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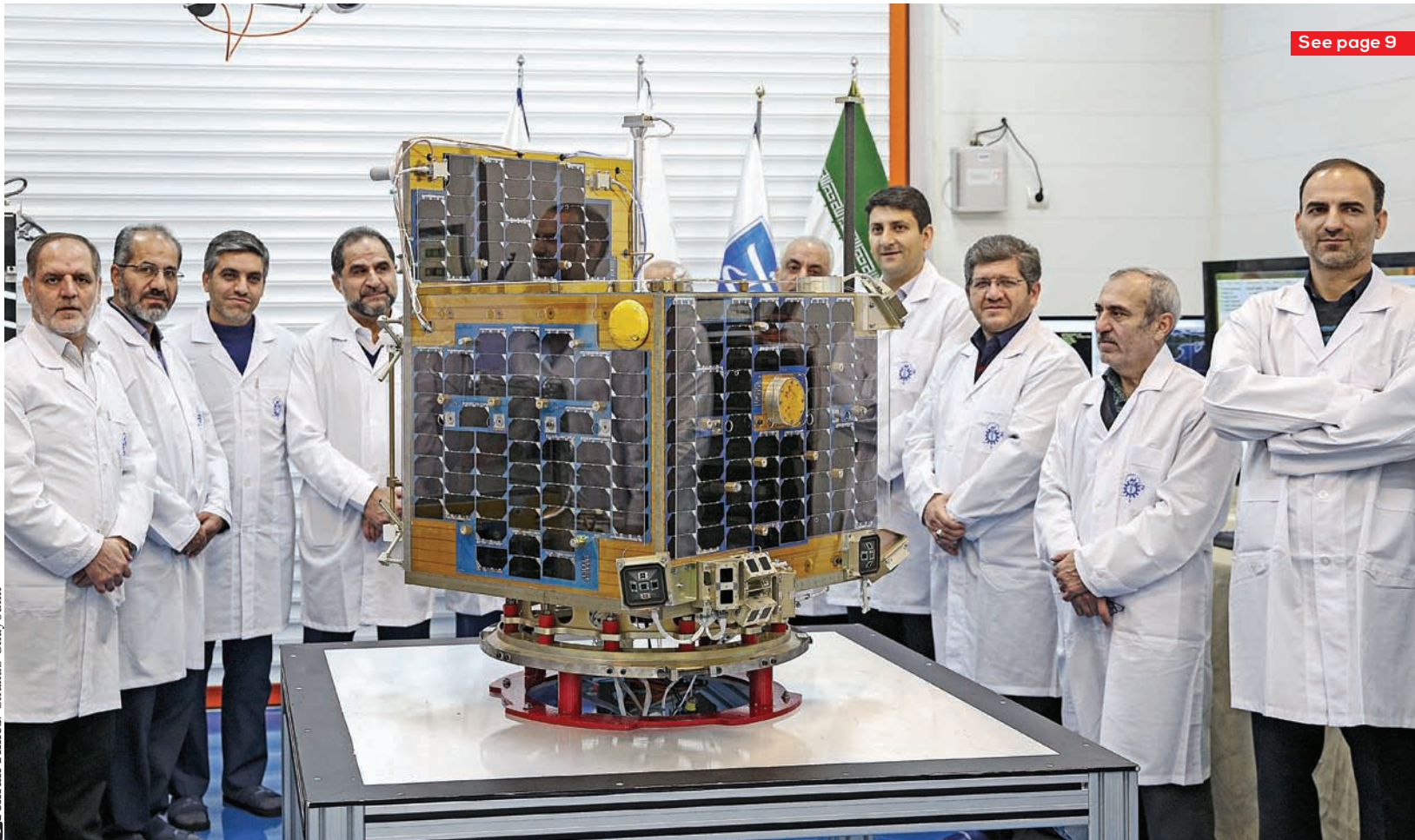


Iranian fans launch furious Instagram rant at AFC **11**



Overseas musicians performing at Tehran Southern Nights festival **12**

All-Iranian environmental satellite unveiled



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Domestic production saves Iran over €1.2b since Mar. 2019

TEHRAN — Iran's deputy industry, mining and trade minister for industry affairs says domestic production has saved the country over €1.2 billion since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2019), IRIB reported. "So far, the contracts and agreements signed [with domestic producers] with the support of the domestic production promo-

tion expert desks have resulted in a reduction of foreign currency expenditure by 1.2 billion euros," Mehdi Sadeqi Niaraki said. Speaking in a gathering of the heads of the country's industry, mines and trade organizations, Niaraki said: "The main focus of the [industry] ministry's programs for the current year is on the domestic production boom." **→4**

200 MPs call for a decision on British ambassador

TEHRAN — 200 parliamentarians out of the 290-seat parliament issued a statement on Sunday calling for a decision about British Ambassador Rob Macaire, who was arrested briefly by police during an authorized demonstration in central Tehran on January 11. Hamid-Reza Haji Babaei, an MP who represents Hamedan, said in a public session of the parliament that the Foreign Ministry is duty bound to defend the people's rights and reduce political ties

with Britain to the level of charge d'affaires. On January 12, Iran's Foreign Ministry summoned Macaire for his "unconventional behavior and presence" in the illegal gatherings. The British diplomat was reminded that his presence in illegal gatherings has no conformity with his responsibility as his country's political representative in Iran and that his behavior is in contrast to the 1961 Vienna convention on diplomatic relationship, the ministry said. **→2**

Top Persian Gulf airlines continue using Iranian airspace

TEHRAN — Qatar Airways, Emirates and several other Persian Gulf airlines have been continuing to use Iranian airspace despite propaganda over security issues in the region. On January 3, a U.S. drone strike assassinated top Iranian general Qassem Soleimani and in an act of retaliation Iran fired missiles at U.S. targets in Iraq on January 8. In the tense aftermath,

Iran's air defense accidentally shot down a Ukrainian airliner. However, Dubai-based Emirates and sister carrier flydubai have announced they will continue to use Iranian airspace, Reuters reported on Sunday. Kuwait Airways and Abu Dhabi-based Etihad Airways are amongst other regional carriers that have continued using the airspace. **→8**



ARTICLE
Masoud Hossein
Head of the Sport Desk of the TehranTimes

Iran must utilize sports diplomacy

Regardless of how disappointing the banning Iranian teams from hosting AFC Champions League looked, it is an irrefutable fact that Iran needs sport diplomacy to overcome difficulties of the current situation. Football is more than just a game played on the field for the Iranian people. And it's not nonsense that the Iranians are the most loyal fans in Asia.

A match between Persepolis of Iran and Kashima Antlers of Japan in the 2018 ACL Final held in Tehran's Azadi Stadium proved the FIFA and AFC officials the importance of football for the Iranian fans and now the question is: why the wildly enthusiastic fans should be deprived of their rights?

Teams from Iran and Saudi Arabia meet in neutral venues for AFC Champions League clashes from 2016 after two countries failed to resolve their political differences, while the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) ruled all matches would be played on a home-and-away basis as planned between Qatari and Saudi Arabian teams.

Also, Qatar has recently hosted the Persian Gulf Cup with the participation of Saudi Arabia and the UAE and it shows that the Qatari officials utilized sports diplomacy to overcome the complications of the current situation.

AFC has banned the Iranian teams from hosting the matches in their homes and it seems a cruel action but to withdraw from the matches is not the best solution since it will isolate our sports more.

In reaction to AFC decision, Iran's parliament member Mohammadreza Tabesh said: "Banning our country from hosting the matches, is a decision beyond the sports' perspectives and we must resolve this issue with the use of sports diplomacy. We have seats in the Asian Football Confederation and this problem should be resolved through negotiation."

Iranian national football team get ready to host Iraq and Bahrain teams at the Azadi Stadium in the 2022 World Cup qualification and the continuation of the current condition could jeopardize the country's right to take advantage of its home matches.

Houshang Nasirzadeh, the former head of legal committee of the Iran football federation, has said that to withdraw from the competition could lead to a different outcome.

"I also believe that AFC's decision is not acceptable but the confederation will ban our football for two years if we pull out from the competition," he said.

There is no doubt that Iran is a safe country but the politicians are well served with the knowledge of how to use sport to their purposes. THEY don't want to make the condition worse.

Thousands of women protest against Trump across the U.S.

Thousands gathered in cities across the country Saturday as part of the nationwide Women's March rallies focused on issues such as climate change, pay equity, reproductive rights and immigration. Hundreds showed up in New York City and thousands in Washington, D.C. for the rallies, which aim to harness the political power of women, although crowds were noticeably smaller than in previous years. Marches were scheduled Saturday in more than 180 cities.

The first marches in 2017 drew hundreds of thousands of people to rallies in cities across the country on the day after President Donald Trump was inaugurated. That year's D.C. march drew close to 1 million people.

In Manhattan on Saturday, hundreds of people gathered as part of a "Rise and Roar" rally at separate events in Foley Square and Columbus Circle.

"Today, we will be the change that is needed in this world! Today, we rise into our power!" activist Donna Hylton told a cheering crowd in Foley Square.

Snow began falling by the afternoon in Manhattan, apparently putting a damper on plans for the two groups to converge in large numbers near Times Square.

In downtown Los Angeles, thousands of men, women and children filled several blocks as they made their way from a plaza to a park adjacent to City Hall, where a rally featured speeches by Jennifer Siebel Newsom, the wife of California Gov. Gavin Newsom, Mayor Eric Garcetti, Rep. Maxine Waters and others.

Jennifer Siebel Newsom credited women for mobilizing against gun violence, creating the #MeToo movement against sexual harassment and

discrimination, and taking back the Democratic majority in the House of Representatives.

"In 2020, I have no doubt that it will be women who will lead again, rise up and move this country forward on a path toward justice," she said.

In Denver, organizers opted to skip the rally after the march and instead invited participants to meet with local organizations to learn more about issues such as reproductive rights, climate change, gun safety and voting.

Several thousand came out for the protest in Washington, far fewer than last year when about 100,000 people held a rally east of the White House. But as in previous years, many of the protesters made the trip to the nation's capital from cities across the country to express their opposition to Trump and his policies. **→10**

Jordan parliament passes draft law to ban gas imports from Israel

Jordan's parliament on Sunday approved a draft law to ban imports of Israeli gas to the country just days after they started under a multibillion-dollar deal struck in 2016 which is opposed by much of the population.

The motion was passed unanimously by Jordan's 130 lawmakers and will be referred to the cabinet to be made law, although legal hurdles may prevent it coming into force.

The government has previously said it was a deal between companies rather than a political matter.

The \$10 billion supply deal was originally struck between Jordan's state-owned utility and a U.S. Israeli consortium led by Texas-based Noble Energy, to provide gas to the country's power plants for electricity generation.

It was not referred to parliament for approval.

Although U.S. ally Jordan has a peace treaty with Israel the deal, which supplies Jordan for 15 years, has faced much popular opposition, with lawmakers arguing it makes the kingdom dependent on its neighbor for energy.

Many Jordanians are also the descendants of Palestinians who moved to the country after the creation of Israel in 1948, and view Israel as an erstwhile enemy that expelled their ancestors from their homes.

The Jordanian government said after the agreement was signed in 2016 that securing stable energy prices for the next decade could achieve annual savings of at least \$500 million and help reduce a chronic budget deficit.

The import of Israeli gas has become a major focus in Jordan and sparked protests and calls for both the deal and the peace treaty to be scrapped.

"The gas of the enemy is an occupation. Down with the gas deal," placards carried by protesters said.

Jordan's ties with Israel have come under increasing strain since the gas deal was struck as Israel has moved to the right and since Donald Trump replaced Barack Obama as U.S. president.

Jordan's King Abdullah fears Israel's rejection of a Palestinian state in the occupied West Bank could spark renewed violence and see a new generation of Palestinians relocating to Jordan.

(Source: Reuters)



ARTICLE
Mahnaz Abdi
Head of the TehranTimes Economy Desk

Trade centers in regional countries to spur non-oil exports

Reimposition of the U.S. sanctions on Iranian economy has led the Islamic Republic to reduce its dependence on oil revenues and elevate its other sources of income instead; while increasing non-oil exports has come as the most significant approach in this regard.

To expand non-oil exports during the sanctions time, Iranian economic and trade organizations have been defining some strategies and resolved to pursue them vigorously.

The major strategy is to focus on the neighboring countries and the trade partners in the region, and it is in fact one of the top priorities of the government for defying the U.S. sanctions.

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.

Based on the data published by Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO), the value of trade with the neighboring countries stood at over \$36.5 billion in the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20, 2019); that is about 41 percent of the country's total non-oil trade in that year.

It is while the head of Iran's Planning and Budget Organization (PBO) says 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 has stated.

And as announced by the officials in the Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade, the necessary planning and investigations have been made for achieving this target.

One of the major strides to materialize this objective is opening trade centers and offices in the neighboring and regional countries.

Iran has already set up trade centers in some neighbors and negotiations and planning are underway to open some centers in other regional countries. **→4**



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Frozen waterfall attracts ice climbers

An ice climber challenges a frozen waterfall, which is situated adjacent to the prehistoric rock carvings of Ganjnameh, a can't-miss destination in Hamedan, west-central Iran, January 17, 2020.

Iran boasts a considerable number of waterfalls that aren't certainly branded as the world's highest, wildest or prettiest but a feature making them astonishing is that they are scattered in a country dominated by arid and semi-arid plains.

German FM criticizes U.S. maximum pressure against Iran

By staff and agency

German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas criticized on Sunday U.S. President Donald Trump for his policy of maximum pressure against Iran.

"If one wanted to improve the situation of the Iranians, it would be useless to stop the dialogue," Maas told German newspaper Bild am Sonntag, according to Deutsche Welle.



"The EU is counting on diplomacy instead of escalation," he said.

Maas said that while the U.S. withdrew from the nuclear deal and is pushing for maximum pressure against Iran, France, Great Britain and Germany wanted instead "to make progress through negotiations".

Trump unilaterally withdrew the U.S. from the multilateral 2015 nuclear deal in May 2018 and introduced the harshest ever sanctions against Iran under his officially stated

"maximum pressure" strategy.

His administration has been trying to reach the Islamic republic for dialogue for a new deal.

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Friday that Iran will never negotiate a new nuclear deal with the United States.

"We will never negotiate a new deal," Zarif said in a meeting with All India Association of Industries (AIAD) in Mumbai.

Many analysts and think tanks believe that the maximum pressure policy has failed to achieve concrete results.

Former U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry has called policy of "maximum pressure" on Tehran bankrupt.

"We have been pressuring them. Maximum pressure... we're seeing the unfolding of really a bankruptcy of approach," he told CBS News.

South Korea says consulting Iran on how to secure Strait of Hormuz

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Seoul is consulting with Tehran on how to secure the Strait of Hormuz and the possibility of sending troops to the Middle East, a Cheong Wa Dae official said Saturday, Yonhap reported.

"As you know, we will have to make a decision in consideration of the people's life and security as well as oil supply," the official said, adding relevant options are "still being reviewed," the official said.

Consultations with Iran are under way as well, he added. Speaking shortly after the National Security Council (NSC) meeting held Thursday, Presidential Chief of Staff Noh Young-min told a local radio talk show that "there has been considerable progress, internally" in discussions on the sensitive issue of possible troop dispatch.

UK's Johnson, France's Macron reiterate commitment to Iran nuclear deal

LONDON (Reuters) — British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and French President Emmanuel Macron reiterated their commitment on Sunday to the Iran nuclear deal and agreed a long-term framework was needed. Downing Street said on Sunday.

"On Iran, the leaders reiterated their commitment to the JCPOA (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action) and also acknowledged the need to define a long-term framework...", a Downing Street spokeswoman said in a statement after the two met on the sidelines of a Libya summit in Berlin.

"They agreed on the importance of de-escalation and of working with international partners to find a diplomatic way through the current tensions."

Black box of Flight 752 still in Iran, civil aviation chief says

TEHRAN (Press TV) — The black box of a Ukrainian passenger plane that was mistakenly downed near the Iranian capital is still in Iran and no decision has been made yet to send it abroad, says the Civil Aviation Organization of the Islamic Republic of Iran (CAO.IRI).

"We are trying to examine the black box of the crashed Ukrainian plane in Iran and our next options will be Ukraine and France. But no decision has been made so far to send the box to a second country," director general of the organization's investigation office, Hassan Rezaifar, told the Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) on Sunday.

With 167 passengers and nine crewmembers on board, Ukraine International Airlines flight PS752 crashed outside Tehran's Imam Khomeini International Airport on January 8, moments after takeoff.

The General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Islamic Republic said on January 11 that the plane had flown close to a sensitive military site and been brought down due to human error "at a time of crisis caused by U.S. adventurism."

The head of the Aerospace Division of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), Brigadier General Amir Ali Hajizadeh, also explained that the air defense system had erroneously identified the aircraft as a hostile missile.

When the incident took place, Iran's air defense forces were put on the highest level of alert following missile attacks by the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) against a U.S. base in Iraq.

