any sensible serious measure to fulfil their obligations.

The E3's passive approach caused Iran to utilize the projected regulations stipulated in the paragraphs 26 and 36 of the JCPOA to reduce parts of its commitments under the deal via implementing five modification steps in considerable intervals.

E3's perfidy under JCPOA

The Europeans have long records of damaging opportunities as well as perfidies in their approach towards Iran. For instance, since the beginning of the Islamic Revolution, the European countries proved their hostility towards the Iranian nation shoulder to shoulder with the Americans. In some



Negotiators from Iran and Europe at a meeting of the JCPOA Joint Commission in Vienna in June. (Leonhard Foeger/Reuters)

cases, they played an agent role which had been aiming at intensifying pressures on Iran in line with the U.S. interests.

The E3 did fulfill none of their commitments under the JCPOA since the nuclear pact's formation. They instead, tried to force Iran to surrender to the Donald Trump government's 12-leg conditions.

Over one and a half years has passed from the Europeans' promise to save the deal via operationalizing a financial channel to ease trade with Iran to bypass the U.S. sanctions but they have not performed any practical action in this regard so far.

Intentional delay by the European Union to present and activate the mentioned financial mechanism is the fruit of secret negotiations between the E3's foreign ministers and the U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo within the framework of "the secret diplomacy".

As the theory of the Europe's independency in the international order has several times been disapproved, investing on

the European's behavior will bring about nothing but failure.

In the world of realities, if Europe intends to remain in the JCPOA to reap its benefits it has to comply with Trump's conditions regarding the JCPOA, including omitting timetable for Iran nuclear program's restrictions, more inspections from Iran's nuclear sites, limiting Iran's missile power and forcing Iran to put an end to its support for the resistant front whose admission by Iran are totally impossible.

Following withdrawal of the U.S. from the pact, some experts opined that the move has created a suitable opportunity for Europe to attain and show its independency from Washington.

Unfortunately, performance of the so-called three European powers showed in the last one and a half years that they have neither might nor will and capabilities of taking independency from the U.S.

The three European nations of Britain, France and Germany have mostly played the role of road-maker for Washington.



Riches: Artist's vision of a mining settlement on the double asteroid 90 Antiope (Alamy)

Private sector navigates outer space ahead of international law

Clarification sought for rules governing lunar extraction and space pollution

By Clive Cookson

The foundations of today's international space law were laid at the height of the cold war and the Soviet-American space race. In 1959, just two years after the Russians launched Sputnik, the first artificial satellite, the UN established a Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space. In 1967 the landmark Outer Space Treaty came into force with its declaration that "the moon and other celestial bodies... shall be the province of all mankind". This Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space — to give its longer title — remains the cornerstone of international space law and is still attracting new signatories. Last August Bahrain became the 110th party to the treaty.

It was supplemented by four, more limited, international agreements brokered by the UN during the late 1960s and 1970s — governing the rescue of astronauts, liability for damage, registration of launches and lunar activities. No further space treaties have been drawn up since.

Yet the past 40 years, and the past two decades in particular, have seen space activities transformed, as a thriving private sector has moved into what had been almost entirely the province of governments. The 1967 Outer Space Treaty is excellent at defining responsibilities of member states — not to militarize space nor appropriate territory on celestial bodies, for instance — but understandably it fails to anticipate the extent and nature of commercial operations.

Because space belongs to no one, problems are emerging. Two issues stand out in particular as needing legal clarification: space mining and space pollution. Extraction of extraterrestrial resources Plans to mine asteroids have receded into the future since the idea came to public attention less than four years ago. The moon is likely to be a more immediate target for commercial exploitation, with several ambitious startup companies planning to extract lunar resources in the 2020s. They include ispace of Japan and Lunar Resources and Moon Express of the U.S. Such moves would become possible, for instance, by using ice on the moon's surface? it could provide water for lunar colonies, or be split electrically — using solar power — into hydrogen and oxygen to fuel spacecraft for further exploration of the solar system. Minerals and metals could be used similarly. Whether the Outer Space Treaty permits such activities is unclear.

In the absence of a clear international legal framework, individual countries are formulating national laws that allow their companies and citizens to exploit natural resources on celestial bodies. The U.S. led the way with the Space Resource Exploration and Utilization Act that President Barack Obama signed in 2015. Then Luxembourg, a small country with big space ambitions, followed suit in 2017 and UAE's new space law will take effect this year. In November, the UN Office for Outer Space Affairs (Unoosa) signed an agreement with the Luxembourg government to launch a project called Space Law for New Space Actors. It will help countries starting to develop space programs to draw up legislation in line with international space law. Simonetta di Pippo, Unoosa director, says at least 70 countries already operate national space programs "and many more are beginning to explore the opportunities offered by space activities".

Orbital pollution is the other question, and arguably one that needs addressing more immediately than resource exploitation, is orbital pollution. Debris from defunct spacecraft is an evergrowing threat to the active satellites on which modern life depends, since they provide communications and broadcasts, navigation, weather forecasts and environmental monitoring. According to Unoosa, almost 9,000 objects have been launched into space since Sputnik, and the total will rise rapidly during the 2020s as operators put up "constellations" containing thousands of small communications satellites. The European Space Agency (ESA) estimates that more than 3,000 abandoned satellites are in orbit, as well as 34,000 fragments of debris larger than 10cm that would destroy an active satellite and untold millions of tiny pieces that could do serious damage with an impact in the wrong place.

In the absence of international law to force satellite operators to remove redundant spacecraft from busy orbits, voluntary codes have been drawn up by the UN and its affiliates such as the International Telecommunication Union. The 2007 UN Space Debris Mitigation guidelines are one example. But Jan Wörner, ESA director-general, wants stronger measures.

He says it should be compulsory for every new satellite to include a built-in mechanism to bring it down to burn up safely in the upper atmosphere at the end of its life. Otherwise the operator should be compelled to sign a deorbiting contract with an external provider, probably a specialist company or space agency.

Methods proposed by ESA and others include grabbing the junk with robotic arms, catching it in a net or harpooning it. The communications satellite constellations planned by OneWeb of the UK and SpaceX and Amazon threaten a quite different sort of space pollution.

Astronomers are voicing concern that the reflected light and radio waves from thousands of satellites will ruin observations by their sensitive telescopes. In the absence of any global governance system to provide environmental protection in space, there may be little that astronomers can do about it, apart from shaming the satellite companies to do as much as possible to reduce the threat. SpaceX, for example, is experimenting with giving its next lot of Starlink satellites a less reflective coating. It has been difficult to prevent pollution of unowned parts of Earth, such as open oceans and the atmosphere. Preventing a similar "tragedy of the commons" in space may be just as hard.

(Source: Financial Times)

China is coming nearer to India. Is it dangerously close?

China is coming in Myanmar to stay. It already has foothold at Hambantota in Sri Lanka, Djibouti on the Arab peninsula, Gwadar in Pakistan and serious presence in Maldives.

By Prabhash K Dutta

U.S. President Donald Trump may not know that China shares a long land border with India but if he is worried about Chinese global expansion plans, Chinese President Xi Jinping is adding to his woes. Xi Jinping is in Myanmar today (Friday) on a mega expansion plan. China is not only strengthening its presence along India's land borders but also coming closer to India's sea borders on all possible points of intersection.

Xi Jinping's two day visit to Myanmar is the first by a Chinese leader in 19 years. Ostensibly, Xi Jinping is visiting Myanmar to celebrate 70 years of diplomatic relation with India's eastern neighbor -- Myanmar.

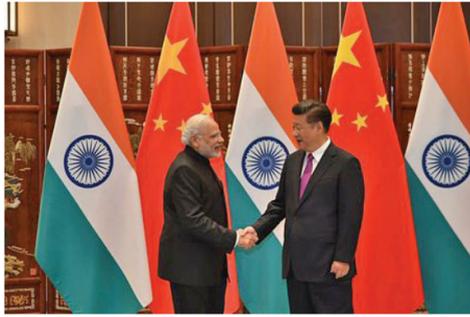
There is another common thread linking China with Myanmar -- the treatment of their Muslim minority, Uighurs, and the Rohingya respectively. None is apologetic about it but both are said to be contributing to increasing global radicalization of Muslim youths.

Radicalization of Muslim youths due to developments along India's northern and eastern borders is a cause of concern for New Delhi. But that is secondary in the view of the other Chinese plan -- encircling India.

While India has refused to join China's Belt and Road Initiative for violating its sovereignty in Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir, Myanmar is part of the Chinese expansion program.

There is a China-Myanmar Economic Corridor project, which is on the line of a similar project involving Pakistan. This brings China close on both western and eastern fronts of India. China is sitting in the north and making serious inroads in Nepal and Bhutan to make India fairly uncomfortable.

To top it up, China is developing a deep-sea port on My-



anmar's western coast in the Bay of Bengal. This deep-sea port is coming up at Kyaukphyu, situated in the Rakhine province from where the Rohingyas were driven out.

Kyaukphyu is strategically placed. If you look at the map of the region, you will find Kyaukphyu occupying top of a triangle with Kolkata and Andaman Islands forming the other two ends of its base.

