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Iran aiming to promote engineering services export to neighbors

TEHRAN — Head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) says his organization is focusing on improving the exports of engineering and technical services to the neighboring countries as well as China, and India, IRNA reported.

"Currently, the value of engineering and technical services exports in the world is at about \$5.5 trillion and we are trying

to increase Iran's share of such exports by removing barriers in this area," Hamid Zadboum said on Monday in a TPO meeting on the issue.

Also in the meeting, Farhad Nouri, TPO's deputy head for exports of goods and services, said that the sanctions and banking problems have created obstacles to the development of the exports of technical and engineering services. **→4**

Iran breaks U.S. monopoly on aviation navigation charts

TEHRAN — Iranian researchers have succeeded to produce aviation navigation charts, known as Inflight AIP (Aeronautical Information Publication), which was monopolized by the United States, IRNA news agency reported on Sunday.

Prepared by Iran's Army, the Inflight AIP was unveiled in Tehran with Air Force Commander Brigadier General Aziz Nasirzadeh and Vice President for Science and Technology Sourena Sattari in attendance. Digital aeronautical charts, includ-

ing instrument flight rules (IFR) and visual flight rules (VFR), is a high-quality knowledge-based product which was solely produced by Jeppesen Company and was not available for Iranian airlines due to U.S. sanctions.

In aviation, an AIP is defined by the International Civil Aviation Organization as a publication issued by or with the authority of a state and containing aeronautical information of a lasting character essential to air navigation.

Leaving NPT an option if Iran case sent to UN, Zarif warns

TEHRAN — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif warned on Monday that Iran will raise the issue of quitting the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) if the Europeans refer Iran's nuclear case to the UN Security Council.

"If they (Europeans) take any action, the issue of quitting the NPT will be raised

based on the letter of the President dating May 2018," Zarif told ICANA.

France, Germany and the United Kingdom, the three European states signatory to the JCPOA, issued a joint statement on January 14, announcing they have formally triggered the dispute mechanism which could bring the issue before the UN Security Council. **→2**



EDITORIAL
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Why did Britain boycott Hezbollah?

The British Treasury, which had previously listed the military wing of Hezbollah as terrorist, expanded the scope of its asset-freezing measures against the movement.

The move by Britain can be examined from several aspects:

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who is currently in critical political and economic conditions, seeks to divert public opinion from domestic crises in the country by creating global unrest.

Paying bribes by the regional Arab states, especially Saudi Arabia, to the Western countries has become a factor that determines the behavior of some countries like the U.S., France and Britain. The recent move by the UK against Hezbollah can also be examined in the same context.

In the current situation, Hezbollah plays an important role in the Lebanese political and security stability. Therefore, it can be concluded that UK action is in fact intervention in Lebanese domestic affairs aimed at obstructing the process of government establishment and making the country insecure against Israeli aggressions and plunder of the country's oil, gas and water resources.

The noticeable point is that Hezbollah has been practically a part of Lebanon's political structure for years by its presence in the parliament and cabinet, so the boycott of Hezbollah means the boycott of Lebanon.

British officials, who has virtually no place in the EU because of Brexit, with the aim of obtaining U.S. economic support, have set their foreign policy in line with the policy of the White House and have in fact become a puppet in U.S. hands.

Britain's action can be seen a follow-up of the recent moves by the government against the Resistance Front and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Widespread sale of weapons to Saudi Arabia and the UAE and participating in their invasion into Yemen, backing the assassination of the commanders of the resistance movement at Baghdad airport, planning and preparing the ground to activate "trigger mechanism" focused on Trump's 12-article plan against Iran, supporting U.S. new sanctions against Tehran, **→10**

IRGC chief: Enemy should fear 'Martyr Soleimani' more than 'Qassem Soleimani'

TEHRAN — The martyrdom of Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani was a new beginning for the fallen general, says IRGC chief, noting that "Martyr Soleimani" is more alive and more dangerous for the enemy than "Qassem Soleimani".

"Hajj Qassem had displaced and bewildered the enemy and was a man of changing the power balance at the peak of inequality," ISNA quoted Major General Hossein Salami as saying on Monday.

He made the remarks at a ceremony to introduce the new commander of the IRGC Quds Force, attended by senior commanders of the Iranian armed forces.

"General Martyr Soleimani had taken his own revenge on the enemy in several occasions long before his martyrdom," Salami said.

He added that Soleimani's activities had worn



the U.S. and the Zionist regime out.

"In Haj Qassem's view, there was no equation that could not be solved. At the heart of danger, he was a mountain of calm and serenity and had drawn the enemies into defeat," Salami said.

The remarks came more than two weeks after

U.S. President Donald Trump ordered strikes that martyred Lieutenant General Soleimani, chief of the IRGC Quds Force, and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the second-in-command of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units (PMU).

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.

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said on Friday that Iran's revenge "was a blow to America."

"Of course, it was an effective military blow, but more importantly and higher than military blow, this was a blow to America's grandeur as a superpower," Ayatollah Khamenei said while addressing worshippers during the Tehran Friday Prayers.

Sure-Mehr seeks to implement Leader's guideline on translation movement

By Samaneh Aboutalebi

TEHRAN — An official of Sure-Mehr, a major publishing company affiliated with the Art Bureau, said on Monday that the company is seeking to implement Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei's guideline for Iranian publishers on a translation movement.

"We have already translated about 150 children's books written by Iranian writers into different languages including English, Turkish, Arabic, Russian, Spanish, French and Urdu," Sure-Mehr Public Relations and International Affairs Office director Ali Eskandari told the Tehran Times on Monday.