The strikes were in retaliation for the assassination by U.S. terrorist forces of Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, the commander of the Quds Force of the IRGC, in Baghdad.

Iran's Tasnim news agency on Saturday had quoted Rezaifar as saying that Tehran will send the black box to Ukraine.

Iran's Foreign Ministry on Friday decried the "abuse" of Iran's accidental downing of the plane by some countries that pursue certain "political plots" against Tehran.

"We urge all sides to not abuse humanitarian issues - specifically this tragic incident - in a bid to make political gestures and pursue their political dreams," Foreign Ministry Spokesman Abbas Mousavi said.

Iran warns to reconsider cooperation with IAEA if E3 acts unfairly

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iran may reconsider its cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) if the three European countries signatory to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) continue their unfair approach towards Tehran's rights, Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani warned on Sunday.

"Iran is not much for threats, but we state frankly that if Europe, for any reason, adopts an unfair approach in using the Article 37 in the nuclear deal, we will then make a serious decision about our cooperation with the Agency, and the plan is ready at the Iranian Parliament," Larijani said in Parliament.

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.

"It is regrettable that a European foreign minister explicitly stated that the U.S. has threatened them to increase the auto tariffs by 25% (on Europeans) if they did not activate the trigger mechanism," Larijani said.

He went on to say, "So the problem is not Iran's behavior, as the Europeans themselves have repeatedly censured the U.S. for withdrawing from the JCPOA. Rather, the problem is the U.S. threats, that an economically powerful country is forcing Europe to adopt an unfair and humiliating approach."

"We will not start this, but we act in accordance with the Europeans' measures, therefore it is better for them to be fair and



reasonable about this," he added.

U.S. President Donald Trump quit the multilateral 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 deal, Iran started to partially reduce its commitments.

‘Politicization of Ukrainian plane incident will be of no help’

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Abdolreza Faraji-Rad, Iran's former ambassador to Norway, has said that politicization of the Ukrainian plane crash will be of no help, warning it will just add to complications.

"Politicizing the incident will just add to complications and will be of no help," Faraji-Rad told IRNA in an interview published on Sunday.

"For example, there will be no need to take the case to the [UN] Security Council and issue a resolution on it," he added.

He said, "Iran is cooperating to settle the issue. We can prevent exacerbation of tension and complications through active diplomacy."

The former ambassador called for expansion of dialogue and technical consultations among the involved sides.

The Ukrainian passenger plane, with 176 people aboard, was mistakenly downed on

January 8 near Tehran by air defense system.

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

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif also said in a tweet on Friday that politicization of the Ukrainian passenger plane crash must be rejected.

"Politicization of this tragedy must be rejected," Zarif tweeted after a meeting with Canadian Foreign Minister François-Philippe Champagne in Muscat, Oman.

Zarif said now all the countries affected by the plane incident should focus on the agonies of the bereaved families.

"Focus on victims' families," Zarif wrote.

A special working group has been established by the Iranian Foreign Ministry to facilitate consular affairs for the victims of the crash.

Iran's action is based on articles 26 and 36 of the JCPOA. Tehran has repeatedly announced it will reverse its decisions once other signatories fulfill their commitments.

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

In a statement on Tuesday, the Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman said activating the "trigger mechanism" will serve nobody's

The passenger plane was accidentally shot down on January 8, nearly four hours after the Iranian military fired dozens of missiles at a U.S. airbase in Iraq in retaliation for the assassination of Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani in Baghdad five days earlier.

The Iranian military announced on January 11 morning 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.

On Friday, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said, "The plane crash was a bitter incident. Losing Iranian youths and people is a bitter incident."

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

He also said, "There are ambiguities in the

interests.

"I have to mention that the three European nations have taken a passive measure from a weak position," Abbas Mousavi said.

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

Iran said on Thursday the three European states had succumbed to "high school bully" Trump when they triggered the dispute mechanism.

The Washington Post reported on Wednesday that Washington had threatened to impose a 25% tariff on European automobile imports if the three European capitals did not formally accuse Iran of breaking the nuclear agreement.

"Appeasement confirmed. E3 sold out remnants of #JCPOA to avoid new Trump tariffs. It won't work my friends. You only whet his appetite. Remember your high school bully?" Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif wrote on Twitter.

Two European diplomats confirmed Washington had threatened tariffs but said leaders of the three European states had already decided to trigger the mechanism before that.

Another diplomat said a suggestion that the Europeans were acting in response to Trump's threat risked "discrediting the Europeans, but then Trump doesn't really care about that", Reuters reported.



plane incident. We thank the commanders for explaining it to the people, but this issue must be pursued and reoccurrence of similar incidents must be prevented seriously."

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

UNHCR official lauds Iran's services to refugees

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — The UNHCR representative in Iran, Ivo Freijssen, said on Saturday that Tehran's extensive services to asylum seekers and refugees are admirable.

Freijssen made the remarks in a meeting with Mahdi Mahmoudi, head of Iran's Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants.

Freijssen said in a meeting that was held in Switzerland some time ago the issue of providing services to refugees was raised and it is hoped that a mechanism is devised for more support to Iran as it hosts hundreds of thousands of refugees.

He also said in the current year the UNHCR will try, through cooperation by Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan, to activate organizations and international bodies active in areas of refugees.

For his part, Mahmoudi said it is hoped that in the current year international organizations draw up a plan for cooperation with Iran because "we believe that in the areas of providing services to refugees greater and better decisions should be taken."

In May 2019, Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi called on the Western countries not to shrug off their responsibility towards Afghan refugees.

"Supporting immigrants and refugees is an international issue and therefore bearing the responsibilities for them falls upon all countries," Araghchi noted.

Iran has been hosting millions of Afghan refugees since the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in 1979. Iran also hosted Iraqi refugees fleeing from Saddam Hussein's brutality in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Araghchi said Iran has warmly welcomed immigrants from Afghanistan and other countries over the last 40 years.

Araghchi, however, said international

organizations and other governments, especially the Western ones, have been the cause of many sufferings for the Afghan people and should share part of the burden.

The Iranian deputy foreign minister said that it can be done by

Receiving refugees or paying their share are what they can do, the deputy foreign minister said.

"About 468,000 Afghans attend public schools in Iran, each costing the country 600 euros a year, and more than 23,000 college students, each costing 15,000 euros annually," he explained.

The senior diplomat reiterated that expelling refugees is not on the government's agenda. "However," he said, "should the U.S. sanctions impact Iran's oil sale and reduce its revenues, Iran would have to consider new approaches toward them, hinting that Afghans would likely then look toward Europe for refuge."

In a relevant development in September 2018, Iranian Interior Minister Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli called on the European Union (EU) to help Tehran facilitate refugees' return to their homeland.

"We are trying to achieve a suitable management on the issue of refugees and this needs that both the European Union and the United Nations to concentrate on this issue," Rahmani Fazli said in a meeting with visiting United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi in Tehran.

He reiterated that the European countries should feel responsible and give the necessary help for the repatriation of refugees to their countries.

"Iran expects Europe and affluent countries to help cover the costs imposed on host countries by refugees," Rahmani Fazli added.

200 MPs call for a decision on British ambassador

1 → It added the British government should provide answers in this regard.

Ambassador Macaire was accused of "inciting" the protesters in front of Amir Kabir University of Technology.

Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Abbas Araghchi said in a tweet on January 12 that Macaire was temporarily arrested for participating in the "illegal gathering" in Tehran.

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

The ambassador has left Tehran for his country. His departure had been announced to the relevant bodies.

The sources said that Macaire left Iran according to regulations.

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

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

Iran's military response to Soleimani assassination a 'turning point' in power balance: Araghchi

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said on Sunday that what the U.S. did by assassinating top Iranian general Qassem Soleimani and Iran's military response to it will mark a "turning point" for the region.

"Those who got happy with the martyrdom of General Soleimani should know that this martyrdom will lead to further promotion of Resistance," Araghchi said.

The remarks came weeks after U.S. President Donald Trump ordered the drone strikes that martyred Lieutenant General Soleimani, chief of the IRGC's Quds Force, and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the second-in-command of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), as well as eight other companions.

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 U.S. terror attack.

Araghchi said Soleimani's martyrdom and Iran's revenge will affect the Resistance Front, the fight against terrorism and Daesh (ISIS) and eventually the U.S.-Iran power balance in the region.

"The countries that placed hopes on the U.S. security umbrella and lived under it saw the United States' incapability in different cases and saw the U.S. irresolution to respond to the attack against them (Americans)," he added.



■ Araghchi says dispute mechanism won't refer Iran to UNSC

Araghchi, a top nuclear negotiator, also said the triggering of the dispute mechanism under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) does not mean referring Iran's case to the UN Security Council.

"The dispute mechanism does not mean referring Iran's case to the Security Council. What Europe has done is triggering the

dispute mechanism according to Article 36. We believe that Europe cannot trigger this mechanism because we have triggered it and finished it," Araghchi said, according to Mehr.

France, Britain, and Germany confirmed on January 14 that they had triggered the dispute mechanism in the JCPOA, also known as the Iran nuclear deal, but said they were not joining the United States campaign to exert maximum pressure on Tehran.

Russia has announced that it sees no grounds to trigger the dispute mechanism, saying the activation of this mechanism may make it impossible to return to the implementation of the agreement.

China has also expressed regret over the decision, saying it will not help solve the issues or ease current tensions.

"Russia and China also agree with us and we believe that Europe cannot use this article," Araghchi said. "Reducing our commitments was a compensatory measure and Europe cannot take a compensatory measure against our move."

He said nothing has happened yet, but added that the Islamic Republic will make appropriate decisions in due time.

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

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

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.

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

Tehran slams Macron for 'Arab-Persian Gulf' falsification

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi has criticized French President Emmanuel Macron for misnaming the Persian Gulf and for France's military presence in the region.

"I remind Monsieur Macron that the gulf located south of Iran has only one name and that is the #PersianGulf. Your military presence in the Persian Gulf is as wrong as your naming it. Both mistakes are huge but compensable," Mousavi said on his Twitter page on Sunday.



It came after Macron said in a tweet that France had deployed the Jaguar Task Force mission to the Arabian Peninsula and in "the Arab-Persian Gulf."

He also claimed that the military buildup was meant to strengthen maritime security in the strategic region.

The name of the body of water separating the Iranian plateau from the Arabian Peninsula, is historically and internationally known as the Persian Gulf, named after the land of Persia or Iran.

For years, some Arab States have disputed historical and legal evidence of the name of the Persian Gulf.

More than 20% of world's oil and 35% of oil traded by sea passes through the Strait of Hormuz, making the Persian Gulf region one of the most highly important strategic places in the world for international trade.

In addition, the three Persian Gulf Islands of the Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Mussa are also located here and are part of Iran's sovereignty.

For thousands of years world maps from ancient times dating as far as 500 B.C. to the present have all been referring to this body of water as the Persian Gulf.

Police seize over 250 kg of narcotics in northern Iran

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — A sum of 251 kg of narcotics has been seized in the northern province of Golestan, the province's police chief announced on Saturday.

Rouh al-Amin Qassemi said that the operation was carried out jointly with police forces from Yazd province.

According to Qassemi, after a series of intelligence and technical operations, anti-narcotics police identified and arrested a drug smuggler in Yazd province.

The suspect had been hiding illicit drugs in his residence in Golestan province, he said, adding that anti-narcotics police seized 150 kg of opium and 101 kg of hashish during the operation.



Iran is in the forefront of the fight against drug trafficking originating from Afghanistan. About 4,000 Iranian police forces have been killed in the fight against drug cartels.

Europe is the main destination of drugs produced in Afghanistan.

In April 2019, Iranian Police Chief Hossein Ashtari described Iran as a pioneering state in the campaign against drug trafficking, and said, "We have declared our information and needs to the international organizations but I should say that we have not pinned hope on their aid."

"We do not have hope that the international organizations can seriously confront" the cultivation and production of narcotics in Afghanistan, General Ashtari said.

The Iranian police officials say that opium production in Afghanistan has undergone a 50-fold increase since the U.S.-led invasion of the country in 2001.

Venezuelan FM in Tehran for bilateral talks

TEHRAN (MNA) — Minister of Foreign Affairs of Venezuela Jorge Alberto Arreaza Montserrat was scheduled to arrive in Tehran on Sunday night for a three-day visit.

Heading a high-ranking delegation, Arreaza, is slated to hold meetings with senior Iranian officials, including his counterpart, Mohammad Javad Zarif.

In October 2019, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani held a meeting with his Venezuelan counterpart Nicolas Maduro on the sidelines of the Non-Aligned Movement Summit in Baku.

In the gathering, the Iranian president lauded the resistance of the Iranian and Venezuelan nations against the U.S. bullying and pressure as "praiseworthy", saying Washington's plots against the Islamic Republic and the Latin American country have failed.

U.S. unwise acts threatening international peace: ambassador

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — The Iranian ambassador to China on Saturday condemned U.S. for assassinating IRGC Quds Force commander, noting that such unwise acts are threatening international peace and stability.

Mohammad Keshavarzadeh described the assassination of Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani by the U.S. as violation of international law and the United Nations Charter.

The envoy highlighted that the assassination is now at the center of worldwide attention and protests.

"Assassination of Soleimani by armed forces under the direction of the U.S. president is an obvious example of state terrorism and, as a criminal act, constitutes a gross violation of the fundamental principles of international law, including those stipulated in the UN Charter," Keshavarzadeh explained.

"Soleimani was at the heart of the Iran government's efforts to help — in response to requests from some governments in the region — fight the so-called Islamic State militant group, better known as the ISIL, which the United Nations Security Council designates as a terrorist group," the ambassador asserted.

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

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



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

In retaliation to the assassination of General Qassem Soleimani, the Aerospace Force of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) fired dozens of ballistic missiles at the U.S. Ain al-Assad airbase in southwestern Iraq on January 8.

Top Iranian political and military figures had vowed "harsh revenge" for the martyrdom of General Soleimani. Iran targeted the airbase from which the U.S. had flown drones to assassinate Soleimani.

Photos released by media outlets show that the airbase, the biggest run by the U.S. in western Iraq, has suffered great damages.

16 U.S. troops flown to Kuwait after Iran's attack: Kuwaiti paper



POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — 16 U.S. service members with fatal injuries sustained during Iran's attack against the Ain Al-Assad airbase earlier this month have been taken to a hospital in camp Arafat in the Ahmed al-Jaber airbase in Kuwait, a leading Kuwaiti newspaper disclosed on Sunday.

According to Fars, the Arabic-language Al-Qabas paper quoted informed sources as saying that the U.S. soldiers, including some whose bodies were severely burnt and some others who had sustained shrapnel wounds, have been transferred to a U.S. military hospital in Kuwait under strict security measures.

It added that the wounded military men have gone under surgical operations and are still kept at the ICU section of the hospital.

According to the paper, several other U.S. forces who had sustained mild injuries in Iran's missile strike are being treated in Iraq.

U.S. President Donald Trump had claimed that there was no casualty in Iran's missile raid on the Ain Al-Assad airbase, which came as a revenge for a U.S. drone attack that killed Iran's top general, Qassem Soleimani.

Last Thursday, the U.S. Central Command revealed that 11 personnel stationed at

the airbase had to be sent out of the country after displaying concussion symptoms.

"While no U.S. service members were killed" in the Iranian missile attack on the military base, "several were treated for concussion symptoms from the blast and are still being assessed", Navy Captain Bill Urban said in a statement.

The temporary removal of the troops was taken "out of an abundance of caution", Urban said, refusing to divulge any more details about the condition of the servicemen or the extent of their injuries.

"The health and welfare of our personnel is a top priority and we will not discuss any individual's medical status," he added.

The air base, which houses U.S. troops, is one of the largest and oldest military bases which is located in Al-Anbar province in western Iraq. It found itself under fire from volleys of ballistic missiles launched from Iran days after the U.S. assassination of Soleimani, who played a major role in defeating Daesh (ISIS) in both Syria and Iraq.

His assassination has inflamed tensions between Washington and Tehran, and drew a harsh rebuke from Baghdad, prompting the Iraqi Parliament to pass a resolution ordering American forces to leave the country.

Bodies of 11 Ukrainians killed in plane crash sent home



POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Bodies of the 11 Ukrainian nationals who died in a plane crash near the Iranian capital of Tehran arrived in Kiev on Sunday.

According to The Associated Press, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Prime Minister Oleksiy Goncharuk and other officials attended the solemn ceremony at Kiev's Boryspil airport to see the downed plane's nine Ukrainian flight crew and two passengers being removed from the aircraft.

Ukraine International Airlines staff, some in tears, stood on the tarmac clutching flowers. The Ukrainian passenger plane, with 176 people aboard, was mistakenly downed on January 8 near Tehran by air defense system.

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

The plane was shot nearly four hours after the Iranian military fired dozens of missiles at the U.S. airbase in Iraq in retaliation for the assassination of Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani in Baghdad five days earlier.

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

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad

Zarif blamed "U.S. adventurism" for causing the Iranian military to shoot down the Ukrainian passenger plane.