China is coming here to stay. It already has foothold at Hambantota in Sri Lanka, Djibouti on the Arab peninsula, Gwadar in Pakistan and serious presence in Maldives.

In almost every case, China has used its money power to force its expansionist ambitions on the host countries. Of all debts that Myanmar has on its head today, about 40 per cent is owed to China.

Curiously, China is funding a hydropower project on the main Myanmar river Irrawaddy. Under the agreement, China will get 90 per cent of the total power generated by

the Myitsone dam project with installed capacity of 6,000 megawatt. So, Myanmar gives its land and its river, China brings its money and engineering, and gets 90 per cent of electricity in return. This is happening in India's vicinity.

Given that Myanmar has its own share of problems with China, it is safely assumed that the leadership of the country is aware of the dangers that China poses, not just to the land of golden pagodas but also to its time-tested friend, India.

China has been backing armed insurgency in the border regions of Myanmar. In fact, China was behind the failed peace deal of 2015 when Japan and other powers had almost brought Myanmar and the insurgents to an agreement. China sensed a loss of grip over the situation and forced, it is said, the insurgents to withdraw from the peace deal.

With greater foothold in Myanmar, China poses a grave challenge to strategic security of India. It already has got some stake in Bangladesh through a \$25 billion loan, supply of submarines and weapons, and securing the status of a mediator between Bangladesh and Myanmar over the Rohingya crisis.

India is the only neighboring country of China which has resisted and challenged to some extent the expansionist agenda of the communist regime.

Xi Jinping is said to be prodding the Chinese policy makers to "return to true form of communism" and his expansionist agenda is an extension of its global vision. This is where the U.S. thinks India is its great ally.

But presence of Donald Trump at the helm of affairs in the U.S. appears to be hampering the strategic interests of both India and the U.S. -- since he is utterly illiterate about geography of the region and disinterested in related affairs for a U.S. president.

(Source: India Today)

Second Announcement



1398.6437

N.I.S.O.C

NATIONAL IRANIAN SOUTH OILFIELDS COMPANY AHVAZ-IRAN

TENDER NO. : 48-32-9825000

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

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

Vendors who intend to participate in aforesaid tenders are requested to send their "Intention to participate" letter via Fax to the following number along with their resume according to Qualitative Assessment Form no. 1, available at: WWW.nisoc.ir, not later than 14 days after the second announcement, otherwise, their requests for participation in the tender will be disregarded. The applicants should have relevant background in supplying the required goods and capability to provide and submit a bid bond of 62,343 EURO or 8,919,685,960 RIAL, in favor of NISOC. Tender documents including the materials thorough technical specifications and Qualitative Assessment Forms can be accessed via: WWW.nisoc.ir-material procurement management tab. ONLY ACCEPTABLE DELIVERY TERM IS D.D.P. NISOC'S WAREHOUSE, AGHAJARI, IRAN. PAYMENT TERM IS C.O.D. SUBSEQUENT TO NISOC'S MATERIAL APPROVAL. NO ADVANCE PAYMENT WILL BE PAID.

FOREIGN PURCHASING DEPARTMENT
Bldg. No. 104, Material Procurement Management Complex
Kouy-e Fadaeian Islam (New Site), Ahvaz, Iran

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

Over 5,000 camels shot dead in 5 days in Australia

TEHRAN (Tasnim) — Helicopter-borne marksmen killed more than 5,000 camels in a five-day cull of feral herds that were threatening indigenous communities in drought-stricken areas of southern Australia, officials said.

Aboriginal leaders in South Australia state said extremely large herds of the non-native camels had been driven towards rural communities by drought and extreme heat, threatening scarce food and drinking water, damaging infrastructure, and creating a dangerous hazard for drivers.

The cull in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands -- home to about 2,300 indigenous people in the arid northwest of South Australia -- ended on Sunday, said APY general manager Richard King.

"We appreciate the concerns of animal rights activists, but there is significant misinformation about the realities of life for non-native feral animals, in what is among the most arid and remote places on Earth," King said in a statement on Tuesday, according to Australian media.

APY officials said the operation had removed more than 5,000 camels.

The cull came as Australia experienced its hottest and driest year on record in 2019, with the severe drought causing some towns to run out of water and fuelling deadly bushfires that have devastated the country's southeast.

Camels were first introduced to Australia in the 1840s to aid in the exploration of the continent's vast interior, with up to 20,000 imported from India in the six decades that followed.

Tens of illegally-kept historical objects seized in Tehran

HERITAGE TEHRAN - Iranian authorities have recently confiscated 448 historical objects which were illegally kept in a place in the city of Tehran, IRNA reported on Wednesday.



A total of 448 historical relics made of bronze, silver and gold, which date back to the first millennium BC, Sassanid and Islamic periods, have been seized by the police, said Amir Rahmatollahi, a senior police official in charge of protecting cultural heritage.

Three people have been detained in this regard, he noted. The Sassanid era (224 CE–651) is of very high importance in the history of Iran. Under Sassanids, Persian art and architecture experienced a general renaissance. Crafts such as metalwork and gem-engraving grew highly sophisticated, yet scholarship was encouraged by the state. In those years, works from both the East and West were translated into Pahlavi, the language of the Sassanians.

Islamic arts, the literary, performing, and visual arts of the vast populations of the Middle East and elsewhere that adopted the Islamic faith from the 7th century onward. These adherents of the faith have created such an immense variety of literatures, performing arts, visual arts, and music that it virtually defies any comprehensive definition. In the narrowest sense, the arts of the Islamic peoples might be said to include only those arising directly from the practice of Islam.

More commonly, according to Encyclopaedia Britannica, the term is extended to include all of the arts produced by Muslim peoples, whether connected with their religion or not.

Indonesia introduces super-priority tourism destinations at ASEAN forum

The Tourism and Creative Economy Ministry formally introduced Indonesia's five super-priority tourism destinations to 43 international journalists attending the ASEAN Tourism Forum 2020 in Brunei Darussalam on Thursday.

The ministry said it expected the effort would spread the word and further information about the destinations, dubbed the new Balis, to more audiences in the world. This is the first time Indonesia introduced the five destinations to international journalists in a formal international business-to-business event.

"Many of them expressed enthusiasm and curiosity," Wisnu Bara Tarunajaya, the ministry's director of tourism human resources and inter-institutional relations, told The Jakarta Post. "They wanted to know about how to get to the destinations, what products we are ready to offer and what the strategic promotions for the destinations are," he added.

The government is developing the five super-priority destinations as a part of its efforts to make the tourism industry one of the new drivers of economic growth. The destinations are Toba Lake in North Sumatra, Borobudur in Central Java, Labuan Bajo in East Nusa Tenggara, Mandalika in West Nusa Tenggara and Likupang in North Sulawesi.

(Source: The Jakarta Post)



ROUND THE GLOBE

Early Christian Necropolis of Pécs

In the 4th century CE a remarkable series of decorated tombs were constructed in the cemetery in the town of Sopianae, in the Roman Province of Pannonia, the ruins of which survived under the ground and are situated in the current city of Pécs, in South Hungary.

The burial chambers, chapels and mausoleum excavated on the site of the Sopianae cemetery form a complex that bears witness to an ancient culture and civilization that had a lasting impact.



It is the richest collection of structural types of sepulchral monuments in the northern and western Roman provinces reflecting a diversity of cultural sources.

These monuments are important both structurally and architecturally as they were built above ground and served as both burial chambers and memorial chapels.

They are also significant in artistic terms because of their richly decorated murals of outstanding quality depicting Christian themes.

The Roman cemetery was found by archaeological excavations which began two centuries ago. Subsequent excavations revealed that the early Christian complex of monuments provides exceptional evidence of a historical continuity that spanned the turbulent centuries from the decline of the Roman Empire in the 4th century to the conquest of the Frankish Empire in the 8th century.

Sixteen structures constitute the World Heritage property, although the cemetery includes over five hundred more modest graves which cluster around the major monuments.

(Source: UNESCO)

Sorbonne experts confirm fossilized skull found in Iran belongs to Homo sapiens

HERITAGE TEHRAN - A team of researchers and archaeologists from the Sorbonne University has confirmed a fragment of a fossilized skull, which had been found in an Iranian cave, belongs to Homo sapiens, the only extant human species.

"The Sorbonne University of France has concluded the fragment of a skull, which was found in the historic Kaldar cave near Khorramabad, [the capital of western Lorestan province], is associated with the Homo sapiens through conducting laser 3D scans," CHTN quoted provincial tourism chief as saying on Thursday.

"Preliminary results of this typology analysis that is being carried out at Copenhagen University in Denmark by the means of physical anatomy, scan results and their interpretation show that fortunately the fossil belongs to the Homo sapiens (modern, intelligent) species," Seyed Amin Qasemi explained.

Kaldar is a key archaeological site that provides evidence of the Middle to Upper Paleolithic transition in Iran. The cave is situated in the western Khorramabad valley and at an elevation of 1,290 meter above sea level. It measures 16 meters long, 17 meters wide and seven meters high.

Excavations at the site in 2014–2015 led to the discovery of cultural remains generally associated with anatomically modern humans (AMHs) and evidence of a probable Neanderthal-made industry in the basal layers.

The research also offers an opportunity



to study the technological differences between the Mousterian and the first Upper Paleolithic lithic technologies as well as the human behavior in the region.

The cave has also yielded weapon fragments crafted by Neanderthals. The findings, some of which date from 21,000

to 40,000 years ago, were unveiled during a special ceremony on Saturday in May 2019. Kaldar is a key archaeological site that provides evidence of the Middle to Upper Paleolithic transition in Iran.

In taxonomy, Homo sapiens is the only extant human species. The name is

Latin for "wise man" and was introduced in 1758 by Carl Linnaeus (who is himself also the type specimen). Neanderthals are an extinct species or subspecies of archaic humans in the genus Homo, who lived within Eurasia from circa 400,000 until 40,000 years ago.

Gonbad Kavus museum features rare Turkmen rugs, carpets

HERITAGE TEHRAN - If you are a fan of hand-knitted rugs and carpets or pictorial rugs and planning to visit northern Iran, you may put Gonbad Kavus carpet museum into the itinerary of your journey to make it richer and more colorful.

The museum features rare Turkmen rugs and carpets amongst a variety of counterparts woven in every corner of the ancient country.

Turkmen carpets woven mostly by Turkmen girls and women in the northern province of Golestan come in eye-catching and mesmerizing designs, attracting many Europeans and Americans to this great piece of handicraft.

Covering 700 square meters in area, the museum opened to the public in 2014 as Iran's third major museum of carpets.

Travelers to Gonbad Kavus are well paid off when they pay a visit to the city's millennium-old brick tower, a UNESCO-regis-



tered monument that is an exemplar and innovative design of the early-Islamic-era

architecture. The UNESCO comments that the tower bears testimony to the cultural

exchange between Central Asian nomads and the ancient civilization of Iran.

Persian carpets are sought after internationally for their delicate designs and good quality. A medallion pattern is arguably the most characteristic feature of all types of Persian rugs. However, there is tremendous variation in the shapes and sizes of the medallions as well as the way they are used in various rugs. It's not wrong to say that no two rugs will have the same medallion layout.

Over 5,397,000 tons of Iranian carpets, worth \$424.451 million, were exported to over 70 countries during the past Iranian calendar year (ended March 20, 2019) with the U.S. standing on top of the importers list. Germany, the UK, Italy, France, Spain, Switzerland, Austria, Russia, Portugal, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Hungary, Romania, Poland and Ireland are other major importers of Iranian carpet.

Peru deports 5 tourists accused of damaging Machu Picchu temple



A sixth man will appear in court after the group caused a piece of a stone wall to fall and crack the floor, the authorities said.

The Peruvian authorities deported five tourists and arrested a sixth accused of damaging a temple at Machu Picchu, the famous Incan ruins in the Andes, the National Police said.

The tourists were caught just before 6 a.m. on Sunday

by staff members who work at the archaeological park, the Ministry of Culture said in a statement on Tuesday, identifying them as four men and two women from Argentina, Chile, Brazil and France.

The ministry said there was evidence that the group had sneaked into the site illegally on Saturday night and damaged a stone wall in the Temple of the Sun by causing a piece to fall about 20 feet and crack the floor. Fecal matter was also found at the site.

On Wednesday, five of the tourists were deported to Bolivia, the National Police of Peru said. An Argentine tourist, Nahuel Gómez, 28, faced a charge of committing a crime against cultural heritage and remained in custody in Peru.

The Cusco office of the Ministry of Culture said in a statement Wednesday that Mr. Gómez had admitted causing damage to the temple wall and entering the park illegally before dawn.

José Bastante, the chief of archaeological work at Machu Picchu, called on the authorities to quickly determine responsibility and punish the offense.

The Ministry of Culture, condemning the tourists' conduct, said that domestic and foreign visitors alike

should respect and protect Peru's archaeological heritage.

Machu Picchu, perched 8,000 feet above sea level and overlooking chasms that descend into jungle, attracts thousands of daily visitors and has become one of the world's most recognizable tourist sites. It was a religious and political center for the Incan state after its construction in the 15th century and contains more than 200 structures and spectacular stonework and architecture.

The Temple of the Sun is a semicircular structure constructed around a large boulder on the lower part of a hill and aligned so that when summer solstice occurs, light shines through a window and aligns with both the boulder and the top of a nearby mountain peak. After the Spanish conquest of the Incas, the remote site was largely abandoned.

More than 450 years later, the growing popularity of Machu Picchu is raising concerns among Peruvian officials and archaeologists who hope to protect the UNESCO world heritage site. Several tourists were reportedly detained for taking nude photos at the site in 2014, and officials have warned tourists not to take pieces of debris as souvenirs.

(Source: The New York Times)

Tool-making Neanderthals dove for the perfect clam shell

By Brooks Hays

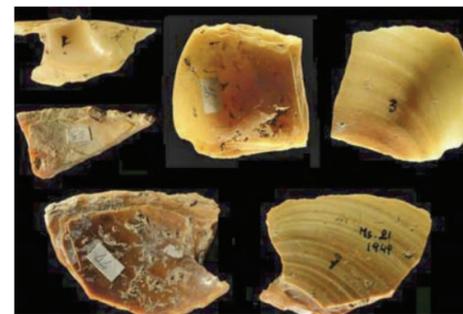
New research suggests Neanderthals held their breath and dove underwater to retrieve the perfect clam shells for tool-making. The findings, published this week in the journal PLOS One, provide further evidence that Neanderthals were just as clever and adaptable as their human relatives.

The study relied on archaeological evidence collected by researchers in 1949: dozens of clam shells found in Grotta dei Moscerini, an Italian cave just steps from the Mediterranean Sea.

The excavation revealed 171 shells -- belonging to a local species called the smooth clam, Callista chione -- that had been sharpened into cutting tools some 90,000 years ago.

"The fact they were exploiting marine resources was something that was known," lead study author Paola Villa, researcher at the University of Colorado Boulder, said in a news release. "But until recently, no one really paid much attention to it."

Villa and her colleagues reexamined the shells to determine how Neanderthals went about collecting



Scientists have found evidence that Neanderthals dove underwater to retrieve shells to be fashioned into cutting tools. Photo by Villa et al./PLOS One

them and fashioning them into tools. They found two-thirds of the shells were covered in abrasions, evidence the shells had been washed on shore by waves before being collected from the beach.

However, the other third of the shells were slightly larger than the others and featured a shiny, smooth exterior. These shells, scientists theorize, were likely plucked from the seafloor while the clams were still alive.

"It's quite possible that the Neanderthals were collecting shells as far down as 2 to 4 meters," Villa said. "Of course, they did not have scuba equipment."

The findings jive with an earlier study that found swimmer's ear, bony growths caused by prolonged exposure to wet, cold conditions, were unusually common among Neanderthals -- further evidence that the early human relatives were not afraid of the sea.

Often, depictions of Neanderthals paint the human relatives as bumbling brutes, eking out an existence through a combination of brawn, luck and desperation. A growing body of evidence, however, suggests Neanderthals were surprisingly inventive and adaptable, and capable of taking advantage of a variety of natural resources.

"People are beginning to understand that Neanderthals didn't just hunt large mammals," Villa said. "They also did things like freshwater fishing and even skin diving."

(Source: UPI)

\$120m earmarked to implement Zagros forest protection plan

SOCIETY TEHRAN — A total budget of 5 trillion rials (nearly \$120 million at the official rate of 42,000 rials) has been allocated to implement Zagros forest protection plan, IRNA news agency reported on Wednesday.

Vast areas of forest are covered with the Brant's oak, and several programs have been prepared to protect the forest plant species in 11 provinces.

Implementation of watershed management plans, identification of smuggling routes, and prohibition of agriculture in forests are among the programs.

Fariborz Gheibi, deputy head of the Forests, Range, and Watershed Management Organization, stated that this year, €150 million has been allocated to implement sustainable management of natural resources in over 33,000 watersheds.

The Zagros forest is the most important vegetation area in the country, which is spread over 6 million hectares of the whole 30-million-hectare area of the region, he noted.

Climate change, deforestation, over-grazing, land use changes, drought, pests and diseases were among the causes of depletion in the forests which have been analyzed, he highlighted.

Since the Iranian calendar year 1387 (March 2008-March 2009), about 1.45 million hectares of forests have died of pests and diseases.

Zagros forest steppe ecoregion with an area of about 6 million hectares (3.5 percent of Iran) is located primarily in Iran, ranging northwest to southeast and roughly paralleling the country's western border. The forest constitutes 40 percent of the country's forested area. The forest has also been called western oak forest due to the dominance of oak species.

According to the Science Direct Western, oak forests are home to many species including, the Persian squirrel which is the indicator species of this region. Persian



squirrels and oak trees have symbiotic relationships, in which forests provide ecological requirements of Persian squirrels such as food and shelter and, in return, the Persian squirrel contributes in seed germination and forests' regeneration.

A wide variety of wildlife, including wolves, leopards, and even the Persian fallow deer which was once thought extinct have made their homes in the mountains.