"Human error at time of crisis caused by U.S. adventurism led to disaster," Zarif tweeted on January 8. "Our profound regrets, apologies and condolences to our people, to the families of all victims, and to other affected nations," Zarif added.

President Hassan Rouhani said last week 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.

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said on Friday, "The plane crash was a bitter incident. Losing Iranian youths and people is a bitter incident."

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

"There are ambiguities in the plane incident. 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," he said.

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

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	410694.5
IFX	5297.73

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	46,564 rials
GBP	54,667 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$64.85/b
WTI	\$58.58/b
OPEC Basket	\$65.62/b
Gold	\$1,559.30/oz
Silver	\$18.11/oz
Platinum	\$1,026.65./oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

Stock market advances on Sunday

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), rose 732 points to 410,694 on Sunday, IRNA reported.

As reported, some 6.385 billion securities worth 37.119 trillion rials (about \$883.7 million) were traded at this market.

The first market's index rose 495 points and the second market's index climbed 1,654 points at TSE, the same report conformed.

TEDPIX posted a new record on Saturday, as it jumped 10,516 points to stand at 409,962.



Some 9.266 billion securities worth 39.854 trillion rials (about \$948.9 million) were traded at TSE on Saturday.

The first market's index rose 7,391 points and the second market's index climbed 22,517 points at this market.

TSE witnessed the highest ever weekly rise of its main index, TEDPIX, in the past Iranian calendar week, which was the last week of Iran's tenth calendar month of Dey.

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.

Dominica is the fastest-growing economy in Latin America and the Caribbean region

A new report by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) from the United Nations indicates that the Commonwealth of Dominica was the fastest growing economy in the entire Latin America and the Caribbean region in 2019. The island's GDP is said to have jumped up by 9%, attributed to Citizenship by Investment (CBI), soaring tourism numbers and public sector construction.

Foreign investors sought to obtain second citizenship from Dominica through the CBI Program, choosing to either make a minimum \$100,000 contribution to a government fund or invest in pre-approved real estate, such as luxury resorts and boutique hotels. Some reasons driving investors' trust are linked to them seeking to belong to a stable democracy with great diplomatic relations, a trustworthy business environment and a promising economic future.

Importantly, Dominica's CBI Program is considered the best in the world, employing reliable due diligence that particularly attracts global individuals and families with indisputable integrity.

Dominica is leading the macroeconomic expansion in the Eastern Caribbean Currency Union (ECCU). According to the ECLAC report, "construction activity increased across all ECCU economies" but it was especially notable in Dominica. The "robust performance of the tourism sector, as well as the Citizenship by Investment (CBI) programs and public sector-fuelled construction activity, were primary drivers of ECCU-wide GDP growth in 2019," the report notes.

The real estate option under CBI forms the foundation of a promising ecotourist sector, able to compete on the international market. Stopovers in Dominica increased threefold, the ECLAC report found, with cruise ship arrivals specifically increasing sevenfold. This is an even more impressive achievement considering the fact that island had suffered a loss worth 226% of GDP after Hurricane Maria in September 2017.

The other CBI option, known as the Economic Diversification Fund (EDF), in turn helps sponsor major nationwide development projects, either partially or fully. These include rehabilitating roads and bridges, creating new health centers, supporting education initiatives, building hurricane-proof public housing, an international airport and a geothermal plant.

(Source: prnewswire.com)

Domestic production saves Iran over €1.2b since Mar. 2019

1 -> "So far, the industry ministry has managed to establish nine expert desks for promotion of domestic production in various areas including automotive, motorcycle, petrochemicals, and telecommunications, as well as copper and steel industries, and by the end of the current year (March 19, 2020) we will hold seven more such desks", he said.

The official noted that the industry ministry's programs for promotion of domestic production are going to save \$10 billion for

the country in the next two years.

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

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

To this end, Iranian government has put supporting domestic producers atop



agenda in the current year.

Providing the required working capital for the production units and offering them

facilities is one of the major measures being pursued by the government to support such units.

Trade centers in regional countries to spur non-oil exports

1 -> Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Reza Rahmani has said that Iran is going to open business offices in some of the strategic countries in the region including Iraq, Syria, Turkey and Lebanon.

In last March, the country established a center in Baghdad for marketing its products in the Iraqi market and also expand the exports of its products to its neighbor.

The center has been set up by Iran's Exhibition Projects Management Company to hold Iranian exhibitions in Iraq in a bid to increase Iran-Iraq bilateral trade, boost Iranian production level, and exchange information and technical knowledge between the two countries.

Also, Iran and Syria have agreed on establishment of an Iranian trade center in Damascus. Equipping the trade center is in the final stages and it will be opened soon.

"Many businesses and companies have signed up to have booths in the trade center, and now the map for the center have been prepared and we have presented it to all applicants to lease the units based on annual contracts," Keyvan Kashefi, the chairman of Iran-Syria Joint Trade

Committee, has said.

Such centers are mainly aimed at facilitating exports to the target countries, while also acting as some platforms for introduction of Iranian products in those countries, in addition to preparing some proper condition for Iranian traders and businessmen to get acquainted with the potentials of those markets.

Last week, a deputy head of Trade Promotion Organization announced that the organization will issue permits for the country's plastic and polymer industries unions and associations to set up trade centers in the target countries in a bid to facilitate exports of these products to those markets.

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

During the meeting, the participants mentioned the necessity of establishing some centers in countries like

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

Also, Iranian Electrical Power Equipment Manufacturing and Provision Company (known by its Persian acronym SATKAB) has recently announced that through establishment of some offices abroad the company is trying to lay the ground for more activity of Iranian companies in the markets of target countries and boosting the export of technical and engineering services to those markets.

Mohammad-Vali Alaeddini, the managing director of the company, says that setting up such offices in the target countries help the Iranian companies have a stable presence there to continuously identify the requirements of those markets to meet them and boost Iranian exports.

So, while the government is seriously following up the plan for establishment of trade centers overseas specially in the neighboring and regional countries, it also plans to set up some offices just for some specific products in the target markets to increase exports of those products.

Bank Maskan offers over 100,000 loans in 9 months



ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Bank Maskan, the acting bank of Iran's housing sector, has provided 100,000 loans for housing development during the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-December 21, 2019), Mehr news agency reported on Saturday.

As reported, the number of the mentioned facilities decreased by about 45 percent in the said period compared to the 167,000 loans paid during the last year's nine-month time span.

According to the data provided by the bank, in terms of the number, bond facilities comprised the biggest share of the mentioned facilities in the said period.

In the mentioned time span, the number of people who applied for loans for purchasing homes were less than the number of those who applied for construction loans.

Over 31,200 construction loans were paid in the mentioned nine-months, registering a 45-percent rise compared to the past year's same period, according to Bank Maskan data.

Based on the data, in the mentioned period, a total of 30 trillion rials (about \$714 million) was paid for construction and 22.3 trillion rials (about \$530 million) for house purchases, while 52.3 trillion rials (about \$1.2 billion) was also offered in the form of bond facilities.

So in terms of value, bond facilities ranked first among the paid loans followed by purchasing loans.

Bank Maskan's facilities are granted mainly in the forms of bond facilities and savings funds (which could be used for construction or purchase of houses).

In December 2019, Central Bank of Iran (CBI) reported that Iranian banks and financial institutions offered a total of 6,288,511 loans, of which 11.5 percent were granted to the housing sector.

According to the report, 724,255 loans worth 390.94 trillion rials (\$3 billion) were given out to different housing subsectors, including for home purchase, construction and repair, during the first eight months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-November 21, 2019).

Tehran hosts 22nd conference on ranking top national companies

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iran Industrial Management Company (IMI) held the 22nd top 100 Iranian companies ranking conference (IMI-100) in Tehran on Sunday, IRIB reported.

Attended by senior officials from various government organizations and institutions, the seminar was going to rank the country's top 500 companies in terms of production and exports among which 100 were selected as the country's top 100.

Collecting information about the country's enterprises, clarifying the country's business environment, presenting a clear picture of the position of various firms, companies and industries in the country's economy, promoting competition between the enterprises and creating a more scientific decision-making environment have been mentioned as some of the main goals of the

22nd conference of top Iranian companies.

In this conference, based on an assessment of the companies' growth trend over the last four years, the top 10 companies are awarded as the "pioneers".

The best companies in terms of overall performance, rapid growth, exports, and industry groups were also honored.

According to the managing director of the country's Industrial Management Institute, Abolfazl Kiani, some 100 companies account for nearly 94 percent of Iran's total non-oil exports and these companies also account for 11 percent of the country's total Gross Domestic Production (GDP).

Persian Gulf Petrochemical Holding, Isfahan Oil Refining Company, Bandar Abbas Oil Refining Company, Bank Mellat Holding and Mobarakeh Steel Holding are Iran's top five companies, according to Kiani.

TPO to hold seminar on introducing Vietnam's market in early February



ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) plans to hold a seminar on introducing the markets of Vietnam on February 4.

As published on the website of TPO, the seminar is aimed at making Iranian businessmen and traders acquainted with the potentials for doing business in the markets of the Southeast Asian country and having more vigorous presence in those markets.

TPO has previously held similar gatherings on introducing markets of some other countries and is planning to hold some more seminars in this field. It is mainly in line with the country's approach of bolstering non-oil exports.

Last month, the head of Iran-Vietnam Joint Chamber of Commerce announced that the value of trade between the two countries reached \$352 million in the end of the last Iranian calendar year of 1397 (March 20, 2019), up over 100 percent from \$172 million in the preceding year.

"According to the official statistics, the worth of trade between the two

countries stood at \$352 million in the previous Iranian calendar year [1397], the figure, however, is not approved by the joint chamber, since due to the U.S. sanctions much of the two countries' trade is done through third countries and is estimated to be around \$700 million," Mostafa Mousavi told ILNA.

The Asian country is eager for boosting its trade with Iran and considering the banking issues the two countries trade is mostly done through bartering, the official said.

According to Mousavi, because of the sanctions most of Iran's exports to Vietnam are being done through Turkey and Oman, while Vietnamese goods are imported through the UAE, which has led to not being mentioned in the official statistics of the two countries.

Vietnam is one of the world's major producers of non-oil commodities and its products are of very high quality.

The country was the 45th exporter of goods to Iran during the past Iranian calendar year. The country mainly exported coffee, pepper, fish feed, and cellphones to Iran.

Open market to stabilize liquidity: banking expert

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Liquidity stabilization in the country will be the major result of launching open market operation (OMO) system in the banking system, Seyed Bahaeddin Hosseini Hashemi, a banking and monetary expert, stated.

"The amount of liquidity in private sector has become like a flood and it should be controlled through systems like OMO", Tasnim news agency reported on Sunday, quoting Hashemi.

The expert further cited fixed prices, employment, and stability in forex market as some other potential results of the open market operation.

The Central Bank of Iran (CBI) officially launched an open market operation system on January 16, as part of its monetary policy to curb inflation, control interest rates in the interbank

market and manage liquidity.

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.

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 the money supply.

2mt of idle petchem production capacity to be revived next year

E N E R G Y **TEHRAN** — Nearly two million tons capacity of Iran's idle petrochemical units will be revived in the next Iranian calendar year (starts on March 20), IRNA reported on Saturday, quoting a manager with the National Petrochemical Company (NPC).

"In the past few years, for some reason, part of the production capacity of the country's petrochemical complexes has not been operational, so with the planning and coordination among various holdings and petrochemical complexes, approximately two million tons of these idle capacities will be put back into operation next year," Jalal Mirhashemi, NPC's production control manager said.

According to Mirhashemi, realization of the second and third leaps of the petrochemical industry along with removing barriers, and increasing the production capacity have become the main goal of NPC for the upcoming year.



The ground can be prepared for increasing Iran's production and exports of pet-

rochemicals by making optimum use of the installed capacity in the country and

helping idle units become operational, Mirhashemi said.

"By identifying production bottlenecks and removing them according to their priority, it would be possible to make maximum use of the capacity created earlier through hefty investments in the domestic petrochemical sector without the obligation of spending heavily," he noted.

He further stressed that the NPC plans to take necessary measures to increase the diversity of the country's petrochemical products to meet the domestic needs and to increase the share of the country's export markets.

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

According to Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh, the country is currently producing nearly 70 million tons of petrochemical products annually.

Iran's daily gas consumption hits new record high

E N E R G Y **TEHRAN** — Iran's daily natural gas consumption hit a record high of 592 million cubic meters (mcm) a day due to the recent heavy snowfall and cold weather which has blanketed the country, said the spokesman of the National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC). "This condition (the cold weather) has caused the domestic and commercial consumption [of natural gas] to reach an unprecedented 592 million cubic meters per day," Mohammad Asgari told IRNA.

"If the current consumption trend continues, daily gas consumption will rise to over 600 million cubic meters per day," he warned.

Emphasizing the need to pay more attention to the optimization of gas consumption, the official said: "Although the domestic gas sector is fully supplied considering the increase in gas production in South Pars field as well as the development of the country's gas network, however, the increase in domestic consumption could interrupt the gas



supply to the country's industrial sector, power plants, and petrochemical plants."

As reported, currently, about 30,000 villages with 4.6

million households as well as 1,148 cities with over 18 million households are connected to the national gas network; this is while the development of the gas network for the industrial sector and power plants continues.

In August 2019, NIGC Dispatching Director Mehdi Jamshidi Dana said the country's daily gas production has reached 810 mcm.

According to Jamshidi, with over 39,000 kilometers of high-pressure gas pipelines, 82 gas pressure boosting stations, 296 turbo-compressors and other gas facilities, the Iranian gas network is Asia's biggest and the world's fourth-largest network in terms of facilities.

Back in January 2019, the NIGC's managing director had announced that 93.6 percent of Iran's population enjoy natural gas.

Gas is supplied to 97 percent of people in the urban areas and 82 percent of people in the rural regions, according to Hassan Montazer Torbati.

From mini-OPEC to fully-fledged alliance

When the energy ministers of seven states signed the foundation charter last week to elevate the East Med Gas Forum from a discussion platform to a fully-fledged body of cooperation, few realized this has the makings of establishing a far-reaching alliance to help untangle some age-old conflicts.

Egypt has rightly taken the initiative to jump into the driving seat of this Mediterranean cooperation, that could develop on the model of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (PGCC), only instead of a regional intergovernmental political and economic union, the new Forum should aim to safeguard energy, as well as commercial interests, at all cost.

After all, apart from doubling the capacity of the Suez Canal that channels a colossal amount of global sea trade, Egypt also aspires to become an energy hub between Europe and Asia, through its oil and gas discoveries, and electricity interconnectors it is building to Europe via Cyprus, east over Saudi Arabia and south to the rest of Africa.

Lebanon and someday, Syria, are the only missing components of the Forum comprising Egypt, Cyprus, Greece, Israel, Italy, Jordan and Palestine, while France also retains the right to claim a seat, as for decades it has been at the forefront of building bridges between southern Europe and northern Africa.

Besides, France and Italy are the two leading EU member states that have a vested interest in developing and safeguarding energy resources in the region, and their involvement should be more proactive, allowing to maintain a balance.

Naturally, Turkey will continue to be the troublemaker in the neighborhood, egged on by Russia that simply does not want to see any other cooperation between any country in the region.

■ the soon-to-be alliance

Which is why the new forum and soon-to-become alliance, should have maintained a harsh tone with Ankara, saying from the outset that the new cooperation 'is' aimed at third countries, as long as Turkey continues to behave the way it does.

It is now playing with fire in Libya, sending 'peacekeeping' forces with Moscow's blessing and soon with new Russian weaponry.

How long Ankara can maintain so many open fronts before these turn against them, only depends on the West's tolerance of the situation.

France wants to enhance its influence in the world and is now trying to steer European defense and geostrategic policy.

Italy needs to re-establish itself as a force to be reckoned with but requires a stronger naval presence to control the migrant flow into Europe.

(Source: financialmirror.com)

China continues to lead U.S. in race to sustainability

Investment in renewable energy capacity worldwide was \$282.2b last year, according to new data from BloombergNEF (BNEF) increasing by 1 percent compared to 2018's \$280.2b.

Even though China, the world's largest market, is slipping back, they are still leading the U.S., currently hitting news records.

According to BNEF, what had started as a subdued first few months of 2019, picked up pace in the second half of the year, with notable increases in investment including U.S. onshore wind and, in particular, offshore wind in China and Europe.

Overall renewable energy capacity investment figures for 2019 saw wind (onshore and offshore) beat solar on with \$138.2b globally, an increase of 6 percent. Solar was close behind, at \$131.1bn, having fallen 3 percent.

Falling capital costs in wind and solar meant that the two combined are likely to have seen around 180 GW added last year, increasing by 20 GW since 2018.

China, whilst remaining the highest investor in renewables at \$83.4b in 2019, slowed by 8 percent compared to 2018 – the lowest figure since 2013. Solar plummeted by a massive 33 percent, but wind rose 10 percent to \$55b.

The U.S. was the second-largest investing country in renewable energy capacity, at \$55.5b, spiking 28 percent

year-on-year, due to a rush by wind and solar developers to qualify for federal tax credits due to be scaled-back in 2020.