Australia wildfires will be 'normal' if world warms 3C, warns Met Office

Scientists have warned the bushfires razing large swathes of Australia could become "normal" around the world as global temperatures are projected to increase by 3-5C this century.

A review of 57 scientific papers published since 2013 suggested clear links between climate change and an increase in the frequency and severity of "fire weather".

Richard Betts, Head of Climate Impacts Research at the Met Office Hadley Centre, who co-authored the review, said: "We're not going to reverse climate change on any conceivable timescale. So the conditions that are happening now, they won't go away."

The studies included in the review were analysed to determine the impact climate change had on wildfire risks all over the world.

The findings come as the Australian government and some local media continue to downplay the role of climate change on recent wildfires that have destroyed nearly 3,000 homes and killed at least 28 people and an estimated one billion animals.

The increased risk of "fire weather" seasons - periods with a high fire risk due to the combination of higher temperatures, low humidity, low rainfall and strong winds - have become 20 per cent longer globally.

Western United States and Canada, southern Europe, Scandinavia, the Amazon and Siberia are also affected by the increased fire risks.

Australia was particularly vulnerable to fires as its land area has warmed more than



the rise in average global temperatures of about 1C since pre-industrial times, said Betts.

"Temperature conditions in Australia are extreme at the moment but they are what we expect to happen on average in a world of three degrees of global warming," he added.

"It brings it home to you what climate change means."

Ian Colin Prentice, director of the Levelhulme Centre for Wildfires, Environment and Society at Imperial College London and co-author of the review, added: "Wildfires can't be prevented and the risks are increasing because of climate change."

"This makes it urgent to consider ways of reducing the risks to people. Land planning should take the increasing risk in fire weather into account."

The World Meteorological Organisation said if no action is taken to stop rising emissions, the global temperature could increase by 3-5C this century, more than three times limits agreed in the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement.

(Source: The Independent)

Warming oceans force leatherback turtles on longer journeys to feed

Leatherback turtles are making exhausting journeys, in some cases nearly twice as long as usual, from nesting to feeding grounds, because of rising ocean temperatures and changing sea currents.

After nesting, turtles must move to cooler waters to feed, but higher temperatures mean some are having to swim further to reach suitable areas, according to research from Greenpeace and the French Institut Pluridisciplinaire Hubert Curien, part of the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique.

The researchers tagged 10 nesting female leatherback turtles last year on the Yalimapo and Remire-Montjoly beaches of French Guiana, and then tracked their migration through the north Atlantic. Some of the turtles were found to have swum as far as Nova Scotia in north-east Canada and to France to find new feeding grounds for the jellyfish which form their main diet.

Though small in scale, the research provides an insight into how some marine species are being forced to adapt to the warming oceans. This week scientists warned that ocean temperatures had reached record levels with the last five years, which were the five hottest on record.

Warming oceans pose clear dangers to human life as they lead to more intense storms and rising sea levels, but the impact of the increasing frequency of heatwaves at sea on marine species is much less studied. There is evidence that some species, including commercially important fish such



as cod, are migrating towards the poles in search of cooler waters, but more research is needed for a fuller picture.

In another stark example of the dangers to marine life from human actions, one turtle followed was found dead on a beach in Suriname only 120km (74 miles) from the starting point, drowned after having become entangled in a discarded fishing net.

Estimates say more than half of all sea turtles have ingested plastic. The animals also face threats from overfishing, though they are mainly bycatch rather than targets.

The beaches of French Guiana were once abundant turtle nesting grounds, but now the eggs laid there are only a small fraction of those laid 30 years ago.

Last year, the complete absence of leatherback turtles from a beach in a nature reserve in Nicaragua also raised alarm.

"Sea turtles survived the extinction of the dinosaurs, but they might not survive us," said Will McCallum, a campaigner at Greenpeace.

(Source: The Guardian)

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → E

Motorcyclists responsible for 63% of accidents in Tehran

Motorcycle riders are the highest contributors to road fatality being responsible for 63 percent of the accidents happened in the Iranian capital in the first 10 months of the current [Iranian calendar] year (starting on March 21, 2018), head of accidents department of Tehran Traffic Police has said.

Unfortunately, motorcycle users represent over 38 percent of the total traffic fatalities happened in the aforementioned period, Tasnim quoted Ehsan Momeni as saying on Tuesday.

As per the figures revealed by forensics, young motorcyclists aged 18-28 years constituted 33 percent of the fatal crashes resulted in their deaths, while being blamed for over 63 percent of the total accidents, he lamented.

راکبان موتورسیکت در ۶۳ درصد تصادفات تهران مقصر بودند

رئیس اداره تصادفات پلیس راهور تهران بزرگ گفت: در ده ماهه نخست سال ۹۷ راکبان موتورسیکت در تهران در ۶۳ درصد تصادفات به عنوان مقصر حادثه شناخته شده‌اند.

به گزارش روز سه شنبه خبرگزاری تسنیم؛ سرهنگ احسان مؤمنی در تشریح تصادفات منجر به فوت شهر تهران گفت: ۳۸ درصد کل متوفیان حوادث رانندگی مربوط به موتورسیکت سواران بوده است. وی اظهار کرد: با توجه به آمار پزشکی قانونی ۳۳ درصد راکبان موتورسیکت فوتی ۱۸ تا ۲۸ سال سن داشته‌اند و در ۶۳ درصد تصادفات به عنوان مقصر حادثه شناخته شده‌اند.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

"galacto-, gala-, galact-"

■ **Meaning:** milk
■ **For example:** The Milky Way is the *galaxy* which is the home of our Solar System.

PHRASAL VERB

Have (got) something against somebody/something

■ **Meaning:** to dislike or be opposed to someone or something for a particular reason:
■ **For example:** I can't see what you've got against the idea.

IDIOM

Bucket list

■ **Explanation:** a list of things a person would like to do or achieve before a certain age or before dying
■ **For example:** I have never visited the pyramids of Egypt but they're on my bucket list.

EU unveils plan to dedicate a quarter of its budget fighting climate change with €1 trillion 'green deal'

Brussels unveiled a €1 trillion investment plan to fight climate change on Tuesday, laying out a roadmap which would put the EU on the path to becoming the first carbon-neutral continent by 2050.

The European Commission's proposals would dedicate around a quarter of the EU budget to the task, with a new mechanism to help regions facing disruption because of the transition to a net zero-carbon economy.

The latest proposal for a «Just Transition Mechanism» is a bid by Brussels to convince coal dependent member states like Poland to get onboard with the plan.



The new European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen, who leads the EU's executive arm, has made a «green deal» the centrepiece of her mandate, but needs to convince lower income countries in the east of the bloc that it is worth their while.

The mechanism would allocate cash based on specific criteria such as how many people work in coal mining or shale gas in any given region. Money could be spent on «re-skilling» workers or «investment in new productive activities», EU officials said.

To qualify for money, member states would have to put forward plans to restructure their economy on low-carbon lines, which would have to be signed off by the Commission.

Ms von der Leyen says that under the broader investment plan, half of the cash would come from the EU budget. National governments would also contribute €100 billion, with €300 billion from the private sector.

Another €7.5 billion would be come from the EU's own 2021-2027 budget to act as seed funding to leverage a further €100 billion in investment.

«The transformation ahead of us is unprecedented. And it will only work if it is just - and if it works for all,» said Ms von der Leyen.

«We will support our people and our regions that need to make bigger efforts in this transformation, to make sure that we leave no one behind. The Green Deal comes with important investment needs, which we will turn into investment opportunities.»

«The plan that we present today, to mobilise at least €1 trillion, will show the direction and unleash a green investment wave.»

Some EU countries plan to go further than decarbonising by 2050. Finland is leading the pack with plans to become carbon-neutral by 2035. The UK has plans to become carbon neutral by 2050, though the opposition Labour party has proposed making substantial progress to carbon neutrality by 2030.

The IPCC, the global authority on climate change, says limiting warming to 1.5C - widely regarded as a tipping point - will require carbon emissions from 2017 levels to be cut in half by 2030, with full carbon neutrality by 2050.

The European Parliament will take an indicative non-binding vote on the Green Deal plans on Wednesday, while Ms Von der Leyen says she wants the climate law to be in place by March.

(Source: The Independent)

WORDS IN THE NEWS

Ethiopia famine warning

(November 13, 2002)

Ethiopia faces a famine much more severe than that in the 1980s, its prime minister has warned. He said that if the situation was a nightmare last time, it is now too horrible to think about. This report from Martin Plaut.

The **scale** of the current Ethiopian drought is much larger than the 1980s. Millions are now at risk, many living in the most **inaccessible** areas of this **remote** region. It is also made much worse by AIDS, which has infected over three million people. **Weakened**, they have already sold off many of their possessions. It's also **eroded** their ability to farm, even when times are good. But some **lessons have been learned** from previous disasters. An **early warning system** is in place, giving **donors** time to respond.

Some aid has already been promised, and more is on the way. And the Ethiopian government itself has been planning, **building up its stocks**, and distributing **food aid** in the villages where it's most needed. **If this can be maintained** the giant camps of the **destitute** can be avoided. This is vital to prevent cholera and diarrhoea. With a massive international effort, the scale of the deaths can be reduced, but they cannot be avoided altogether.

Words

scale: number or extent
inaccessible: very difficult to reach
remote: (of a place) situated far from the main centres of population; distant
weakened: people who are weakened have lost some of their physical strength
possession: something that is owned or possessed
eroded: gradually destroyed or removed
lessons have been learned: people have gained experience
early warning system: a system that give a warning at the earliest possible moment that something bad is going to happen
donors: people, organizations and governments that give money, food and other aid
building up its stocks: gradually increasing its supplies
food aid: food given for people in need
if this can be maintained: here, if they can continue to do this at the same level without stopping
destitute: extremely poor and lacking the means to provide for oneself

(Source: BBC)

Turkey starting troop deployment to Libya, Erdogan says

→ **1** Erdogan said Turkey had deep historical and social ties with Libya, asserting that Haftar would have taken over the entire nation if Ankara had not intervened.

Turkey will join Germany, the United Kingdom and Russia in Libyan peace talks in Berlin next Sunday, he said.

"The putschist Haftar did not sign the ceasefire. He first said yes, but later, unfortunately, he left Moscow, he fled Moscow," Erdogan said.

"Despite this, we find the talks in Moscow were positive as they showed the true face of the putschist Haftar to the international community," the Turkish president added.

On January 2, Turkey's parliament has approved a bill to deploy troops to Libya.

Parliament Speaker Mustafa Sentop said at the time that the legislation had been passed with a 325-184 vote.

Back in late November last year, Libya's GNA and Turkey signed security and maritime agreements in opening the path to the Turkish troop deployment. The accords also drew the ire of Mediterranean countries, including Greece and Cyprus, which were eyeing energy resources in the area.

Libya's eastern-based parliament later voted unanimously against the deals.

Libya plunged into chaos in 2011, when a popular uprising and a NATO intervention led to the ouster of long-time dictator Muammar Gaddafi and his execution by unruly fighters.

The North African country has since been split between two rival administrations based in the east and west amid a conflict drawing increasing involvement from foreign powers.

According to the latest UN tally, more than 280 civilians and roughly 2,000 fighters have been killed since Haftar launched his offensive in April to seize Tripoli. An estimated 146,000 Libyans have been displaced.

The U.S. now: Widespread thuggery

→ **1** pronounced that he was "the Truth" in a moment of ecstatic spirituality, which at the time suggested he was calling himself "god." This did not go over well in Abbasid Baghdad and al-Hallaj was executed in 922.)

Iran's leaders did not dither for long in blaming themselves for the aircraft disaster, and it's worth noting that there are reports that there might have been American or Israeli sabotage of the electronic guidance signals and reporting equipment in Iranian airspace. In fact, this is probably the chief cause of the tragedy although it may take some time to prove and expose it thoroughly. Iranians need to go light on the government, in part because Iran's government has proven to be far more honest than the U.S. or European governments.

Great disgust, for example, must be reserved for the UK, France and Germany, under the threat of Trump tariffs on the European auto industry, for in effect dumping the JCPOA this past week. It's one thing to do the wrong thing, but it's far worse to do the wrong thing out of cowardly failures to stand by commitments and abide by their terms. INSTEX was apparently a delaying tactic! Nothing more than a false promise to Iran. The entire Middle East must begin to look even harder north and east for reliable partners, to Russia and China especially, who are not threatening.

Iranians must understand that their government has done nothing wrong, and the U.S. demonization of Iran is madness. But it is largely because Iran is so resource rich, and this has been the case for many decades. If Iranians want to tinker with who runs the country and how, this ought to wait until external Western threats are history, and especially those of the U.S. and Israel. The threats against Iran's people are too great to allow any disunity.

Take Trump Administration spokesman Brian Hook describing how a new "nuclear deal" with Iran would differ from the JCPOA. In brief, that Iran would NOT be allowed to enrich any uranium, Iran's missile defense programs would be curtailed, Iran's alleged "regional aggression" (which has been defensive and requested by regional allies) will end. These demands are equivalent to Iran giving up its sovereignty and defenses entirely and are so arrogant as to be angrily laughable.

Maybe Iran ought to offer conditions for a new deal suggested by Hook? NO nukes permitted in the Middle East at all, liberation for Palestine, U.S. Navy barred from the Persian Gulf, U.S. troops out of West Asia and bases dismantled, and Western oil companies barred from Iran, Iraq and Syria at least. And that's just for starters. Why is anyone supposed to pretend that a nuclear Iran is a threat to anyone as opposed to what it really is — a deterrent to more U.S. or Western and Israeli aggression?

Iran deserves much better than anything the West has meted out to it since the fall of Mossadegh. Sometime ahead it will get much better for Iran. Fortune waxes and wanes. The problem, as ever, is how long it's going to take.

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

PRESS TV — China has denounced US-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.

US 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.

Kenneth Roth, the executive director of Human Rights Watch, holds up the group's World Report 2020 at the United Nations in the Manhattan borough of New York City, January 14, 2020. (Photo by Reuters)

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."

U.S. military dispatches over 70 trucks to oil-rich eastern Syria: report

PRESS TV — The United States has reportedly dispatched dozens of truckloads of military and logistical equipment to oil-rich areas it has occupied in Syria's eastern province of Dayr al-Zawr and the northeastern province of Hasakah as Washington and some of its regional allies are vying with one another to seize oil reserves and plunder natural resources in the war-battered country.

Local sources from the Kurdish-majority northeastern city of Qamishli, speaking on condition of anonymity, told Syria's official news agency SANA that a convoy of 75 trucks crossed the Semalka border crossing, which is a pontoon bridge across the Tigris, on Thursday evening and headed towards US positions in the two provinces.

In late October last year, Washington reversed an earlier decision to pull out all of its troops from northeastern Syria, announcing the deployment of about 500 soldiers to the oil fields controlled by Kurdish forces in the Arab country.

The US claimed that the move was



aimed at protecting the fields and facilities from possible attacks by the Daesh Takfiri terrorist group. That claim came although US President Donald Trump

had earlier suggested that Washington sought economic interests in controlling the oilfields.

Pentagon chief Mark Esper then threatened that the US forces deployed to the oil fields would use "military force" against any party that might seek to challenge control of the sites, even if it were Syrian government forces or their Russian allies.

Syria, which has not authorized American military presence in its territory, has said the US is "plundering" the country's oil.

On December 18, 2019, China's special envoy for Syria said the United States' pretext for extending its military presence in the Arab country, namely to protect Syrian oil fields, was untenable.

"Who have given the Americans the right to do this? And, at whose invitation is the US protecting Syria's oil fields?" Xie Xiaoyan said at a press conference in Moscow.

"Let's think the other way around: will the US allow Syria to send troops to US territory to protect oil fields there?" he said.

Germany to build new warships amid push for EU army

PRESS TV — Germany says it plans to build at least four new multi-role warships worth nearly 6 billion euros in an effort to increase its military capabilities.

The announcement comes amid a brewing dispute between the US and the Europeans over military spending by NATO members.

The Trump administration has been pressuring Germany and other European members to raise their military budget and contribute more towards the cost of the alliance.

Germany has announced to increase military spending by more than 5 billion euros this year to 47.32 billion euros, the biggest rise since the end of the Cold War.

The issue has pitched Chancellor Angelina Merkel's Christian Democrat party (CDU), which favors higher military spending, against its Social Democrat (SPD) coalition partners who are opposed.

US President Donald Trump is pushing for more increases to meet a target of spending 2 percent of economic output on military by NATO members.

Implicit in Trump's pressures is his aggressive drive to arm-twist allies into buying more US-made weapons.

However, the new German warships will be built by Dutch shipyard Damen in association with its Bremen-based partner Luerssen, with the first planned to be delivered in 2027.

The German armed forces Bundeswehr said they will be able to attack targets on land and under water, and provide air cover for other vessels.

The contract includes an option to build two additional MKS 180 warships, Bundeswehr said, adding that about two-thirds of the production will take place at Luerssen's



shipyards in northern Germany.

"The decision for the MKS 180 to be mainly built by the Luerssen Group and thus in Germany is a good decision which strengthens Germany as a marine and shipyard location," Merkel's chief budget lawmaker Eckhardt Rehberg said.

The ship tender is one of Germany's biggest arms projects, along with a contract for the MEADS missile defense system and the new Franco-German fighter jet (FCAS).

Other companies interested in the MKS 180 warship tender are ThyssenKrupp and German Naval Yards.

Damen said its alliance also included Hamburg-based Blohm+Voss shipyard and France's Thales. It estimated that about 80% of the tender's net investment would remain in Germany.

Merkel and French President Emmanuel Macron have called for an integrated European Union military, which has infuriated President Trump.

"The times when we could rely on others are over. This means we Europeans have to take our fate fully into our own hands," Merkel has said, adding "We should work on a vision of one day establishing a real European army."

The idea, first floated by Macron, drew an angry reaction from Trump who mocked France over its near defeat to Germany in two world wars and accused the French president of seeking to develop the EU's own military to defend itself from the US.

Last month, Trump approved a colossal military bill that authorizes a topline of \$738 billion for fiscal year 2020.