The U.S. energy transition is a key focus at DISTRIBUTECH 2020, January 28th – 30th in San Antonio Texas.

Click here to register your attendance and find out how you can contribute to North America's smart energy future.

"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," said Ethan Zindler, head of Americas for BNEF, noting that the second-highest year for investment (\$45.7b) came in Trump's first year, 2017. "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 was a hairs-breadth behind the U.S., investing \$54.3bn in renewables capacity, although this represented a 7 percent decline since 2018. Spain led the way with \$8.4bn, up 25 percent in 2018 and the highest annual figure for that country since 2011.

The UK invested \$5.3b, dropping by a shocking 40 percent – the lowest investment level in over a decade, whilst Germany fared slightly better – investment fell 30 percent to just \$4.4b, its lowest since 2004.

(Source: powerengineeringint.com)

New developments in LNG bunkering markets

The LNG bunkering market research has reported a study recently presented by AMR provides comprehensive knowledge on the development activities by Global industry players, growth possibilities or opportunities and market sizing for LNG bunkering along with analysis by key segments, leading and emerging players, and their presence geographies.

This research study has 120 pages and covers the complete market overview of various profiled players and their development history, on-going development strategies along with the current situation.

The global LNG bunkering market was valued at \$XX million in 2018, and our analysts predict the global market size will reach \$XX million by the end of 2028, growing at a CAGR of XX% between 2018 and 2028.

This report provides detailed historical analysis of global market for LNG bunkering from 2013-2018, and provides extensive market forecasts from 2020-2028 by region/country and subsectors. It covers the sales volume, price, revenue, gross margin, historical growth and future perspectives in the LNG bunkering market.

The research benefits in recognizing and following arising players in the market and their portfolios, to enhance decision-making abilities and helps to create effective counter-strategies to gain a competing advantage. Some of the players profiled/ part of study coverage are Casum, Shell (Gasnor), Equinor, Barents Naturgas, Engie, Bomin and Linde, Eni Norge, Harvey Gulf, Polskie LNG, Korea Gas Corp, Gaz Metro.



■ An examined comprehensive data

AMR's research team has examined complete data across the globe comprising 20+ countries with a comprehensive data plan spread from 2013 to 2026 and approximately 12+ regional indicators complemented with 20+ company level coverage.

The study is organized utilizing data and knowledge sourced of various primary and secondary sources, proprietary databases, company/university websites, regulators, conferences, SEC filings, investor presentations and featured press releases from company sites and industry-specific third party sources.

Container Vessels, Tanker Vessels, Bulk & General Cargo Vessels, Ferries & OSV, Others segment interpreted and sized in this research report by application/end-users reveals the inherent growth and several shifts for the period 2014 to 2026.

The changing dynamics supporting the growth perform it perilous for manufacturers in this extent to keep up-to-date with the changing pace of the market. Find out which segment is doing great and will return in strong earnings adding the significant drive to overall growth.

Furthermore, the research contributes an in-depth overview of regional level break-up categorized as likely leading growth rate territory, countries with the highest market share in past and current scenario.

Some of the geographical break-up incorporated in the study are North America (United States, Canada and Mexico), Europe (Germany, UK, France, Italy, Russia and Spain etc.), Asia-Pacific (China, Japan, Korea, India, Australia and Southeast Asia etc.), South America Brazil, Argentina, Colombia and Chile etc.), Middle East & Africa (South Africa, Egypt, Nigeria and Saudi Arabia etc.).

In the Type segment Truck-to-Ship, Ship-to-Ship, Port-to-Ship, Others included for segmenting LNG Bunkering market by type.

The industry is performing well and few emerging business institutions are in their peak as per growth rate and their existence with major players of LNG Bunkering market whereas conflict between 2 Global economies continues in 2020.

(Source: dagorettnews.com)

Wind farm to be opened in Bosnia and Herzegovina

The Relaks Company from Posusje, owned by businessmen Veljko Loncar (Vokel) and Tomislav Maric (KTM Brina), is working on a project to build the Ostrc hydroelectric plant on the Ostrc mountain above Posusje. The project is in the phase of obtaining an energy permit.

So far, the CoE has been issued with a location and environmental permit, the Indikator reports, referring to grude.com news portal.



Wind power and direction have been continuously monitored and recorded for five years with devices mounted on an 84-meter-high measuring pillar on Ostrce.

Based on the obtained data, all the necessary studies and studies were done showing that the Ostrc site is one of the best locations for the construction of wind farms in BiH.

The electricity from wind energy, Ostrc wind power plant will produce with eight wind turbines with a total installed capacity of 28.2 MW.

The planned annual production is 94 GW / h of electricity and it is sufficient to supply all homes in Posusje, Grude and Ljubuski.

According to the Feasibility Study, the value of the Ostrc wind farm project is 35 million euros and it will be the largest investment in one project in the County of West Herzegovina.

On behalf of the concession fee, Relaks will pay a concession fee of 2.5% of the total value of electricity produced, and the fee will be split into two equal parts between the cantons and the Municipality of Posusje.

(Source: ewind.es)

The new energy superpower in the Middle East

By Vanand Meliksetian

Russia under President Putin has regained some of the global importance that it lost after the breakup of the Soviet Union.

During the Cold War, Moscow had a significant presence in the Middle East where it supported proxies in its battle against the West. Russia's recent advances in the region have been a reaction to the U.S.'s relative retreat.

Although Putin is accredited with excellent strategic insight, his accomplishments are primarily good decisions made at the right moment.

The escalation of the conflict between the U.S. and Iran is another development that the Kremlin views favorably as they see opportunities to advance their position. The risks are severe, but so are the rewards. Moscow could make significant financial, strategic, and diplomatic advances at the expense of both Iran and the U.S.

Russia is already one of the biggest producers of oil in the world with a daily production average of 11.2 million barrels in 2019. A significant portion of the state's budget is based on the export of oil and gas.

■ Conflict is bad for business

Although conflict is usually bad for business, the rising oil prices due to the killing of General Soleimani increase Russia's earnings in the short term.

Iranian oil is roughly the same quality as oil from Russian oil fields. Although Tehran's exports have already collapsed due to Trump's 'maximum pressure policy', Moscow still sees some room to increase market share at the expense of



Iran. Every day that Tehran's national oil company is absent from the global markets, competitors solidify their position.

Also, the recent tensions increase the risk of supply disruptions in an already sensitive region.

Approximately 21 percent of the world's oil passes through the Strait of Hormuz. During the past two months, several ships have been attacked as a direct consequence of the rising tensions. Although Washington and Riyadh were quick with blaming Tehran, it is uncertain who was behind the attacks.

What is certain though is that any supply disruption will have disastrous consequences for the world economy.

While customers of Middle Eastern oil are aware of the risks and try to mitigate its effects, Moscow sees opportunities. East Asia's three largest economies, China, Japan, and South Korea, have a dependency of 44, 88, and 82 percent respectively on the Persian Gulf oil.

These countries have a lot to lose if the U.S.-Iran conflict escalates. Therefore, the strategic importance of alternative producers such as Russia has increased.

Traditionally, the bulk of the country's oil is produced in Western Siberia. In recent years, however, the country has invested significantly in the Arctic and Eastern Siberia.

Russia's relative proximity to Asian customers and the lack of bottlenecks make it an ideal supplier.

■ Saudi dethroned in 2016

Russia already dethroned Saudi Arabia in 2016 as the biggest supplier in China. With additional investments and the gradual shifting of production from the west towards regions near East Asia, Moscow expects to increase its exports even further.

Lastly, the tension between the U.S. and Iran improves Russia's diplomatic standing.

Moscow has achieved the impossible: maintaining good relations with all countries in the Middle East. The relative withdrawal of the U.S. from the region has created a power vacuum that Russia partly filled.

Although Moscow does not have a military, economic, and diplomatic clout comparable to Washington's, its flexible Middle Eastern strategy has made it one of the few power brokers of the region.

The value and importance of a mediator are only appreciated when there is a conflict to solve. Although Moscow's cooled relations with Washington rule out mediation, Tehran is keen on receiving support from the Kremlin in its conflict with Washington.

The unprecedented economic and political pressure has left Iran's leadership with few options. Moscow, however, is happy to help as long as the rewards are worth it.

(Source: oilprice.com)

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Trump impeachment: What you need to know about the Senate trial

For only the third time in history, an American president is facing an impeachment trial, with hearings set to start on Tuesday.

Such a trial could, in theory, lead to President Donald Trump being removed from office. That outcome would be a huge shock - we'll explain why later - but the very fact a president is facing trial is significant.

Here are seven questions and answers that will help you understand the trial.

■ 1) What is impeachment?

Put simply, it's a process that allows senior figures in government to hold other officials (like judges, the president and cabinet members) to account if they're suspected of committing offences while in office.

Those offences can include "treason, bribery or other high crimes and misdemeanors".

After someone is impeached, they then go on trial in the Senate, the members of which will decide whether they are guilty or not. It's a political trial not a criminal one.

■ 2) What is Trump accused of?

He's facing two articles of impeachment, or charges.

Firstly, he's accused of seeking help from Ukraine's government to help himself get re-elected this November. He's alleged to have held back millions of dollars of military aid to Ukraine and dangled a proposed White House meeting with Ukraine's president, both as bargaining chips.

In exchange, witnesses say he wanted Ukraine to publicly announce an investigation into Joe Biden, the man who's leading the Democratic race to challenge him in the election. Polls suggest Biden would beat him if chosen as the Democratic candidate.

Secondly, after the White House refused to allow staff to testify at the first impeachment hearings last year, Democrats accused Trump of obstructing Congress (the part of the U.S. government that writes and brings in laws, and which was investigating him).

Trump has denied any wrongdoing and has called the inquiry a "witch hunt".

It's worth emphasizing that this has nothing to do with the special counsel investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 U.S. election, and into the Trump campaign's ties to Russia. That ended with no further action against Trump himself.

■ 3) Why is there a trial?

This is what led us to this moment:

● August 2019: A whistleblower made allegations against President Trump

● October - December: An investigation took place, with hearings in the House of Representatives (controlled by Trump's Democratic rivals)

● December: Democratic leaders from the House voted to impeach Trump

● January 2020: The case was passed up to the Senate (controlled by Trump's Republicans), where the trial will take place

■ 4) What does a Senate trial involve?

The U.S. Constitution is a bit vague when it comes to the specifics of managing impeachment. But there are general rules based largely on the impeachment trial of President Andrew Johnson in 1868. In that



Democratic Senator Chuck Schumer (left) and Republican leader Mitch McConnell (right) will be key players in the Senate trial. (Photo: Getty Images)

case, he just about kept his job.

The only other president to face an impeachment trial was Bill Clinton in 1999. He too survived.

Two people are deciding how the trial will be conducted: Mitch McConnell, the Republican leader of the Senate, and his Democratic counterpart, Chuck Schumer.

They'll both have to agree guidelines for evidence, witnesses, duration and arguments. But because the Republicans control the Senate, McConnell has the final say over the format of the trial.

A few rules have already been laid out: there is to be no live tweeting from the chamber, and no outside reading material should be brought in. Senators are also not allowed to speak to those sitting near them while the case is being heard.

Senators will hear from both sides - prosecutors from the House of Representatives and lawyers from the White House - as well as from any witnesses. After that, senators will be given a full day to deliberate before they vote on whether to convict Trump.

A two-thirds majority of 67 votes in the 100-seat Senate is required to convict and oust Trump. But because there are only 47 Democrats (and 53 Republicans), the president is widely expected to be cleared.

In the unlikely event of Trump being found guilty, he would be removed from office and Vice-President Mike Pence would be sworn in as president.

A simple majority of senators - 51 - could also vote

to end the trial should they wish.

■ 5) Who are the main players?

Each senator, including McConnell, has delivered an oath promising to deliver "impartial justice" during the trial. But McConnell - the most senior Republican in the Senate - last month said "I'm not an impartial juror" and has also said he and his party are working hand-in-hand with the White House.

"Everything I do during this, I'm co-ordinating with the White House counsel," he told Fox News, to the fury of senior Democrats.

He won't be presiding over the trial - that job has gone to Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts, although the 100 senators will ultimately act as both judge and jury. Justice Roberts is there to make sure the trial sticks to the predetermined rules.

A group of seven Democrats will act as impeachment managers - essentially prosecutors for the House, who will present its case for impeachment to the Senate. They include Intelligence Committee Chairman Adam Schiff and Judiciary Committee Chairman Jerry Nadler, both frequent targets of Trump's anger.

President Trump's defense team will include special prosecutors from President Bill Clinton's impeachment - Ken Starr and Robert Ray.

Alan Dershowitz, whose past clients include OJ Simpson, is also part of the team which will be led by White House counsel Pat Cipollone and Trump's personal lawyer Jay Sekulow.

(Source: BBC)

China and Japan's declining populations

■ Japan shrinks by 500,000 people as births fall to lowest number since 1874

A widening gap between births and deaths has put Japan in a demographic squeeze, with fewer people to replace retiring workers and support them as they age.

Japan has 512,000 fewer people this year than last, according to an estimate released on last December by the country's welfare ministry.

The numbers are the latest sign of Japan's increasing demographic challenges.

Births in the country - which are expected to drop below 900,000 this year - are at their lowest figure since 1874, when the population was about 70 percent smaller than its current 124 million.

The total number of deaths, on the other hand, is increasing. This year, the figure is expected to reach almost 1.4 million, the highest level since the end of World War II, a rise driven by the country's increasingly elderly population.

That gap between births and deaths has put Japan in a demographic squeeze. As the number of births goes down, there are fewer young people entering its work force. That means fewer people to replace retiring workers and support them as they age, a situation that poses a serious threat to Japan's economic vitality and the security of its social safety net.

Japan is not the only country having to cope with a shrinking society. It's not even the country with the lowest birthrate: That title goes to South Korea. And other countries - including China and the United States - also face declining birthrates, which could spell trouble down the road.

But Japan is the world's grayest nation: Almost 28 percent of its residents are over 65.

Japan has made efforts to push up its fertility rate - the average number of births per woman - from its current level of around 1.4 to a target of 1.8, still short of the 2.1 considered necessary to hold the population steady.

The government has moved to encourage births by increasing incentives for parents to have more children and reducing obstacles that might discourage those who want to.

But the incentives are proving insufficient as more people in Japan are putting off childbirth - or not having children at all - either to take advantage of economic opportunities or because they worry that economic opportunities do not exist and feel that they cannot afford children.

Even for those who do want to be parents, the hurdles remain daunting.

Demand for day care in the country far outstrips supply, making it difficult for working women to juggle careers and children. And working men who want to take advantage of the country's generous paternity leave can find themselves stigmatized by an entrenched cultural belief that a man's place is in the office, not in the home.

Adding to the government's worries, marriage is on the decline. The number of marriages dropped by 3,000 year-on-year to 583,000, according to the data released on Tuesday, part of a steep decline over the last decade.

It has also committed to accepting limited numbers of immigrants to handle vital work such as caring for the elderly. This year the country began issuing more than a quarter-million visas to immigrants who will do such work. (Source: New York Times)

■ China's sinking birth rate

China's birthrate in 2019 hit its lowest level since the founding of the People's Republic in 1949, according to official statistics released by Beijing Friday.

Chinese mothers gave birth to 14.65 million children last year, a birth rate of 10.48 babies per 1,000 people, according to figures from the National Bureau of Statistics.

China's demographic issues could pose serious issues for the world's second-largest economy when the current working-age population reaches retirement. Experts worry if the trend continues, or the population begins shrinking, China may get old before it gets rich.

Demographers have long pointed to China's "one-child policy" as the culprit of the country's current population problems. For decades, couples in China were limited to only having a single child, unless they were willing to break the law or had the money to work around the system.

Experts say the policy had dire effects on age demographics and sex ratio, as many poor, rural families who prized boys due to traditional cultural values went to extreme measures to ensure their child's sex.

More than 250 million Chinese were over 60 years old last year, the statistics released Friday reveal. They make up more than 18% of the population.

The figure is forecast to rise to a third of the population by 2050 -- or 480 million people. A study published by a leading state-sponsored Chinese think tank last year found that the country will face an "unstoppable" population decline over the coming decades, with fewer and fewer workers struggling to support an increasingly aging society.

The ruling Communist Party has attempted to combat demographic issues by encouraging families to have more babies, but many middle class families are wary to do so because of financial considerations.

A survey conducted in 2017 found that more than 50% of families have no intention of having a second child, with many saying they believed it was too expensive.

However, it's unclear how reliable the figures are, as Beijing has been accused of meddling with its statistics for political gain by Western governments and academics like Yi Fuxian, who studies Chinese demographics at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Yi said in a statement that the numbers are likely overstated because they are heavily influenced by external factors.

China's neighbors in Northeast Asia are dealing with similar demographic issues -- graying populations that aren't having enough children to replace them.

The number of babies born in Japan in 2019 fell to 864,000 -- the lowest since records began in 1899 -- according to a report published by the Japanese Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare.