The bill grants a base budget of \$658.4 billion and an additional \$71.5 billion for overseas contingency operations funding, also known as the war budget.

The push for an integrated European military comes as the EU is searching for answers to a US president who views the EU with contempt.

Last November, Macron raised hackles when he warned European countries that they can no longer rely on America to defend NATO allies.

"What we are currently experiencing is the brain death of NATO," Macron declared in a blunt interview with The Economist.

Europe stands on "the edge of a precipice" and needs to start thinking of itself strategically as a geopolitical power; otherwise we will "no longer be in control of our destiny," he said.

Trump lashed out at Macron, saying the French president's description of NATO as brain dead was insulting and a "very, very nasty statement".

Guatemala cuts ties with Venezuela in kowtow to U.S.

PRESS TV — Guatemala's newly-elected President Alejandro Giammattei has severed diplomatic relations with Venezuela, a move that was swiftly censured by the government in Caracas for being an act of subservience to the US administration.

Giammattei ordered Guatemala's foreign secretary on Thursday to recall the last person remaining in the country's embassy in the Venezuelan capital and close the diplomatic building.

"We have instructed the foreign minister that the only person left in the embassy in Venezuela should return, and that we definitively end relations with the government of

Venezuela," Giammattei said. "We are going to close the embassy."

The announcement came two days after the new president's inauguration and his meeting with the head of the Organization of American States (OAS), Luis Almagro.

The conservative, who took office on Tuesday, had already indicated he would break off ties with Caracas upon assuming power and the OAS has also recognized the Venezuelan opposition figure, Juan Guaido, as the country's president.

Jorge Arreaza, Venezuela's foreign minister, stressed that Giammattei was "throwing himself at the feet of [US President] Donald



Trump" and said the Guatemalan's presidency was destined to "become another joke in bad taste."

Venezuela plunged into political turmoil last January when Guaido declared himself "interim president" of the country, rejecting the outcome of the May 2018 election, which incumbent President Nicolas Maduro had won.

Washington immediately recognized that self-proclamation. Ever since, the US has been escalating tensions against oil-rich Venezuela, and has not ruled out the military option to take out Maduro's government.

In supporting Guaido, the US has already confiscated all Venezuelan state property in America, and hinted at the use of force to install the opposition figure.

Trump distorts data during reelection campaign speech: AP

PRESS TV — US 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 US.

"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 US labor force during Obama's presidency, according to Labor Department figures.

Trump also claimed that the updated trade between the US, Canada and Mexico will pay for a wall along the US-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 US 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 US earners saw the biggest raises of any income bracket over the past year, according to the US 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.

■ **Democratic candidates seeking to replace Trump twist facts**

Meanwhile, Democrats vying to replace Trump "cut some corners" on the facts in their latest presidential debate.

"Medicare for all ... will cost substantially less than the status quo," US Senator Bernie Sanders said.

However, there's no guarantee that "Medicare for All" will cost less. The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office said in a report last year that total spending under a single-payer system like the one Sanders is calling for "might be higher or lower than under the current system depending on the key features of the new system."

The Vermont senator says his plan would require no cost-sharing from patients, no copays and no deductibles. But completely free care could trigger a



surge in demand for medical services, raising costs. Other countries that provide coverage for all do use cost-sharing to help keep spending in check.

Democratic presidential hopefuls Joe Biden (L) and Bernie Sanders speak at the seventh Democratic primary debate in Des Moines, Iowa on January 14, 2020. (AFP photo)

Former US vice president Joe Biden wasn't quite as broke as he claimed when suggesting he took the train back to Delaware because child care costs were too high.

"I was a single parent too. When my wife and daughter were killed, my two boys I had to raise. I was a senator — a young senator — I just hadn't been sworn in yet. I was making \$42,000 a year. I commuted every single solitary day to Wilmington, Delaware — over 500 miles a day, excuse me, 250 miles a day — because I could not afford ... child care. It was beyond my reach."

But the fact is that child care costs are burdensome for most working US parents. A \$42,000 salary that Biden said he earned might not sound like much today. But Biden joined the Senate in 1972. Adjusted for inflation, he was earning more than \$256,000 in today's dollars. That is more than four times the median household income.

2020 Paralympics will be biggest yet: Craig Spence

By Masoud Hossein

TEHRAN — Craig Spence, the International Paralympic Committee's (IPC) chief marketing and communications officer, says that Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games will be spectacular and possibly the biggest yet.

Tokyo 2020 could also be the first Games to sell-out before the Opening Ceremony with demand for tickets like nothing the IPC organizers have experienced before.

In an exclusive interview with Tehran Times, the IPC top official said that they have undertaken a lot of work in recent years to raise the Games.

Tehran Times: The Paralympic movement has improved dramatically over the past years, ensuring equal rights for those with disabilities. The Paralympics has grown from 400 athletes from 23 countries in 1960 to 4,328 athletes from 159 nations in 2016.

What is your predication for Tokyo 2020 and the upcoming Games as well?

Craig Spence: I think the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games will be spectacular and possibly our biggest yet. The qualification process in all 22 sports is ongoing but we are aiming for 4,350 athletes from around 165 countries. In addition to this we are expecting our biggest ever global TV audience with a cumulative 4.25 billion people set to watch the Games in more than 160 countries. Tokyo 2020 could also be the first Games to sell-out before the Opening Ceremony with demand for tickets like nothing we have experienced before.

Historically, persons with disabilities have been on the edges of Japanese society due to a feeling of over-protection. Happily, the Paralympics Games are changing this, and growing awareness is shifting attitudes in the right direction.

These attitudes will change much more once the Games begin and I know the performances of Para athletes will open peoples' eyes and minds. Change starts with sport and thanks to the Paralympics Japanese people will start to understand that persons with disabilities can do far more than they thought possible, not only can they compete, they can work, have fun, travel and lead full lives just like anyone else.

The Paralympics have come a long way from its humble beginnings as a rehabilitation program for the war veterans. Now, 60 years after the inauguration, what is the long-term goals for the Games?

You are right. The Paralympic Movement and Paralympic Games have come a long way since the 1960 Games in Rome, Italy.

As part of our strategic plan, our



objective for the Games is to ensure it showcases the outstanding capabilities of persons with disabilities, stimulates the creation of truly inclusive societies with accessible environments, promotes safe and fair participation and inspires physical activity by all.

We want to maximize the Games experience for all stakeholders, starting with the athletes. Competing at the Games should be the pinnacle of their careers. We want to broaden the number of countries that take part and create opportunities for athletes with varying types of impairment.

By further increasing the global reach of the Games, we will amplify the impact, legacy and value of the Games. We want to showcase the outstanding impact the Games have on the host country and around the world in transforming cities, lives and societies.

A large number of people, behind the scenes, have helped the Para sports to improve in the years, given the fact that it's something like philanthropic mission. But in the recent years, NPC have penned the big deals with Agitos, Toyota, Samsung, BP and Visa and I think it is both good and bad. As a person who works as IPC marketing manager, how do you keep

the balance between two? Not afraid of turning into a money-making industry and losing its primary goal?

We are where we are today because of the work of the amazing volunteers and administrators who helped establish the Paralympic Movement both nationally and internationally and this will always be the case.

The investment we have seen in recent years from commercial partners and broadcasters is hugely positive as it has benefited the Movement at all levels and sped up our growth process.

There is no doubt that there is a direct correlation between the investment coming in and the rapid improvement in athletic performances and greater reach of the Paralympic Movement.

Our sponsors help us communicate the Paralympic Movement to far greater audiences, reaching billions around the world. And when our message is that Change Starts with Sport and our desire is to make for a more inclusive world through Para sport, this can only be a good thing.

Iran is a heavyweight in the Para sports as the country has the most decorated Paralympic sports team, sitting volleyball. The Iranian Paralympians are under extreme pressure for the U.S. sanctions

and their preparations are not going well. Is there any way to help the Iranian committee to facilitate the process for the preparation as the country is going to reduce its athletes in the Games?

The IPC is always keen to separate out sport and politics and we hope NPC Iran can best prepare its athletes for the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games regardless of the circumstance it currently faces.

The strongest ever Paralympian, Siamand Rahman, could be a role model for those with disabilities in the world. He is like Michael Phelps and Usain Bolt in Olympic Games. Have you any further plans to introduce new Para athletes like Siamand and Morteza Mehrzad in sitting volleyball?

Pretty much every athlete who competes in Para sport is a role model and the IPC has undertaken a lot of work in recent years to raise the global profile of several leading international athletes, including the world's strongest Paralympian Siamand Rahman and archer Zarah Nemati.

We are currently recruiting 17 global ambassadors to support our promotion of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and have many exciting plans to further promote athletes ahead of the Tokyo 2020.

FFIRI General Assembly to be held on March 15

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Football Federation of the Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI) General Assembly will be held on March 15.

The federation is currently heading by Heydar Baharvand. Baharvand was appointed as the federation's acting president on Dec. 30 following Mehdi Taj's resignation due to his heart problems.

The federation had already announced that the General Assembly will be held on May 7.