South Korea's fertility rate hit a record low last year of 0.98, or fewer than one baby per woman in the population. To maintain a stable population, countries need a fertility rate of 2 -- anything above that indicates population growth.

(Source: CNN)

How the Libya Summit in Berlin took shape

The path to this Sunday's peace conference on Libya in Berlin was anything but certain.

First, officials in the German government had to convince all the parties in the conflict to attend.

At this point, it's hard to know what person in the German government first came up with the idea of brokering peace in Libya. Some say the idea came from Angela Merkel's Chancellery. Others believe it originated in the Foreign Ministry. German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier reportedly made an attempt to pursue the idea - and Andreas Michaelis, a senior official in the Foreign Ministry and confidant of Steinmeyer's, allegedly suggested the idea to Heiko Maas shortly after the latter became Germany's foreign minister.

What is known is that during a regular foreign policy meeting between German Chancellor Merkel and Maas in mid-August, the two decided to become mediators in the conflict. The idea behind the initially secret "Berlin Process" had been to bring together all the countries involved in the Libya conflict from the outside - without including the Libyan parties themselves. Merkel and Maas were particularly interested in the countries supporting Libyan General Khalifa Hifter in his plan to capture the capital of Tripoli: Russia, the United Arab Emirates and Egypt. Hifter is vying for power against Fayeze Sarraj, the prime minister of the internationally recognized unity government in Libya.

■ 'A meaningful international event'

At first, things looked promising - so promising that the German ambassador in Libya tweeted: "With sufficient preparatory work, these efforts could lead towards a meaningful international event this fall." Jan Hecker, Merkel's foreign-policy adviser, and Michaelis made plans to hold an initial meeting in the Chancellery on Sept. 17. They invited high-ranking foreign-policy advisers from the three Hifter-supporting countries, along with Turkey, which supports the



German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas (left) and General Khalifa Hifter in Benghazi. (XANDER HEINL / PHOTOTHEK.NET / IMAGO)

official Libyan government. Other guests included the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council and representatives of Italy, the European Union, the African Union and the Arab League. The plans required a considerable amount of work. Hifter's supporters, in particular, reacted skeptically.

Sarraj supporters and Haftar allies clashed during an early-evening conversation that lasted for around three hours. Two European partners - France and Italy - also signaled their skepticism. Both countries had made previous attempts to solve the Libya problem, but in contrast to them, Berlin was seen by many as unbiased on Libya and less stained by colonial history. Leaders in Berlin also believed Germany's actions at the end of the Gadhafi regime could help them become honest brokers in the conflict. When a Western coalition

under French military leadership moved to oppose the longtime Libyan ruler in the spring of 2011, Germany abstained from the vote at the Security Council.

Given how many diplomatic attempts to solve the Libyan conflict had previously failed, it was a feat to get all the players to the table. To show that the German government was serious, Minister Maas personally welcomed the international advisers on Oct. 1 at the Foreign Office in Berlin.

But then negotiations stumbled. Allies of General Hifter were particularly reluctant to agree to a weapons embargo. The German hosts believed this was the necessary first step for a successful peace process. The more success Hifter had in Libya, the less his supporters were willing to agree to a compromise.

Can Remaining Question Marks Be Removed?

After that, Merkel agreed to make the negotiations a priority. During the third meeting, on Oct. 21 in the Chancellery, she dropped in on the negotiations herself. Another meeting then took place in late November in the Foreign Ministry. The German negotiators hoped they would be able to hold the summit before the holiday season in December.

Then Turkey created new problems. In late November, Libyan Prime Minister Sarraj and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan agreed to a "Memorandum of Understanding," facilitating military cooperation and allowing Turkey to easily send ships as well as airplanes and soldiers to Libya. Hifter's supporters fumed. The Greeks, the Cypriots as well as Libyan tribes all sharply criticized the deal.

A further meeting at the Chancellery as well as countless phone calls from Merkel and Maas were necessary for all the countries involved to declare themselves willing to attend the peace summit in Berlin in January.

On Saturday, Jan. 11, Merkel once again tried to secure personal support in Moscow for her Libya conference. At the Kremlin, Merkel and Russian President Vladimir Putin spoke much longer than expected - first for one-and-a-half hours alone, and then for another two hours as part of a larger group. When they stepped in front of the tightly packed crowd of journalists, it was clear that the conversation had been fruitful. Putin praised the German plan to have a conference in Berlin. Merkel lauded the attempt by Putin and Erdogan to negotiate a cease-fire between the opponents. The "Berlin Process" and the deal with Ankara now functioned like two parts of a whole. Putin looked at his watch and said, "The cease-fire should be starting in five hours."

(Source: Spiegel)

Snow doesn’t disrupt Imam Khomeini Intl. Airport flights

TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** – Flights at Imam Khomeini International Airport (IKIA) are well under way despite a heavy snow blanketed the airport on Sunday.



Air traffic at the airport witnessed no stops under the inclement weather conditions, said Hassan Khoshkhoo, IKIA deputy director for airport operations, IKAC News reported.

To ensure that flight operations continue on the airport aprons, taxiways and runways, winter services staff cleared nearly an area of two million square meters at the airport, including access roads, he added.

Historical object put up for sale online confiscated

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** – Iranian authorities have seized a historical container from a person who had put up the object on an e-commerce website for sale in Neyshabour, northeast Iran.



The historical object, which estimated to date from Il-khanid era (1256 to 1335), was identified following routine observations of internet advertising websites, Mohammad-Ali Modir, an official in charge of protecting cultural heritage, said on Thursday, CHTN reported.



ROUND THE GLOBE

Historic center of Agadez

The historic center of Agadez in Niger dates back to the 15th and 16th centuries, when the Sultanate of Air established itself there, encouraging the consolidation of Tuareg tribes and the development of trans-Saharan economic and cultural exchanges.

Sedentarisation took place based around the former encampments, which led to an original street plan, which is still respected today.

The historic center includes a large amount of housing, and a well preserved palatial and religious ensemble, including a tall minaret made entirely of mudbrick. The old town is characterized by mudbrick architecture and a decorative style that are specific to the Air region.



The traditional sultanate system is still in place, ensuring social unity and economic prosperity. It is a living historic center inhabited by about 20,000 people.

The boundaries of the nominated property are those of the historic center. The overall urban fabric is well preserved, and is spatially organized around the politico-religious monuments linked to the Sultanate of Air. A significant number of houses (easily a majority) have been preserved, which allows the satisfactory expression of the specific values linked to the mudbrick architecture and decoration specific to the Air region.

■ Integrity

The boundaries of the nominated property are those of the historic center. The overall urban fabric is well preserved, and is spatially organized around the politico-religious monuments linked to the Sultanate of Air. A significant number of houses (easily a majority) have been preserved, which allows the satisfactory expression of the specific values linked to the mudbrick architecture and decoration specific to the Air region. The nominated property has good visual unity from many observation points, and gives the visitor the sense of being in an historic town of great integrity. There are however some significant local alterations: inappropriate buildings made of breeze blocks, the use of corrugated iron for roofs, an overhead electricity cable network which is particularly visible and unsightly, and the appearance of large advertisements painted on walls.

(Source: UNESCO)

Top Persian Gulf airlines continue using Iranian airspace

→ 1 “We will continue to fly to Iran because Iran is an important country to us and it is our neighbor and we want to serve the people of Iran,” Qatar Airways Chief Executive Akbar al-Baker said.

“Iranian airspace is important for all carriers in this region,” said Adil al-Ghaith, Emirates’ senior vice president, the report said.

Executives and analysts believe that carriers in the Persian Gulf, a major transit stop between European and Asian destinations, have few alternative routes to choose from in an area where much of the airspace is kept clear of civilian aircraft for military use.

Previously, Russian airlines announced they have made no changes in using Iranian airspace.

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

Moreover, data from Flightradar24 website shows Aeroflot flight SU512 departed from Moscow on schedule at 10:15 p.m. Wednesday and landed in Tehran early Thursday morning and returned to Moscow as planned.



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

firmed they are avoiding parts of the region.

Iran’s tourism minister on January 12 said that the country’s tourism industry has suffered a setback but it will certainly return to “normal”, in remarks referring

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

Fourfold rise possible in inbound medical tourists to Iran: expert

TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** — An Iranian university professor and researcher believes that the country has the capacity and infrastructure to increase inbound medical travelers by as much as four fold.

“According to statistics compiled by the health ministry, 550,000 medical tourists traveled to the country during the last [Iranian calendar] year (ended March 20, 2019) and currently the ground is fertile to attract 2.5 million [medical travelers] per annum,” Ali Radman told IRNA on Sunday.

The average expenditure by each medical traveler in Iran stands as \$3,000 and some 70 percent of such visitors arrive in the country to receive infertility, ophthalmology, orthopedics and cardiovascular services, Radmand noted.

He also noted that the Islamic Republic currently ranks 41st amongst the 176 countries that offer medical and health services to foreign travelers, adding Canada is on top of the list.



He also attached great importance to the emerging sector, saying the global medical tourism industry valued at \$439 billion, which has had a significant year-on-year growth.

In December, Saeid Hashemzadeh, the head of the ministry’s medical tourism department, said 22 medical tourism companies have so far been licensed by the health ministry, while 180 others are in the

process of obtaining licenses.

He added that Iranian hospitals admitted 70,000 foreign patients over the last [Iranian calendar] year (March 2018 – March 2019), adding some 90% of foreign patients in Iran are from Afghanistan, Iraq, Azerbaijan, Kuwait, Oman, Bahrain and other countries around the Persian Gulf.

Iran hosted a record high of nearly 600,000 medical travelers during the first four months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-July 21, 2019), nearly equal to the figure for the whole past year, according to an Iranian association for the health tourism promotion.

Many domestic experts say that medical tourism in Iran produces win-win outcomes as the country yields considerable benefits to international health-care seekers, offering affordable yet quality treatment services.

The country has set its goals to exceed its yearly medical travelers to around 2 million in [calendar year] 1404 (March 2025-March 2026).

You want to be a responsible tourist. But what does that even mean?

The year is 2013, and the (hypothetical) trip is a mix of virtue and fun: Fly to a Caribbean island, stay in an Airbnb, help build a classroom at a school, visit an orphanage and then finish off by flying to a second island and kicking back at an all-inclusive resort. Highlight: a 45-minute swim with dolphins.

See the world! Help locals make rent! Give back! Contribute to the economy! What a responsible traveler!

Today, that kind of getaway might elicit a horrified gasp, followed by questions and commentary: Was the Airbnb legal? Isn’t there an overtourism issue there? Please tell me you bought carbon offsets for those flights. Did the school even need a new classroom, and, by the way, since when can you swing a hammer? Don’t you know that orphanage tourism is problematic? Was the resort locally owned? How could you support animal captivity?!

“I think for the longest time, we had this notion that we could go anywhere, do anything and it wouldn’t make an impact,” says Jonathon Day, an associate professor of sustainable tourism at Purdue University and chair of the Travel Care Code initiative to promote responsible travel.

Traveling in an age of heightened concerns about climate change, income inequality, overtourism, animal welfare, corporate greed and exploitation can be fraught. Those who want to see the world while also being kind to the planet face pitfalls, especially as public consciousness shifts and awareness of the potential harms of global jet-setting evolves. And to make matters worse, there is no consensus on what makes a trip responsible, or conscious, or “green” — whatever ideal a well-intentioned vacationer aspires to.

“It’s not about making perfect choices, because as we’ve learned, what we know and understand as responsible tourism is always changing,” says Justin Francis, CEO and co-founder of Responsible Travel, which describes itself as an “activist” travel company. “It’s just about making better decisions than we made a couple years ago.”

Travel has long been considered inherently good: It broadens horizons, fosters understanding, promotes cultural exchange and changes the traveler for the better. It is also an important economic driver in destinations around the world that provides jobs and, often, encourages conservation. If experts agree on anything, it’s that these sentiments aren’t misguided.

“I don’t want to be a wet blanket on travel,” Day says. “People go on vacation and they’re renewed and they’re educated and all of those things. We just need a little bit more mindfulness and taking a little bit more responsibility.”

Industry players, keen to adapt to changing winds, are already making some adjustments on their own. Major hotel chains such as Marriott International and InterContinental Hotels Group are eliminating small plastic bottles for toiletries. Some airlines, including JetBlue and British Airways, are offsetting emissions



for domestic flights. Dutch airline KLM made headlines last year for encouraging travelers to fly less.

But for travelers who want to be more proactive in their good-global-citizen efforts, experts who focus on responsible travel have some guiding principles. Francis says the right kind of tourism should create better places for residents to live, not just for tourists to visit.

The Travel Care Code asks three big questions, Day says: Are you respecting your hosts? Are you reducing waste, including energy consumption? And are you making sure the money you spend goes to the local community?

Beyond asking those general questions, there is some consensus about ways tourists can be more responsible.

■ Cut back on flying

This doesn’t necessarily mean travel less, though. Low-cost airlines make it cheap and easy to jet around for short jaunts, or to visit multiple destinations in one trip. That’s not ideal for the old carbon footprint.

Responsible travel advocates suggest people who take multiple vacations a year could consider combining a couple for one longer trip, and replacing others that would involve flights with train travel, close-to-home getaways or staycations. They also suggest avoiding trips where internal flights are necessary.

“If you’re taking eight short breaks but flying, cut back to one or two longer holidays where you stay a bit longer,” Francis says. As a bonus, he says, that allows travelers to get a better feel for a destination and experience it with less stress.

Gregory Miller, executive director of the Center for Responsible Travel, says it’s more earth-friendly to take nonstop flights whenever possible and fly on newer planes, which are more energy-efficient.

■ When you do fly, offset emissions

Not everyone agrees on the benefit of buying carbon offsets — not even everyone interviewed for this story agrees.

“You can jump on a boat like Greta,” says Day, referring

to Swedish teenager and climate activist Greta Thunberg, who crossed the Atlantic in a carbon-neutral sailboat to get to the United Nations climate summit. “If you can’t do that, is there anything we can do in between? I think that carbon offsets ... so long as they’re from reputable companies, are interim.”

The real solution, he says, is to have planes that don’t use jet fuel. But while planes are becoming more efficient, low-carbon alternatives for long-haul travel is still a long way off.

Miller says he recommends that travelers look for carbon-offset nonprofit organizations that maximize donations to make sure all the money goes to the project itself. Projects should also be transparent and have third-party verification, experts say.

Francis’s travel company started offering offsets in 2002 but stopped in 2009.

“The problem with the carbon offsets is that it’s seen as a get-out-of-jail-free card,” he says. “It’s essentially shifting the moral responsibility away from the tourist to the airplane to some other project somewhere else in the world. And I think we need to be more accountable than that.”

■ Be thoughtful about lodging

Stay in locally owned hotels if possible to keep more money in the community. Check to see whether the property uses renewable energy, participates in sustainable community projects and is sensitive to the environmental needs of the destination. It’s almost the default to no longer offer plastic straws or to encourage guests to reuse their towels; ask what other measures the hotel or lodge is taking.

Airbnb or other vacation rentals can be a tricky solution, depending on the city. Critics argue that in some cases, investors have bought up available inventory to rent to tourists, leaving residents with fewer affordable places to stay. It’s best to find out how short-term rentals are regulated in a particular area, and whether there is a shortage of housing for locals.

“I think it’s a question of going in with your eyes open in terms of what are the impacts of your participating in that level of tourism as opposed to more formal hotel accommodations,” Miller says. “If it’s destabilizing the local economy, but you’re saving a few dollars, you need to realize that.”

■ Mind what you eat

Travelers should try to dine at locally owned restaurants instead of giant chains, Francis says. And don’t be afraid to ask where the food comes from and order accordingly: Locally sourced items take less energy to get to the table. He says to also consider eating less meat and dairy, because they are more carbon-intensive to produce.

“What I’m really trying to do is ... shorten the supply chain in every way,” Francis says.

(Source: The Washington Post)

All-Iranian environmental satellite unveiled

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — An environmental research satellite, which has been fully designed and built for the first time in the country, was unveiled on Sunday.