Iran rout New Zealand at Asian Handball C'ship

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iran eased past New Zealand 53-21 in their 2020 Asian Men's Handball Championship opener on Friday.



Team Melli will play Bahrain in Group A at the Shaikh Saad Al-Abdullah Sports Hall Complex in Kuwait City on Saturday. 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.

Nebojsa Milicic Lekic appointed Esteghlal coach

IRNA — Nebojsa Milicic Lekic has been confirmed as assistant coach in Iranian football team Esteghlal.

The 60-year-old coach started his coaching career at Bulgarian team Vereya Stara Zagora and has worked as coach at Real Madrid U-19, RM Castilla and Kairat Almaty.

Lekic has also worked as head coach of Serbian second tier FK Zemun.

The Serbian-Spanish coach will assist Farhad Majidi in the Iranian giant.

Esteghlal are going to win Iran Professional League after seven years.

Iranian federation calls on AFC to dismiss untrue claims about Iran's security

MNA — A spokesman with the Islamic Republic of Iran Football Federation noted that Iran is fully ready to host international teams.

Iran is fully ready to host various teams as it has been repeatedly proved during the past several years, Amirmahdi Alavi said on Friday, pointing to the successful holding of the 2018 AFC Champions League final at Azadi Stadium as a prominent example.

The remarks come as a Saudi Arabian TV host has cited informed AFC officials as saying that Iran would not host any team in this year's AFC Champions League due to security issues.

The Sports Ministry has given the required security guarantees to the Asian Football Confederation, highlighted the spokesman. He called on the AFC to stand against any inaccurate remark and claim about Iran's ability to host matches.

Earlier, Al-Anba newspaper claimed that the matches between Esteghlal and Kuwait SC, which is due to be held on Jan. 21, has been postponed due to Kuwaiti officials' concerns over the security situation in Iran which they have discussed with the AFC officials. The daily also claimed that Doha has been chosen as a neutral venue for holding the match at the 2020 AFC Champions League Preliminary Stage Two.

FC Porto eye Mehdi Taremi: report

TASNIM — Portuguese football giant FC Porto has reportedly shown an interest in signing Iranian forward Mehdi Taremi.

According to O Jogo, Porto are going to sign the 27-year-old striker in the January transfer window.



Taremi, who joined Rio Ave in July 2019 from Qatari club Al-Gharafa on a two-year contract, has scored eight goals in 15 games for the Portuguese team this season.

Porto sit second in Primeira Liga, four points behind Benfica.

Gabriel Calderon: I will always speak wonders about Iran

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Ex-Persepolis coach Gabriel Calderon has spoken about his time at the Iranian club and insisted that the international political conflicts had not affected his life in Iran although he admitted there were problems regarding financial issues between him and the club.

The Argentine, who left Persepolis following just half a season, opened up to Spanish newspaper AS on his short experience in the Iranian club.

"Persepolis are one of the biggest teams in Iran and Asia but the problem was that I didn't get paid alongside my two Spanish assistants for months," said Calderon.

According to Calderon, the technical staff of Persepolis only received 30 percent of the money they were supposed to receive due to their contract.

"We have been six months without getting salary, but we did not want to leave our job because of the love and respect we had — and still have — for the fans and the players. We



decided to wait until January for the club to have time to solve the situation. They always said they had money problems and insisted they were going to pay in full," he added.

Calderon arrived at Persepolis — the reigning Persian Gulf Pro League and Iranian Hazfi Cup titleholders — last July as a replacement for Croatian Branko Ivanovic.

Despite some negative reaction from part of the fan for his style of play, Calderon guided Persepolis to the top of the Iran Professional League (IPL) in the first half of 2019-20 season.

On 12 January 2020, Calderon resigned from his position as Persepolis coach due to financial troubles and disagreement with the club managers.

The former Persepolis boss, though, insisted that political tensions between Iran and the United States had no effect on his life in Tehran.

"Our life was fine in Iran. I will always speak wonders about the country. We lived apart from international problems," Calderon said.

Persepolis, who sit top of the Iran Professional League, are going to win the league for the fourth successive time.

Why Iran's Alireza Jahanbakhsh is lighting up the premier league

Although it's been a long time coming, Iran's star footballer Alireza Jahanbakhsh has finally shown the English Premier League what he's all about. The 26-year-old has started scoring goals for his club Brighton and Hove Albion in two hugely important Premier League games.

His first goal was against Bournemouth, and it reduced Jahanbakhsh to tears as it ended a painful 18-month goal drought, and this was followed up by a sizeable overhead strike against Chelsea. Such goals are deeply significant as Jahanbakhsh was Brighton's record signing. So how can Iran international star capitalize on his long-overdue return to form?

■ **Jahanbakhsh's Slow Rise To Glory At Brighton**

Alireza Jahanbakhsh was bought by Brighton from the Dutch club AZ Alkmaar for an undisclosed fee in summer 2018. But the winger had a barren time in front of goal as a result of injuries and lack of form and found himself getting hardly picked under new manager Graham Potter.

But Jahanbakhsh's goal against Bournemouth was just the start of a change in form. The Iranian star's in-

credible bicycle kick against Chelsea on New Year's Day signaled how important he could be for the Seagulls. As a result of his two excellent goals, Jahanbakhsh could be a valuable pick for anyone interested in fantasy sports betting with DraftStars who have made the English Premier League one of their featured tournaments.

While Brighton is still sitting in the bottom half of the Premier League table, it's hoped that Jahanbakhsh's return to form could help them escape yet another relegation battle. With other Seagulls stars like Neal Maupay and Aaron Mooy putting in some excellent performances, there's real hope that Brighton could turn things around.

■ **How Jahanbakhsh Became One Of Iran's Top Players**

Jahanbakhsh first came on the scene when he became one of Damash Gilan's youngest ever players. His early appearances in the Iran Pro League showed plenty of potentials and the young winger was eventually snapped up by the Dutch Eredivisie team NEC.

He enjoyed two good seasons with NEC that included a spectacular game against Ajax where Jahanbakhsh scored

two late goals and saved his club from relegation. As such it was little surprise that he nearly pipped Memphis Depay for being declared the best player in the Eredivisie that season.

It was also with NEC that Jahanbakhsh first gave us a glimpse of his incredible bicycle kicks that he used to significant effect against Chelsea. From here Jahanbakhsh was eventually bought by the Dutch side AZ Alkmaar where he was named the Eredivisie's best winger in the 2016-17 season and even became the league's top goalscorer for 2017-18.

All of which made it surprising that it took Jahanbakhsh so long to find his feet at Brighton and Hove Albion. But with stunning goals against the likes of Chelsea and Bournemouth, it seems that Jahanbakhsh is made for even bigger things.

■ **What's Next For Jahanbakhsh?**

The Iranian star's couple of Premier League goals have done wonders for his confidence. While his attempted bicycle kick in Brighton's FA Cup defeat by Sheffield Wednesday didn't quite come off, it showed a level of ambition that's been sorely missing from Jahanbakhsh.



This positivity already got rewarded by Brighton boss Graham Potter who says he wants to keep Jahanbakhsh at the club for the foreseeable future. But there's already plenty of rumors circulating that a bigger football team could swoop in to sign the winger.

Jahanbakhsh has made little secret of the fact that his footballing dream is to play in the Bundesliga. With the likes of Jadon Sancho said to be on his way out of Borussia Dortmund, it would be easy to see how Jahanbakhsh could easily slot into the top German team's line-up. So while watching football in Iran is often problematic, it's reassuring to find that some of the nation's footballing talent is succeeding overseas.

(Source: Scoopempire)

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GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

O, son I fear indigence for you, take refuge unto God, for indigence weakens religion.

Imam Ali (AS)

Mahmudi brothers gain Iran recognition for Afghan migrant filmmakers

By Seyyed Mostafa Mousavi Sabet

The Fajr Film Festival has announced that it will screen "To Die in the Pure Water", a drama by Tehran-based Afghan brothers Navid and Jamshid Mahmudi, in the official competition of its 38th edition.



Afghan brothers Jamshid (R) and Navid Mahmudi (2nd R) codirect a scene from the TV series "The Parasol".

This is the second time they have managed to gain entry to the festival, which is dedicated to movies from Iranian filmmakers. The compelling story in their debut feature "A Few Cubic Meters of Love" had previously secured them a prominent place in Iranian cinema and at the event in 2014.

In their movies including their fifth feature "To Die in the Pure Water", the Mahmudi brothers have related stories about their fellow Afghan immigrants who have fled violence and war in their country.

"Over the past 40 years, I've been looking at whatever happened to me from the viewpoint of an immigrant," said Navid in an interview published by the organizers of the festival.

"If I fell in love, I fell in love as an immigrant, if I became a filmmaker, I made a film as an immigrant," he added.

In their latest movie "To Die in the Pure Water", the leading character is faced with the dilemma of choosing between converting to Christianity to obtain a European visa or continuing to live as a Muslim with all his problems.

The Afghan brothers have chosen a right place to become a voice of their fellow Afghan immigrants that are facing many problems across the world. Iran houses about 3 million Afghan refugees, who have been warmly received, at least, by the cultural community in the country.

Giving entry to the Mahmudi brothers' films at the Fajr Film Festival and other events, including the Iran Cinema Celebration, are the examples of the warm reception afforded the immigrants.

By means of their well-made films, the Afghan brothers have gained recognition in the Iranian cultural community's event for other Afghan filmmakers working in the country.

Sahra Karimi, the sole Afghan woman who has obtained a Ph.D. in cinema, was born in Iran into an Afghan family.

Her debut feature "Hava, Maryam, Ayesha" was screened at Iranian movie theaters last December.

In an interview published afterward, Karimi said that her film is the outcome of helpful Iranians.

She noted, "I asked Iranians to watch this film in order to realize that if Afghan migrants are given an opportunity, they can do great works."

Iranian producer Nasrin Mirshab, who is also the CEO of Dreamlab, the France-based international distributor, collaborated with Karimi in the film.

"We need to recognize the Afghans who have been living with us for years, we are somehow indebted to them," Mirshab has said in an interview.

"About three million Afghans have migrated to Iran and helped us reconstruct our country after the war. They are with us everywhere. However, they are not recognized," she added.

Last December, the 13th Cinéma Vérité, Iran's major international documentary film festival, screened Tehran-based Afghan filmmaker Hassan Nuri's latest documentary in its national competition.

All these events represent Iran's recognition for the serious current of Afghan immigrant filmmakers, who were inspired by the Mahmudi brothers in Iran with "A Few Cubic Meters of Love".

Kayhan Kalhor wins globalFEST Artist Award

A R T TEHRAN — Celebrated d e s k Iranian kamancheh virtuoso Kayhan Kalhor won the Artist Award of the globalFEST, North America's most important world music industry event, which was held in New York last week.

The Artist Award is one of the three main awards of the festival, which is presented to those artists who have made a lasting impression in the U.S., their homeland or around the world.

The Trouble Worldwide Award of the festival went to Lisa Stafford, the Programming director of the Festival International de Louisiane, a music festival in the U.S., while American music consultant and DJ Tom Schnabel won the Impact Award of the festival.

"We are delighted to honor three arts leaders at the globalFEST 2020 Awards, Kayhan Kalhor, Tom Schnabel and Lisa Stafford," the organizers wrote in a statement published on January 12.

"Thank you for your exceptional, visionary, and inspiring contributions to the cultural landscape in the performing arts field in the USA and beyond," they added.

Iran's Music Office director Mohammad Allahyari Fumani congratulated Kalhor on his win in a message published on Friday.

"Achieving this success under these circumstances, when we are mourning the loss of Martyr Soleimani and our loved ones in the Ukrainian plane crash, lessens our sadness," Allahyari Fumani wrote.

Four-time Grammy Award nominee



Iranian kamancheh virtuoso Kayhan Kalhor in an undated photo.

Kalhor has won several awards at Iranian and international music events.

He won the Artist Award at the WOMEX

Awards, the World Music Expo, in Finland, last August.

He was also one of the two winners of

the Isaac Stern Human Spirit Award at the Shanghai Isaac Stern International Violin Competition in August 2018.

Actor Shahab Hosseini criticizes cineastes over withdrawal from Fajr festival

A R T TEHRAN — Shahab Hosseini, the star d e s k of Asghar Farhadi's Oscar-winning movies "A Separation" and "The Salesman", has criticized those Iranian cineastes who have withdrawn from the Fajr Film Festival.

A number of actors and filmmakers have announced over the past week that they would not take part in the festival in sympathy for the families of those people killed following the unintentional downing of a Ukrainian plane by Iran.

"Every year, a large number of people and film lovers wait for the festival to arrive, and, as before, it has been part of the history of Iranian cinema, and like many world festivals it enjoys the support of public sectors," the Palme d'Or winning actor Hosseini wrote in a post published on his Instagram.

"Now a number of cineastes have decided to withdraw from the festival. I do respect their personal decisions, however, I have my own criticism. I believe this act will help foster



Actor Shahab Hosseini in an undated photo. (ILNA/Mehdi Nasiri)

dissension, while the society needs unity and solidarity more than at any time these days," he noted.

"This decision will even lead to a deep and perhaps irreparable division between the cineastes and their fans that would not be to the benefit of either side. And the idea that those who do not withdraw do not feel grieved and do not feel sympathy is quite wrong," he remarked.

"The sacrifice of art and culture is no less of a disaster than any other. This festival can be turned into a memorial for those who were killed in the recent events to help remember their names. It can be a place to express feelings with the families of the victims," he added.

"Art and culture is the right of the people of any country, and can be influential at any time and under any circumstances," he concluded.

Starring and produced by Hosseini, "The Night" will be screened in the official competition of the 38th Fajr Film Festival, which will take place in Tehran from February 1 to 11.



"Traditional Dyeing" by Iranian photographer Saeid Qasemi received the FIAP Gold Medal at the 1st Ala Archa International Exhibition of Photography in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

Iranian photographers honored at Kyrgyzstan Ala Archa exhibit

A R T TEHRAN — Several Iranian d e s k photographers were honored with awards at the 1st Ala Archa International Exhibition of Photography in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, the organizers announced on Tuesday.

Saeid Qasemi received the FIAP Gold Medal (Best of Show) for his single photo "Traditional Dyeing" in the Open Color Section, while his other single photo "Offspring of Imam" received an honorable mention in the Landscape Section.

The FIAP Gold Medal in the People Section was awarded to Nahid Toqi-Eshqi for her photo "Look". Ehsan Jazini's "Anonymous Martyr" and Babak Mehrafshar's "Village Girls" received the FIAP Ribbon in this category.

Jazini also received an honorable mention for his photo

"Stadium Tunnel" in this section.

The FIAP Ribbon in the Open Monochrome Section was presented to Asghar Besharati for "Moto 6", while the FIAP Ribbon in the Nature section went to Ali-Asghar Alimoradi for his photo "Restless".

Several Iranian photographers, including Amin Dehqan, Hadi Dehqanpur, Ayad Musavi, Nilufar Nekukar, Afshin Mirzai, Milad Panahi and Mohammad Shafai, also received honorable mentions in various sections of the contest.

Seyyed Mohammad-Vahid Nasser, Mohammad Shurangiz, Siavash Reisi, Seyyed Mojtaba Sediqi and Mohammad Ebrahimi were also among the honorees.

An exhibition of the winning photos will be held at the Asian Photographers Association in Bishkek on March 17.

Fajr festival announces short films lineup

A R T TEHRAN — A d e s k lineup of 10 short films have been selected to go on screen at the 38th Fajr Film Festival, the organizers announced on Friday.

Acclaimed films "Exam" by Sonia Haddad, about a teenage girl who agrees to deliver a pack of cocaine on the day of an important exam at school and "The Feast of the Goat" by Saeid Zamanian about a 9-year-old boy who tries to stop his father from slaughtering his goat are the highlights of the lineup.

The lineup also includes "Occupation" by Ali Azizi, "Red Panda" by Ali Paknia, "White Wandering Snows" by Mohammadreza Vatandoost, "Dabur" by Saeid Nejadi and "Aziz" by Seyyed Mehdi Musavi.

The festival will also screen "Dragon's Tail" by Saeid Keshavaz, "Alley" by Mohammadreza Mesbah



A scene from "Exam" by Sonia Haddad.

and "Snowy Mother" by Marjan Khosravi.

The 38th Fajr Film Festival will be held in Tehran from February 1 to 11.

"Death Knocks" troupe to raise funds for flood victims of Sistan-Baluchestan

A R T TEHRAN — An d e s k Iranian troupe performing Woody Allen's "Death Knocks" in Tehran said on Thursday that they would dedicate the three-day receipt of box office revenue to the flood victims in Sistan-Baluchestan Province.

Shahin Ramezani is the director of the play currently on stage at the Iran Tamasha Theater Hall, the Persian service of ISNA reported on Wednesday.

The play centers on Nat Ackermann, a successful garment manufacturer, who suddenly faces a confused woman at his window telling him that she is the personification of Death.

Nat, who realizes the seriousness of the situation, tries to engage the personification of Death in conversation to try to trick the lady by using a little cunning, and persuades her to play Gin Rummy.

Aref Qadimi and Karmanian Mirahmadi are the members of the cast.

An unprecedented heavy rainfall, which



Actor Aref Qadimi acts in a scene from "Death Knocks" at the Iran Tamasha Theater Hall in Tehran.

began on January 10, has led to flash flooding in Sistan-Baluchestan, Kerman and Hormozgan.

Tehran session to discuss Herta Muller's oeuvre

CULTURE TEHRAN — A group of Iranian literati will d e s k gather at Tehran's Book Garden today to discuss books by Herta Muller, the Romanian-born German recipient of the 2009 Nobel Prize in Literature.

Renowned translator Asadollah Amrai, Bokhara monthly magazine managing director Ali Dehbashi and writer Fatemeh Khodakarami are among the scholars

expected to attend the meeting.

A short video presenting Muller talking about her books and life during interviews will also be screened at the meeting.

"The Land of Green Plums", "The Appointment", "The Passport" and "Hunger and Silk" are among Muller's books translated into Persian.



Writer Herta Muller in an undated photo.