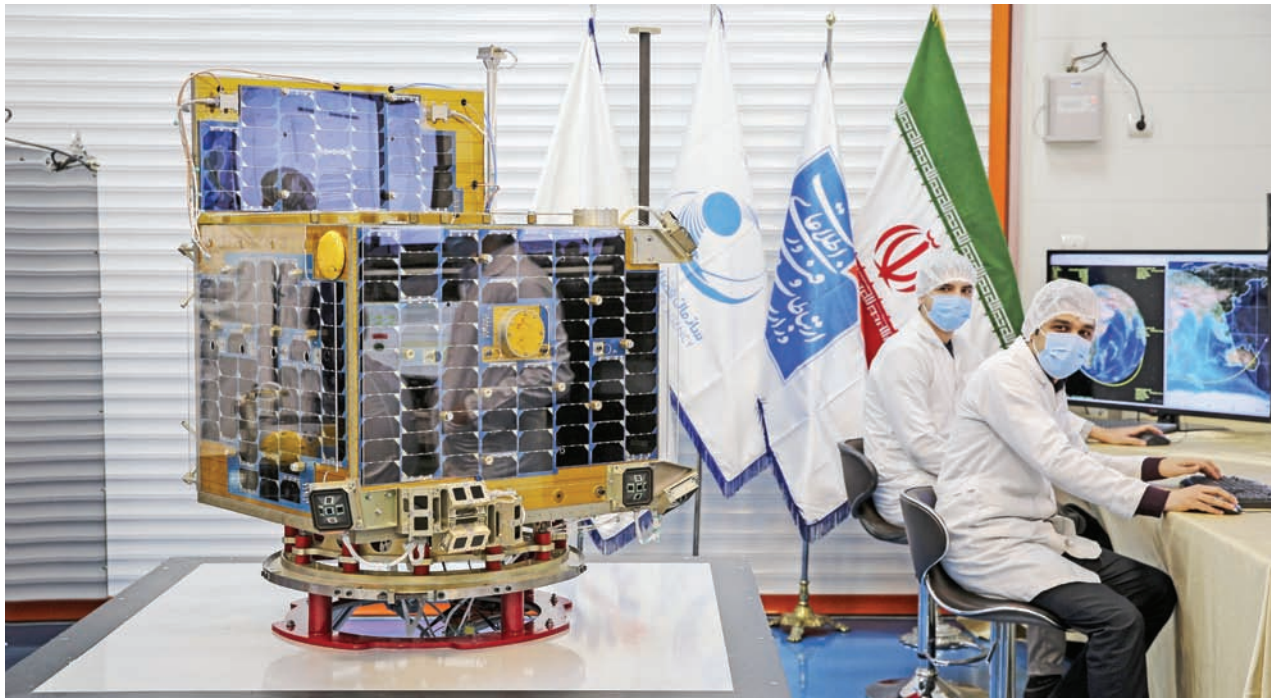
Manufactured by Tehran's University of Science and Technology, the satellite, called Zafar, was delivered to the Iranian Space Agency and will be sent into orbit by summer, IRNA news agency reported.

It weighs 113 kilograms and is capable of taking color photos and survey oil reserves, mines, forests, and natural lands.

Zafar satellite can also create land use maps, urban development monitoring maps, agricultural land boundary maps, and natural land and forest change maps, as well as monitor permanent and seasonal lake changes and identify post-disaster demolition in urban areas, and upgrade structural maps (fault and folding identification).

Iran launched its first satellite, called Omid (literally meaning hope), in 2009. Rasad (literally meaning observation) satellite was also sent into orbit in 2011.

In 2012, Iran successfully put its third domestically manufactured satellite, named Navid (literally meaning promise), into orbit.



The five changes in animal behavior due to global heating

Species around the world are being forced to alter their diet, migratory patterns, feeding grounds and more.

■ Leatherback turtles

Last week it was reported that rising ocean temperatures and changing sea currents are causing leatherback turtles' journeys from nesting to feeding grounds to double in length. After laying their eggs on some beaches, the turtles must move to cooler waters to feed, but higher temperatures mean some are having to swim further to reach suitable areas, according to France's Hubert Curien Institute.

■ Pikas

Pikas, small mammals native to North America, are increasingly moving off high-alpine boulder piles to adjacent forests. A study in the *Journal of Mammalogy* notes that the cool, moist, rocky habitat they require is getting hotter, drier, and less snowy. Because they live high in the mountains, when their terrain becomes inhabitable, there's nowhere left to go.

■ Monarch butterflies

Warmer temperatures are causing monarch butterflies' southern migrations to be delayed by up to six months. Columbia University's Earth Institute explains that this is causing migrations to fall out of sync with the bloom time of the nectar-producing plants the monarchs rely on for food,



contributing to the 95% decrease in their numbers in the last two decades.

■ Puffins

Puffins in the Gulf of Maine normally eat white hake and herring, but warmer oceans are causing these fish to move north. The puffins are trying to feed their young butterflyfish instead, but they are unable to swallow them. Over the past 20 years, conservationists calculate that fledgling survival rates have declined by 2.5% a year.

■ Polar bears and plankton

The Scottish Association for Marine Science says that the melting of sea ice is affecting the wider food chain, as zooplankton feed on the algae growing on sea ice. These microscopic creatures are eaten by fish and shrimps, which are eaten by seals, ultimately forming the basis of 70% of polar bears' diet, according to one science journal.

(Source: *The Guardian*)

Australia set to be battered by severe storms amid weather chaos

Australia's already fire-ravaged state, Victoria, could now face severe flooding as experts forecast its wettest two-day period in "many, many months".

Heavy rain has dampened many of the country's bushfires, which began in September and have killed at least 28 people as well as destroying thousands of homes and scorching acres of land.

But the rain has also caused road closures and power cuts.

More heavy rain, damaging winds and large hail could possibly hit eastern parts of Victoria. This includes East Gippsland where fires continue to burn.

Emergency services minister Lisa Neville warned: "We're going to see some potentially flash flooding and severe thunderstorms over the next couple of days, including some damaged fire areas."

"Unfortunately coming in this massive amount in one go, quickly does cause some risk, both in how you capture most of that and also debris run-off and the potential for fallen trees."

A flood watch is now in place for eastern parts of the state as of Sunday. While the rain is welcome, it will be "hit and miss" and may not reach parts of the country affected by wildfire, according to senior forecaster at the Bureau of Meteorology, Dean Narramore.

Speaking to ABC, he added: "Victoria



is about to see its wettest two-day period in many, many months.

"It will also impact fire zones as well."

Australia's forests are burning at a rate unmatched in modern times and scientists say the landscape is being permanently altered as a warming climate brings profound changes to the island continent.

Heatwaves and drought have fuelled bigger and more frequent fires in parts of Australia, so far this season torching some 40,000 square miles.

With blazes still raging in the country's southeast, government officials are drawing up plans to reseed burnt areas to speed up forest recovery that could otherwise take decades or even centuries.

But some scientists and forestry experts doubt that reseeded and other intervention efforts can match the scope of the destruction.

(Source: *The Independent*)

Fatemeh and Amir-Ali, most popular Iranian baby names

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — "Fatemeh" and "Amir-Ali" were respectively the most popular names for baby girls and boys in Iran during the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-December 21, 2019), National Organization for Civil Registration spokesman has announced.

Over the aforementioned period, Iranian parents chose Amir-Ali, Mohammad, Ali, Amir-Hossein, Hossein, Abolfazl, Amir-Abbas, Samyar, Mohammad-Taha and Aria

more than other names for their baby boys, IRNA quoted Seifollah Aboutorabi as saying on Sunday.

Meanwhile, Fatemeh, Zahra, Helma, Zeinab, Yasna, Ava, Mersana, Nazanin-Zahra, Baran and Fatemeh-Zahra were the top ten names for baby girls, he stated.

During the same period, 913,345 births have been registered in the country, of whom 470,906 were boys and 442,439 were girls, which demonstrates that 106

boys were born per 100 girls, he noted.

However, last year, 1,366,000 infants have been born in the country, 704,054 of whom were boys, he also said.

For every 100 girls, 106 boys were born, which means that the gender ratio last year was 106.3 percent, he further stated.

The number of births registered during the first nine months of this year, has declined compared to same period last year which was a total of 1,046,099 births.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → ع

Female Asiatic lion to join male companion in Iran

Iran will play host to a female Asiatic lion from Ireland to accompany the recently returned male lion under a population management program aiming at endangered species reproduction by the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA), a veterinarian at Eram Zoo has said.

The female lion, born 4 years ago, now is coming back to its motherland after being extinct for 8 decades, YJC quoted Iman Memarian as saying on Saturday.

He went on to say that the lion has undergone genetic tests and diagnostics under the EAZA supervision, and the results have showed that the animal is completely healthy.

Both will be kept at Tehran Zoological Garden separately for a period, and then will live together, Memarian concluded.

شیر ماده ایرانی به جفت نر خود می پیوندد

دامپزشک پارک پردیسان و مدیر باغ وحش ارم از پیوستن شیر ماده ایرانی از ایرلند به جفت نر خود تحت نظر برنامه تکثیر گونه‌های در خطر انقراض خبر داد.

ایمان معاریان در گفتگو با خبرنگار حوزه محیط زیست گروه اجتماعی باشگاه خبرنگاران جوان، اظهار کرد: شیرماده ایرانی که در باغ وحش دوبلین ایرلند به دنیا آمده و ۴ ساله است، پس از ۸۰ سال در راه بازگشت به وطن است.

وی افزود: شیر ماده ایرانی از نظر ژنتیک و نبود بیماری چک شده و هیچ گونه مشکلی نداشته، این شیر پس از استانداردسازی مورد تایید اتحادیه باغ وحش‌های اروپا به ایران جابه جا شد.

دامپزشک پارک پردیسان و مدیر باغ وحش ارم ادامه داد: دو شیر ماده و نر ایرانی مدتی جدا از هم زیست خواهند کرد و به صورت تدریجی این دوگونه به هم معرفی خواهند شد.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“-ship”

■ **Meaning:** position

■ **For example:** True **friendship** is about trusting one another.

PHRASAL VERB

Pare something down

■ **Meaning:** to reduce something, especially by making a lot of small reductions

■ **For example:** The list was pared down for the final interviews.

IDIOM

On cue

■ **Explanation:** to happen at exactly the appropriate or expected moment

■ **For example:** My grandmother was blowing out the candles on her birthday cake when, right on cue, the flowers arrived.

Climate scientists confirm 2010s was hottest decade recorded

The world has just experienced its hottest decade on record, with 2019 among the warmest years ever seen, scientists have confirmed.

Last year saw the second or third highest average global temperatures since 1850, evidence from multiple data sets suggests.

The hottest year was 2016 – when the significant El Nino weather pattern was at play in the Pacific.



The data also shows that the past five years were the warmest of the last 170 years.

Scientists at the Met Office Hadley Centre, the University of East Anglia's Climatic Research Unit and the UK National Centre for Atmospheric Science (NCAS) produce one of the global data sets, known as HadCRUT4.

It is compiled from millions of air and sea surface temperature measurements taken across the globe from land on all continents and from all oceans.

The data shows that temperatures were 1.05C above pre-industrial levels, making 2019 the third warmest year since 1850, behind 2016 and 2015.

But scientists from US agencies Nasa and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (Noaa) also produce data sets for global temperature, each dating back to 1880, and find that 2019 is the second warmest on record.

The differences are largely down to how the scientists account for the polar regions, where data is sparse, the Met Office said.

But taking the evidence from the three records, together with other estimates from reanalyses, suggests that 2019 was most likely the second warmest year.

All three records agree that the last five years have been the warmest five years since each global data set began.

Dr Colin Morice, from the Met Office Hadley Centre, said: "Our collective global temperature figures agree that 2019 joins the other years from 2015 as the five warmest years on record."

"Each decade from the 1980s has been successively warmer than all the decades that came before."

"2019 concludes the warmest 'cardinal' decade, those spanning years ending 0-9, in records that stretch back to the mid-19th century."

He added: "While we expect global mean temperatures to continue to rise in general, we don't expect to see year-on-year increases because of the influence of natural variability in the climate system."

Professor Tim Osborn, director of research at the Climatic Research Unit, said: "We are confident that the world has warmed by about 1C since the late 19th century because different methods of working out the global temperature give very similar results."

Met Office figures have also revealed that for the UK, the 2010s have been the second warmest of the cardinal decades over the last 100 years of weather records.

Meanwhile, the Bureau of Meteorology in Australia – where wildfires have been raging amid record temperatures – also recently confirmed that 2019 was the warmest and driest year on record for the country.

(Source: *The Independent*)

WORDS IN THE NEWS

UN launches global appeal

(November 20, 2002)

The United Nations has opened its annual global appeal. It is calling for three billion dollars in aid next year to help some fifty million people. Most of the countries in the greatest need are on the continent of Africa, where the impact of poverty and conflict has been aggravated by the world's highest infection rates of AIDS. This report from David Bamford:

Every year brings **humanitarian crises** in the world, but while some attract a **spontaneous** outpouring of **global aid** – currently Afghanistan is in vogue, and before that former Yugoslavia – other equally or more serious situations can be all but ignored. This annual process sponsored by the UN and known as the consolidated inter-agency appeal, is an attempt **to steer** global funding where it is most needed. Last year's appeal for 2 and half billion dollars has had to be **bumped up** to over 4 billion dollars because of Afghanistan and the **unanticipated** famines in southern and northeast Africa.

For 2003, the UN's **opening bid** is for a further three billion dollars. As with last year, priority is being given to African states – Angola, the Great Lakes countries; Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia and Sudan; West and southern Africa. Several Asian states are also being **targeted** – Afghanistan, Tajikistan, North Korea and Indonesia. Elsewhere, the Palestinian territories and Chechnya are on the list of **priorities**. The UN, in **launching** this appeal simultaneously in eight world capitals, says it is the most efficient means to ensure that funding is distributed based on need rather than on the level of media attention.

■ Words

humanitarian crises: serious or dangerous situations threatening people's lives

spontaneous: unplanned

global aid: equipment or services given to needy people worldwide

to steer: to move in a particular direction, to control

bumped up to: increased to

unanticipated: unexpected

opening bid: first attempt (to obtain something)

targeted: focused in on

priorities: most important areas

launching: if you launch something you begin it officially

(Source: *BBC*)

Iraq protests swell with youth angry at slow pace of reform

Protests escalated across Iraq's south and its capital Baghdad Sunday as demonstrators sealed off streets with burning tyres in outrage at the government's slow pace of reform.

The youth-dominated rallies demanding an overhaul of the ruling system have rocked Shiite-majority parts of Iraq since October, but had thinned out in recent weeks amid the geopolitical storm of rising Iran-US tensions.

Sunday the anti-government protest movement was re-ignited with hundreds of angry young people descending on the main protest camp in Baghdad's Tahrir Square as well as the nearby Tayaran Square.

Others burned tyres to block highways and bridges, turning back cars and leading to traffic jams across the city.

"This is only the first escalation," one protester with a scarf wrapped around his face told AFP as smoke from the tyres turned the sky behind him a charcoal grey.

"We want to send a message to the government: stop procrastinating. The people know what you're doing," he said.
(Source: AFP)

Lebanon security forces, protesters clash near parliament building

Security forces in Beirut have fired tear gas and used water cannons in clashes with protesters armed with tree branches and sign posts near Lebanon's parliament.

After a lull in largely peaceful protests which broke out across the country in October over the state of the economy, people filled the streets again this week. They are furious at a ruling elite that has steered the country towards its worst economic crisis in decades.

Police wielding batons and firing tear gas have wounded dozens of people at protests in recent days. Protesters are also angry at the banks - which have curbed people's access to their savings - with protesters smashing bank facades and ATMs on Tuesday night.

Lebanon's Internal Security Forces said on Saturday that police in Beirut were being "violently and directly" confronted at one of the entrances to the parliament. In a tweet, it called on people to leave the area for their own safety.

Witnesses said they saw young men hurling stones and flower pots towards riot police, while protesters tried to push through an entrance to a heavily barricaded district of central Beirut, which includes parliament.

Hundreds of protesters marched and chanted against in the political class in other parts of the capital. The unrest, which stemmed from anger at corruption and the rising cost of living, forced Prime Minister Saad al-Hariri to resign in October.

(Source: Daily Star)

Turkey, Russia 'decisively' completed S-400 Deal Despite Pressure: Erdogan

Russia and Turkey have "decisively" completed the deal on S-400 air defense system despite outside pressure, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said Sunday.

"We have assessed the last year as very good in terms of bilateral relations.

Despite the pressure, we decisively completed the S-400 deal," Erdogan said at a meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The Turkish leader remarked on the importance of a joint project to build a nuclear power plant in Turkey.

Previously Erdogan said that Turkey will not give up on Russian S-400 air defense system to acquire U.S. Patriots.

"It is out of question to completely leave Russian S-400 to buy U.S. Patriots. We can buy Patriots too. However, we will buy S-400 as well," Recep Tayyip Erdogan told reporters in his flight en route to Ankara from Washington.

"Turkey can buy U.S. Patriots, but we consider offers to buy just Patriots and completely put Russian S-400s aside as an interference in our sovereignty rights," Erdogan added.

Turkey's acquisition of the advanced Russian air-defense system prompted the Trump administration to remove Turkey from the F-35 fifth-generation joint strike fighter program in July.

The U.S. maintains that the system could be used by Russia to covertly obtain classified details on the jet and is incompatible with NATO systems.

Turkey, however, counters that the S-400 would not be integrated into NATO systems and would not pose a threat to the alliance.

Erdogan said U.S. President Donald Trump makes sincere efforts to find solutions for issues based on mutual respect and national interests in bilateral relations.

"[However], anti-Trump circles are working hard to break our relations," he said, referring to a resolution passed by the U.S. House of Representatives on Armenian claims.

(Source: sputnik)

Thousands of women protest against Trump across the U.S.

➔ From their gathering spot on Freedom Plaza, they had a clear view down Pennsylvania Avenue to the U.S. Capitol, where the impeachment trial gets underway in the Senate next week.

In Washington, three key issues seemed to galvanize most of the protesters: climate change, immigration and reproductive rights.

"I teach a lot of immigrant students, and in political times like this I want to make sure I'm using my voice to speak up for them," said Rochelle McGurn, 30, an elementary school teacher from Burlington, Vermont who was in D.C. to march. "They need to feel like they belong, because they do."

Peta Madry of New London, Connecticut, was celebrating her 70th birthday in D.C. by attending her fourth Women's March with her sister, Cynthia Barnard, of San Rafael, California. Both women were wearing handknitted pink hats that date from the first march. With pained expressions, they spoke about Trump's determination to reverse the policies of his predecessor Barack Obama and his treatment of women.

(Source: Press TV)

60 killed in attack on Saudi-backed forces in northern Yemen

Some 60 people fighting for the Saudi forces who have occupied parts of Yemen have been killed in a missile attack by the country's ruling Houthis Ansarullah movement.

Saudi state television said late on Saturday that the attack by Houthis had targeted a military camp occupied by forces from Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and other countries operating under a Saudi-led coalition in Ma'rib.

Various reports, including from users on the social media, said the number of fatalities had exceeded 60 people as they cited accounts from the military hospital in Ma'rib which had issued a distress call for blood donation.

There was no official statement from the coalition forces. However, if confirmed, the attack could be one of the deadliest by the Houthis on Saudis and allies in Yemen in recent weeks.

Medical sources had confirmed that at least 45 military personnel had been killed in the attack, adding that dozens more were injured.

Houthi control swathes of Yemen since they overthrow a Saudi-backed government in late 2014. The development caused Saudi Arabia and allies to launch an all-out war on the impoverished country.

Tens of thousands of people, most of them civilians, have been killed in Saudi air strikes



and ground operations in Yemen over the past five years.

The Houthi have responded by mostly targeting military positions deep inside Saudi Arabia or sites inside Yemen where Saudis have deployed mercenaries and military forces.

Nearly a dozen Saudi-backed militiamen

were killed or injured in Yemen's northwestern Hajjah province on Saturday in an attack by Ansarullah fighters.

A missile attack on Saudi-led forces in Ma'rib in November killed at least seven soldiers and wounded 12 more.

Meanwhile, nearly a dozen Saudi-backed militiamen loyal to former president Abd

Rabbuh Mansur Hadi have been killed or injured when Yemeni army soldiers and fighters from allied Popular Committees launched separate attacks in Yemen's north-western province of Hajjah.

A Yemeni military source, speaking on condition of anonymity, told Arabic-language al-Masirah television network that Yemeni forces and their allies shot ten Saudi mercenaries in various areas in the Harad and Hayran districts of the province on Saturday.

Separately, Yemeni soldiers and Popular Committees fighters targeted the positions of Saudi mercenaries in the Qaniyah district of the southwestern Yemeni province of al-Bayda', inflicting heavy losses on them.

Elsewhere in the Qa'atabah district of Yemen's southwestern province of Dhale, several Saudi-paid militiamen were killed or injured when bomb attacks struck their positions.

Also on Saturday, Saudi mercenaries lobbied a barrage of artillery shells at several residential areas in Yemen's strategic western coastal province of Hudaydah, damaging a number of houses and private property.

A local source, requesting anonymity, said a house caught fire after the Saudi-backed militiamen targeted it with medium caliber projectiles. There were no immediate reports of casualties available though.

(Source: agencies)

Democrats, Trump offer duelling arguments on impeachment

The Democratic legislators leading the impeachment case against Republican President Donald Trump in the United States have said the president must be removed from office to protect national security and preserve the country's system of government.

In a brief filed ahead of a Saturday deadline, the lawmakers laid out their arguments supporting charges of abuse of power and obstruction of Congress against the president.

"The Senate should convict and remove President Trump to avoid serious and long term damage to our democratic values and the nation's security," the legislators said, for the first time formally calling for the Senate to convict the president and remove him from office.

"The case against the president of the United States is simple, the facts are indisputable, and the evidence is overwhelming," they said. Trump's defence lawyers, meanwhile, dismissed the impeachment trial as unconstitutional and called the charges a "dangerous attack on the right of the American people to freely choose their president".

"This is a brazen and unlawful attempt to overturn the results of the 2016 election and interfere with the 2020 election," the team, led by White House counsel Pat Cipollone, said in a six-page statement released on Saturday.

It was the first time Trump had formally addressed the merits of the two articles of impeachment - abuse of power and obstruction of Congress - that the Democratic-led House approved late last year.

Senate trial

The two articles, aimed at removing Trump from office, form the basis of a trial that will begin on Tuesday in the Republican-controlled Senate.

Trump is accused of abusing his office to try and force Ukraine to launch an investigation into leading Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden by withholding \$400m in military aid and a White House meeting with his Ukrainian counterpart President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

He was also impeached for allegedly obstructing Congress. "President Trump categorically and unequivocally denies

each and every allegation in both articles of impeachment," the defence team's document said.

Trump has denied wrongdoing and has accused Democrats of a partisan-driven effort to undo his 2016 election victory.

"An acquittal would also provide license to President Trump and his successors to use taxpayer dollars for personal political ends," the Democratic legislators' brief said.

The Senate trial is unlikely to lead to Trump's removal, as no Republican senators have voiced support for doing so.

Trump was at his Mar-a-Lago club in Florida for the weekend, and played a round of golf on Saturday.

His lawyers, in their document, argued that Trump acted at all times with full constitutional legal authority, said one of three sources close to Trump's legal team who briefed reporters on a conference call on Saturday.

"We will take the facts head-on and we believe that the facts will prove, and have proven, that the president did absolutely nothing wrong," the source said.

(Source: al Jazeera)

Turkey deploys more militants from Syria to Libya to help protect Tripoli-based GNA



Roughly 2,000 members of Turkish-backed Takfiri terrorist groups in Syria have reportedly arrived in Libya to fight on the battlefields in support of the embattled Tripoli-based Government of National Accord (GNA).

Informed sources, requesting anonymity, told Syria's official news agency SANA that more than 1,700 Turkey's proxies, who have been accused of war crimes and human rights abuses while fighting on behalf of Ankara in northern Syria, had recently reached the North African country to come to the aid of Libyan Prime Minister Fayez al-Sarraj in the face of a months-long campaign by his rival, renegade military commander Khalifa Haftar.

The sources added that Turkish forces continue to recruit Takfiri militants in the Kurdish-populated city of Afrin and other areas in northern Syria to send them to Libya.

British daily newspaper The Guardian reported on Wednesday that some 650 fighters from Turkish-backed militant outfits in Syria are in Libya already, and a further 1,350 crossed to Turkey in January to support the Tripoli government.

Media reports said that Turkey had begun sending militants from Syria to the North African country after Libya's GNA

and Ankara signed security and maritime agreements back in late November last year on paving the way for the Turkish troop deployment.

Libya's eastern-based parliament later voted unanimously against the deals. The accords drew the ire of Mediterranean countries, including Greece and Cyprus, which are seeking to exploit energy resources in the area.

On Saturday, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan urged the European Union to support his country's deployment of troops to Libya in support of the GNA, if the 28-member bloc seeks to end conflict in the North African country.

"It would be a mistake of historic proportions to leave Libya at the mercy of a warlord. Keeping in mind that Europe is less interested in providing military support to Libya, the obvious choice is to work with Turkey, which has already promised military assistance," Erdogan said in remarks in a column published on the Politico website.

He added, "We will train Libya's security forces and help them combat terrorism, human trafficking and other serious threats against international security."

(Source: agencies)

Libya peace summit struggles to draw eastern commander Haftar back into diplomacy



Countries struggled at an international peace summit for Libya on Sunday to draw eastern military commander Khalifa Haftar back into diplomacy, days after he quit talks and more than half of Libya's oil output was shut in areas he controls.

Haftar, whose forces are bearing down on the capital Tripoli with the backing of Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Russian mercenaries and African troops, was expected to attend the one-day summit despite having abandoned talks last week.

Turkey has rushed troops to Tripoli to help an internationally recognized government resist Haftar's assault. Up to 2,000 Turkish-backed fighters from Syria's civil war have also joined the battle, a U.N. official said on Saturday.

Haftar quit a Turkish-Russian summit a week ago and escalated the conflict on Friday when eastern oil ports were shut down. The National Oil Corporation (NOC) said the shutdown was directly ordered by Haftar's forces and would cut oil production by 800,000 barrels a day.

That would potentially hit Tripoli hard, as oil revenues pass through the capital. Southern fields that are under Haftar's control also face a threat of closure.

"We call on all parties concerned to

redouble their efforts for a sustained suspension of hostilities, de-escalation and a permanent ceasefire," said a draft of a communique to be discussed at the summit, reviewed in advance by Reuters.

Libya has had no stable central authority since dictator Muammar Gaddafi was overthrown by NATO-backed rebels in 2011. For more than five years it has had two rival governments in the east and the west, with streets controlled by armed groups.

Haftar, the east's most powerful figure, has won backing from a range of foreign allies for an assault to capture Tripoli in the west, while Turkish support for Tripoli's effort to repel him has turned the conflict into a proxy war. More than 150,000 people have been displaced by fighting for the capital.

Italian Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio called the summit a "point of departure" for achieving a ceasefire and blocking the import of arms.

"In the coming hours - not the coming days but the coming hours - the European states which believe in a diplomatic and political solution must immediately push for today's results to start to be implemented," he told reporters in Berlin.

(Source: Reuters)

Maduro says time for direct talks with Trump, blames Pompeo & co for U.S. 'failure' in Venezuela

Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro has said he is open to talks with U.S. President Donald Trump in the hope of repairing ties with the U.S., while blaming Trump's hawkish advisers for feeding him a distorted narrative.

In an interview with the Washington Post, published on Saturday, Maduro said that he would like to sit down with his U.S. counterpart, suggesting that both countries would benefit from rapprochement based on mutual respect.

The outlet reported that Maduro also suggested Caracas was poised to open its oil industry to U.S. companies if Washington lifts its crippling sanctions on Venezuela's oil and financial sectors, and agrees to pursue a detente with the Latin American country.

The Venezuelan leader described the U.S. policy in relation to the country so far as a "failure," arguing that Trump had been led astray by his own Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, and a chorus of hardliners rooting for regime change in Venezuela.

I think Pompeo lives in a fantasy. He's not a man with his feet on Earth. I think Trump has had terrible advisers on Venezuela. John Bolton, Mike Pompeo, Elliott Abrams have caused him to have a wrong vision.

Speaking about U.S.-backed opposition figurehead Juan Guaido, who declared himself 'interim' president of Venezuela a year ago, but has since not only failed to gain support but also lost his speaker seat in the opposition-led

National Assembly to another lawmaker, Maduro said that Guaido's own lapses, not his government, are the reason behind the lawmaker's fall from grace among his own peers.

"Guaido is responsible for having lost the National Assembly. He and his mistakes. Don't blame me now. He's the one that now has to answer to the United States," Maduro said.

Guaido claimed that his bid to get re-elected as the parliament's leader failed after he was "blocked" by security forces from entering the chamber on January 5, when the crucial vote was held. A dramatic video showed him scaling a fence in an attempt to get into the building.

(Source: RT)

Iran has no problem to host Bahrain in World Cup qualifier: Spox

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Amir d e s k Mahdi Alavi, spokesman of the Football Federation Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI), says that Iran has no problem to host the national teams in Tehran, because the competition will be held under the authority of FIFA.

Asian Football Confederation (AFC)’s decision to ban the Iranian clubs from hosting the international matches may result in a bigger problem for Iran’s football that is to revoke the Iranian national team’ right to host the qualifiers for the 2022 FIFA World Cup.

The Bahraini newspaper, Akhbar Alkhaleej, has claimed that Bahrain national team, one of the Iran’s rivals in Group C of the 2022 FIFA World Cup qualification (AFC), could seize the opportunity, alongside Iraq and Hong Kong, to play their away matches against Iran in a neutral venue instead of playing at the Azadi Stadium in Tehran as a result of the ban imposed by AFC to the Iranian clubs.

Amir Mahdi Alavi, spokesman of the Football Federation Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI) has said: “International and continental national team competitions are being held under the aegis of FIFA and the final decision-maker is the international governing body of football (FIFA). The Asian Football Confederation can only decide on the AFC Champions League matches.”

The Iranian Football Federation has said it would stand up to the «illegal» decision by the Asian Football Confederation to ban the country from hosting any international matches on Iranian soil.

The federation on Friday said it had received a letter from the AFC saying all matches involving Iranian clubs would be held at a neutral venue.

Iranian national football team get ready to host Iraq and Bahrain teams



at the Azadi Stadium in the 2022 World Cup qualification and the continuation of the current condition could jeopardize the country’s right to take advantage of its home matches.

The AFC ban has angered fans in Iran, where football is the most popular sport. Social media posts with the hashtag #ACLneedIranFans trended on Twitter.

Iran will have four must-win matches

in late March and early June.

Team Melli will entertain Hong Kong on March 26 in Tehran and will meet Cambodia five days later in an away match.

Iran will face Bahrain and Iraq on June 4 and 9 in Tehran.

Team Melli, who are going to continue their quest for a sixth World Cup appearance, sit five points behind leaders Iraq in Group C but having played one game fewer.

The eight group winners and four best runners-up will advance to the AFC Asian Cup China 2023 Finals and the final round of qualifying for the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022.

The next best 24 teams from the second round of the joint qualifiers will compete in a separate competition for the remaining 12 slots in the 24-team AFC Asian Cup China 2023.

Iranian fans launch furious Instagram rant at AFC



S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Tens of thousands of Iranian football fans have launched a bizarre rant at Asian Football Confederation (AFC) Instagram account after the confederation said that the Iranian teams cannot host their matches in AFC Champions League.

The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) has sent a letter to the Football Federation Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI) wanting them that they would not be hosting AFC Champions League matches for security reasons.

An extraordinary meeting was immediately held on Saturday at the FFIRI’s headquarters to address the situation and the managers of the four clubs representing Iran in the upcoming ACL emphasized that they will withdraw from the tournament if the AFC insists on this decision.

More than 55,000 Instagram posts used the hashtag #ACLneediranfans following the decision made by Asian Football Confederation.

Esteghlal, Shahr Khodro, Persepolis and Sepahan will represent Iran in ACL.

Iranian cyclist Sohrabi banned for four years



S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — The four-year suspension of Iranian national cycling team captain Mehdi Sohrabi for a doping violation has been confirmed.

The Iranian road champion’s suspension will end on July 2, 2023.

He has been banned by the International Cycling Union due to the use of the prohibited substance.

The 38-year-old cyclist is one of the most successful athletes in the Asian circuit with 49 victories of which three

stages stand out in the Chinese Qinghai Lake Tour.

His ICU points led him to sign for the Belgian Lotto in 2012.

Sohrabi will likely announce his retirement from the sport.

He is the most-decorated Iranian cyclist.

WADA wasted no time in reminding the worldwide sports community that the latest anti-doping list of prohibited substances and methods comes into force on this first day of 2020 and a new decade.

Q-finals: Korea Republic strike late to seal semis spot

Korea Republic made it four wins from four at the AFC U23 Championship Thailand 2020 on Sunday thanks to a dramatic 2-1 victory over Jordan which propelled them into the competition’s semi-finals and a step nearer to qualifying for this year’s Olympic Games.

Having emerged from the group stage with a perfect record, Kim Hak-bum’s rising stars continued their impressive form at the Thammasat Stadium as, despite a late Jordan rally, Lee Dong-gyeong’s last gasp free-kick helped them move to within touching distance of what would be a first-ever Continental title at this level.

The Koreans, who have featured at every Olympic extravaganza since they were hosts in 1988, will now face Australia in an encounter which promises the winners both a place in the final and a berth at Tokyo 2020.

With little room for error for either side, Korea Republic were quickly into their stride as Cho Gue-sung’s third minute shot brought a fine diving save out of Abdallah Al Fakhouri.

Their initial dominance was to be duly rewarded on 16



minutes when, following a neatly worked free-kick and Jordanian defensive hesitancy, Cho headed home from close range to hand his side the lead.

Kim Dae-won’s stinging drive nearly made it two for

the East Asians moments later, before – and as half-time approached – Cho inexplicably fired over the bar from only six yards after being found by Lee Dong-jun.

Needing a response to prevent their exit, Jordan adopted a more positive approach immediately after the break, but it was Korea Republic who continued to look the most threatening with Kim Jin-gyu crashing a 52nd minute free-kick against Al Fakhouri’s left-hand upright.

Only able to muster half-chances at best, Jordan nearly fell further behind on 69 minutes, Al Fakhouri turning Kim Dae-won’s fizzed effort onto the post and away to safety.

Remarkably though, Jordan pulled themselves level with 15 minutes remaining when substitute Yazan Al Naimat turned in the area and unleashed a terrific drive beyond Song Bum-keun’s despairing dive and into the far corner.

Cho was foiled once again by Al Fakhouri late on, only for substitute Lee Dong-gyeong to seal his side’s victory and break Jordanian hearts with the final kick of the game.

(Source: the-afc)

Uzbekistan power into semi-finals of the AFC U23 Championship

Defending champions Uzbekistan bounced back from going a goal behind to hand the United Arab Emirates a 5-1 defeat at Rajamangala Stadium on Sunday to book their place in the semi-finals of the AFC U23 Championship Thailand 2020.

Zayed Abdulla Alameri put the Emiratis in front in the 16th minute but goals from Ilkhomjon Alijanov, Islomjon Kobilov and Oybek Bozorov gave Uzbekistan a 3-1 lead at half time before Jasurbek Yakshiboiev and Nurillo Tukhtasinov completed the win in the dying minutes of the match.

It had all started so promisingly for the UAE, who had been fastest off the blocks

as Maciej Skorza’s side created a pair of chances inside the first two minutes, with Abduvakhid Nematov equal to the task when both Ali Saleh and Khalfan Hassan Al Hamadi tried their luck.

And while Bobir Abdixolikov forced a fine save out of Mohamed Hasan Al Shamsi at the other end before Khojiakbar Alijonov shot narrowly wide, it came as little surprise when the West Asian nation took the lead with 13 minutes on the clock.

Zayed Abdulla Alameri latched on to Majid Ibrahim Salim’s arcing ball forward on the right before slamming a low shot beyond Nematov, with the ball crossing the

line via the inside of the keeper’s right post.

The lead was to last just three minutes, however, as Uzbekistan levelled in style. Bozorov ran across the edge of the penalty area before laying off to Alijonov and his low drive flew beyond Al Shamsi.

The goal gave the Uzbeks a boost and, by the end of the half, they had total control. Bozorov was brought down by Al Hamadi and referee Fu Ming pointed to the spot after consulting the Video Assistant Referee, allowing captain Kobilov to convert with a strike down the middle of Al Shamsi’s goal.

The Emirates were to be on the re-

ceiving end of further punishment four minutes before the interval when another long range strike left them with a mountain to climb.

With the midfield nowhere to be seen, Bozorov had time to turn and stride towards goal before unleashing a dipping curling strike from more than 25 yards that left Al Shamsi watching in admiration as it flew beyond him.

That three-goal salvo knocked the fight out of the UAE, with Alameri going closest in the second half with a shot on the run that flew over the bar.

(Source: AFC)

Branko Ivankovic appointed Oman coach

The Omani Football Association (OFA) has announced that it has reached to an agreement with the Croatian coach Branko Ivankovic.

Ivankovic replaced Erwin Koeman who failed to get the country beyond the group stages of the Persian Gulf Cup in Qatar in December.

Oman are in Group E along with India, Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Qatar in the 2022 World Cup qualification.

Ivankovic left Persepolis in June after failed to reach an agreement with the Iranian team’s officials.

The Croat built the most decorated resume of any coach in Persepolis history. Under leadership of him, Persepolis won three successive Iran Professional League. The Reds, also won one Hazfi Cup, three Super Cups and advanced to the 2018 AFC Champions League final.

(Source: Times of Oman)

Iranian refs to officiate at FIBA Asia Cup

TASNIM — Three Iranian referees will officiate at the 2021 FIBA Asia Cup qualification.

Mohammad Doost will officiate Kazakhstan v Palestine and Kazakhstan v Jordan matches in Group F.

Hadi Salem has been appointed to officiate Hong Kong v Guam and Hong Kong v Australia matches in Group C.

And Sadegh Ghanbari will referee Chinese Taipei v Malaysia and Chinese Taipei v Japan matches in Group B.

Out of the 24 teams in the qualifiers, only 16 teams will qualify for the 2021 FIBA Asia Cup.

Iran have been drawn in Group E along with Saudi Arabia, Syria and Qatar.

Stefano Cusin named Iran’s Shahr Khodro coach

IRNA — Canadian-Italian Stefano Cusin was named the assistant coach of Iranian football team Shahr Khodro.

The 51-year-old coach has already worked as Walter Zenga’s assistant in Al Nassr Riyadh and Al Nasr Dubai.

Cusin will assist Mojtaba Sarasiaei, who succeeded Yahya Golmohammadi in the Mashhad-based football team.

He started his coaching career in Italian team Arezzo and has also worked at Congo national football team, Fujairah and Al Ittihad Tripoli as head coach.

Shahr Khodro sit sixth in the Iran Professional League (IPL) with 29 points, five points behind leader Persepolis.

Iranian boxers win three silvers in Turkey

IRNA — Iran national Boxing Team bagged three silver and four bronze medals in the Int’l Ahmet Comert Boxing Tournament in Istanbul.

Final round of the competitions was held in Istanbul on Saturday. Iran was represented by three boxers in final that initially Moslem Maghsoudi lost to Moroccan rival and won silver medal.

Finally, Omid Ahmadi-Safa and Toufan Sharifi in 52 and 91 kilograms, respectively conceded defeat against their Mongolian and Algerian rivals and grabbed silver medals.

Earlier, Danial Shahbakhsh, Hossein Daneshvar, Ali Jamali and Ehsan Rouzbehani had won bronze medals.

Iran’s boxing team comprising 10 athletes participated in the 32nd International Ahmet Comert Boxing Tournament in being held in Istanbul, Turkey.

Tractor sign Algerian Okacha Hamzaoui

TASNIM — Iranian football team Tractor completed the signing of Algerian forward Okacha Hamzaoui in the January transfer window.

The 29-year-player has joined Tractor for an undisclosed fee.

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

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

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

AFC President, Soltanifar hold phone talk amid AFC’s controversial decision

MNA — Iranian Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports Masoud Soltanifar held a phone conversation with the President of the Asian Football Confederation, Shaikh Salman bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa, on Sunday.

The phone talk comes as AFC has informed the Iranian football federation that Iranian teams should host their rivals in neutral venues during the 2020 AFC Champions League. AFC’s Executive Committee has not issued the final ruling on the case yet but the initial decision has sparked harsh criticism towards AFC for mingling politics into sports.

“Iran is a safe country and has no problem in air traffic as the letter of Iran Civil Aviation Organization, which has been delivered to you, notes. Furthermore, I will guarantee the security of the teams that will be guests of Iran’s football,” Iranian Sports Ministry website quoted Soltanifar as saying.

“It seems that the decision of Competitions Committee has been made under the influence of foreign anti-Iranian media,” he said, noting that such behavior towards most popular teams of Asia is ‘surprising’.

For his part, Sheikh Salman promised to reconsider the decision.

INTERNATIONAL DAILY
www.tehrantimes.com

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» Subscription & Distribution Dept.: Tel: (+98 21) 43051603
» www.eshterak.ir Distributor: Padideh Novin Co.
Tel: 88911433
» Webmaster: webmaster@tehrantimes.com
» Printed at: Jame Jam Bartar Borna - 44197737



Tehrantimes79



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P.O. Box: 14155-4843
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GUIDE TO
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

God never opens the door of gratitude without opening
the door of affluence.

Imam Ali (AS)

Kish Island to host photo exhibit on Martyr Soleimani

A R T **TEHRAN** — Iran's Young Photographers Club plans to hold a photo exhibition in memory of Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani on Kish Island during February.

Entitled "Farewell to Commander", the exhibit aims to highlight national solidarity and put a spotlight on the lofty status of the commander, director of the exhibit Reza Ardalan said in a press conference held in Tehran on Saturday.



People attend the funeral procession of Martyr Qassem Soleimani in Tehran on January 6, 2020. (Mehrdad Hamid Vakili)

Quds Force chief Soleimani was martyred in a U.S. air raid in Baghdad on January 3.

Only professional photographers are allowed to participate in the exhibition and no photos taken with cellphones are accepted.

The exhibit will be organized in three categories. One of the categories is dedicated to photos representing the bravery of Martyr Soleimani.

Another section focuses on photos depicting people's presence at Soleimani's funeral. The other category is dedicated to photographs representing photographers' efforts to cover the funeral.

The exhibit will open on February 12 and will be running for two weeks.

The submissions will be judged by veteran photojournalists Heidar Rezai, Babak Borzuyeh and Hamid Forutan.

The exhibit will next move to Tehran and several other cities. There are also plans to hold the exhibit in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Russia, Pakistan and India.

Iraqi oud player Moaana Jihad to perform in Tehran

A R T **TEHRAN** — Iraqi oud virtuoso Moaana Jihad will be giving a performance at Tehran's Rudaki Hall on January 26.

Entitled "The Memories of Baghdad", the performance has been organized by the Iran Music Association, the association announced on Sunday.

Born in 1986, Jihad is a graduate of music and has given several performances in Iran, Syria, Jordan, France, Egypt, Belgium and Sweden.

He has also released two albums in his homeland.

12th Fajr Festival of Visual Arts postponed

A R T **TEHRAN** — The organizers of the 12th Fajr Festival of Visual Arts announced on Sunday that the festival would be postponed until February 18.

They said the decision to postpone the event was made in sympathy for the martyrdom of Qassem Soleimani and the families of those people who died in a stampede during the funeral of the commander in Kerman and in the unintentional downing of a Ukrainian jetliner.

Ebrahim Haqiqi, the secretary of the festival, and the jury members all resigned last week in sympathy for the victims of the downing of the Ukrainian jetliner.

The festival was initially scheduled to be held at the Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds from February 12 to 19.



Iranian movies line up for Sofia MENAR festival

A R T **TEHRAN** — Five Iranian films are competing in the Sofia MENAR Film Festival underway in the Bulgarian capital, the organizers have announced.

Among the films are "Weightlessness" by Mehdi Fardqaderi, "The Castle of Dreams" by Reza Mirkarimi and "Domino" by Laleh Barzegar.

Also included are "Pastarioni" by Soheil Movafaq and "The Underwater Cypress" by Mohammad-Ali Bashe-Ahangar.

In "Weightlessness", the morning after the glittering wedding ceremony, the bride discovers that the bridegroom is gone.

"Castle of Dreams" is about two young children whose mother has just died, and their father, Jalal, after long years of absence, returns to sort things out, but he does not want to take the children with him.

"Domino" is about Yalda, who tries to reconcile with her husband because she is afraid of the opinions of others.

"Pastarioni" tells the story of an intense rivalry between a luxury Italian restaurant and a small family restaurant in Tehran, which leads them to unite.

"The Underwater Cypress" is about soldiers from an Iranian religious minority who are still listed as missing in action.

MENAR stands for the Middle East and North Africa Region, and the festival spotlights top cinema productions from these areas.

The festival, which opened on January 14, will be running until January 30.



A scene from "The Underwater Cypress" by Mohammad-Ali Bashe-Ahangar.



The director of the Center for Islamic Theology at the University of Münster, Mouhanad Khorchide, in an undated photo. (EPA/Bernd Thissen)

University of Münster to set up Iranology department

CULTURE **TEHRAN** — The Center for Islamic Theology at the University of Münster in Germany has announced its plan to establish a department for Iranian studies in 2021 in collaboration with Iran's Islamic Culture and Relations Organization.

The plan was announced in a meeting between the director of the center, Mouhanad Khorchide, and Iranian cultural attaché Hamid Mohammadi in Germany, the ICRO announced on Sunday.

Khorchide gave an account of the missions accomplished by the Center for Islamic Theology and the aims of the center.

He said that 900 students, 30 out of which are seeking a Ph.D. degree, are studying at the center. Graduates can work as religious science teachers at schools and imams at

mosques across Germany.

Khorchide also announced the center's plan to employ Shia studies professors and change the center into a faculty of Islamic studies in 2021.

On his part, Mohammadi briefed Khorchide about the history of ICRO's relations with Islamic studies centers around the world and announced the organization's readiness to link the center with all Iranian organizations concerning Islamic studies.

He noted that cooperation with the Iranian centers for Islamic studies can help improve plans for Islamic studies at the University of Münster.

He also put forward a proposal to establish a center for Shia studies at the university and organize a cultural meeting between Iranian and German academic centers.

Translations of Persian writers' books to go on display at Tehran exhibit

CULTURE **TEHRAN** — Copies of Persian books translated into other languages will be showcased in a fair, which will open today at the Art Bureau in Tehran.

Over 100 titles released by the bureau's Sure-Mehr Publications, which have been translated into different languages, including English, Russian, Arabic, Turkish and Urdu, will go on display at the exhibition.

Among the books are English translations of Seyyedeh Azam Hosseini's "Da", Mahnaz Fattahi's "Farangis", Davud Ghaffarzadegan's "Fortune Told in Blood", Mohsen Kazemi's "Ezzatshahi's Memoirs" and Habib Ahmadzadeh's "Chess with the Domsday Machine".

The exhibit will also feature Arabic translations of "A Foot That Was Left Behind" by Seyyed Nasser Hosseini, "Daughter of Sheena" and "The 11th Golestan", both by Behnaz Zarrabizadeh, "Nureddin, Son of Iran" by Nureddin Afi, as well as Russian translations of "Smile



A poster Art Bureau's book fair in Tehran.

of Jesus" by Sara Erfani and "Ing with K" by Mohammad-Kazem Mazinani.

The exhibition will be running until January 23.

Overseas musicians performing at Tehran Southern Nights festival

A R T **TEHRAN** — A group of musicians from France, Austria, the Netherlands and Egypt has joined musicians from southern Iran in Tehran to perform during a three-day festival named "Southern Nights".

Saazbuzz, a Tehran-based cultural institute, is the organizer of the festival, which opened at the Niavaran Cultural Center on Sunday.

Egyptian percussionist Amir Wahba and Martin Breuer from Austria are among the musicians who will perform tonight.

A Dutch trio composed of Mark Tuinstra, Maria Gamez and Babak Maddah and a French trio composed of Titi Robin, Francis Varis and Jose Luis Do Nascimento will also give performances during the festival.

Veteran Iranian musician Qanbar Rastgu, known as Khalu Qanbar, and Iranian band Damahi gave concerts on the first day of the festival.

The festival will go on with performances by Iranian jazz guitarist Mahan Mirarab and a concert by Reza Kulaghani, Ebrahim



A poster for the Southern Nights music festival.

Alavi and Hamzeh Yeganeh.

The festival will come to an end with performances by the Dutch and French trios.

Eugenio Barba, Romeo Castellucci postpone programs at Fajr theater festival

A R T **TEHRAN** — The organizers of the 38th Fajr International Theater Festival announced Sunday that the theater companies of Italian stage directors Eugenio Barba and Romeo Castellucci have postponed all programs arranged for the festival.

Barba was scheduled to stage "The Chronic Life", while Castellucci was to perform "Julius Caesar" at the festival.

They were also planning to hold workshops on the

sidelines of the festival.

The organizers gave no reason for the postponement.

A number of Iranian artists have withdrawn from the Fajr festivals to express their sympathy with the families of those people killed following the unintentional downing of a Ukrainian plane by Iran.

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



This combination photo shows Italian theater directors Romeo Castellucci (L) and Eugenio Barba.

Late actor Paul Walker's vehicles garner \$2.33 million at Arizona auction

PHOENIX (Reuters) — Twenty-one vehicles owned by the late actor Paul Walker, who starred in the popular "Fast and Furious" movie franchise, sold for a combined \$2.33 million during spirited bidding at an annual car auction in Arizona, officials said.

The collection assembled by Walker posted strong results at the week-long Barrett-Jackson auction in Scottsdale, with an Alpine White 1995 BMW M3 Lightweight fetching the top single price of \$385,000 in the final day of sales on Saturday. It was one of five such BMW Lightweights, of which 126 were produced, sold at the auction.

Walker, an avid car enthusiast, was a passenger in a 2005 Porsche Carrera GT driven by Roger Rodas when the vehicle



Cast member Paul Walker poses at the world premiere of Walt Disney Pictures "Eight Below" at El Capitan theatre in Hollywood February 12, 2006. (Reuters/Mario Anzuoni)

careened into trees and a utility pole in Santa Clarita, northwest of Los Angeles, killing both men in November 2013. Walker was 40. Excessive speed was cited as the cause.

"People were clearly paying a premium for his cars," said Jonathan Klinger, a spokesman for Michigan-based classic car insurer Hagerty. "With these prices, the late actor appears to be poised to become the next Paul Newman of celebrity car collectors."

Klinger said star power does not always generate high bids, but Walker's combination of celebrity and passion for cars made the vehicles must-haves for some collectors.

Eighteen vehicles and three motorcycles owned by Walker that spanned five decades crossed the block before the hammer came

down for the final time.

Among the crowd favorites were a custom 2009 Nissan 370Z, which made an appearance in the "Fast Five" movie. The low-mileage vehicle sold on Thursday for \$105,600, the most expensive price paid for a 370Z at auction.

A never-raced 2013 Ford Boss 302S race car given to Walker as a gift by another car buff and put into storage sold for \$95,700 on Saturday, auction officials said.

The vehicles were put up for bids with no minimum asking price and sales figures include a buyer's commission.

Proceeds from the sale will go to a trust for Walker's daughter, Meadow. She manages the late actor's foundation.