He said that more books by Iranian writers have been selected to be translated into other languages and added that the books would be

ready for the Tehran International Book Fair in April.

In a meeting with a group of literati, filmmakers and managers of cultural organizations in September 2018, the Leader said, "We should launch a translation movement to export our books and films on the Sacred Defense [the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war] in order to convey the message about Iranians' invincibility and faith for the world."

Over the past two decades, Sure-Mehr Publications has commissioned a number of native translators from various countries to render books by Persian writers, mostly on the Iran-Iraq war.

"When the Leader asked the literati to launch a translation movement, we had already translated and published over 100 books by Persian writers," Eskandari said.

He said that the Leader had praised Sureh-Mehr after the publisher provided him with a detailed report on its active engagement in translating Persian books into other languages.

Eskandari said, "We have put our translated books on display at international book fairs." He added that the books about the war have been warmly received by readers around the world.

Sureh-Mehr is currently organizing an exhibition of the books entitled "Translation Movement" at the Art Bureau in Tehran.

Moreover, audio versions of the English translations of four books, including "If Dad Dies" by Mohammadreza Sarshar and "City of Blood" co-written by Ahmad Dehqan and Saied Fakhrazadeh were unveiled during the opening ceremony of the exhibit on Monday. **→12**

Gen. Soleimani will serve as inspiring source of resistance: Zarif

TEHRAN — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Monday that Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, who was martyred in a U.S. airstrike in Baghdad on January 3, will be serving as an inspiring example for the resistance front.

During a meeting with Venezuelan Foreign Minister Jorge Arreaza in Tehran, Zarif also described Soleimani as a "remarkable" figure of resistance.

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



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ARTICLE
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Israeli security officials affirm Tel Aviv's vulnerability

The Zionist regime's security officials have always affirmed the inefficiency of the Israeli army and the vulnerability of its domestic front against threats by the Palestinian and Lebanese resistance movements.

In the latest assessment, the officials stated that Lebanon's Hezbollah is a very important direct and indirect power that threatens Israel. Hezbollah forces are a threat. Hamas continues to strengthen its military capability and has been able to carry out a war with Israel for days.

Israeli officials, though claiming to reduce Palestinian anti-Zionist operations in the West Bank, said that they will not allow any action to be taken against Israel as long as Abu Mazen is the president of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), but once he steps down they will observe a negative development in the field of security.

They also added: the enemies have noticed the vulnerability of our domestic front. They are moving toward a long-running confrontation using missiles. The missiles used to intercept low-cost missiles are dealing a heavy blow to the Israeli economy. A small organization like the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) launched hundreds of missiles on southern and central Israel within few days, crippling the lives of more than half of Israelis and making Benjamin Netanyahu to call on Egypt for a ceasefire with the PIJ.

The Zionist regime's officials publicly and officially said that their defense is not able to counter Iranian Cruise missiles that their security officials consider Tehran to use and also Hezbollah and Syria will use in the future battle. Using such missiles will inflict heavy damage on the regime and its strategic facilities.

Senior security sources in Tel Aviv said that launching hundreds of thousands of missiles at the regime's domestic front a day is a bad scenario for Israelis. The sources emphasized that if Hezbollah receives a green light it will deal fatal blows not only to the front lines but also deep inside Israel by precision-guided missiles aimed at intimidating the Israelis, causing huge damages and casualties. **→10**

China says backs all proposals that will help preserve nuclear deal

By staff and agency

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Geng Shuang said on Monday that Beijing supports all proposals that will help preserve the 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the JCPOA.



"As comprehensive strategic partners of coordination for a new era and staunch supporters of the JCPOA, China and Russia have been in close communication with each other on the Iranian nuclear issue. China supports all proposals that will help ameliorate the current situation and preserve the JCPOA," the Chinese Foreign Ministry website quoted him as saying in a press conference.

He also said, "The JCPOA, endorsed and adopted by the UN Security Council, is an important outcome of multilateral diplomacy, an important pillar for the international non-proliferation system and peace and stability in the Middle East, and a significant part of the international order based on international law. It should be upheld and implemented."

"Under the current circumstances, we call on all parties to the JCPOA to remain calm and restrained, resolve differences through dialogue and negotiations under the JCPOA Joint Commission, and take concrete measures to restore the balance between rights and obligations in the JCPOA," he said.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov suggested on Friday to hold a meeting on the JCPOA parties in order to understand the future fate of the agreement.

General Hejazi named deputy chief of IRGC Quds Force

POLITICAL **d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Brigadier General Mohammad Hejazi has been appointed as the deputy chief of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Quds Force.

In a ceremony held in the IRGC headquarters in Tehran on Monday, Hejazi was handed the decree signed by IRGC chief Major General Hossein Salami, Mehr reported.

Attended by top military commanders, the ceremony aimed to commemorate Martyr Soleimani and to introduce the new Quds Force Chief Brigadier General Esmail Gha'ani who was appointed to the post by the Leader of the Islamic Revolution back on January 3.

Gha'ani had served as deputy chief of the IRGC Quds Force for years.

He replaced the Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, who was assassinated on January 3 by a U.S. airstrike in Iraq. The attack was ordered by U.S. President Donald Trump.

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.

Envoy: Chieftain tanks dispute nearly settled

TEHRAN — Iranian Ambassador to the UK Hamid Baeedinejad declared that the country's arms contract with Britain over the sales of Chieftain tanks to the former regime of Iran is very close to settlement, the FNA reported on Monday.

"Court of Appeal over a small portion of the country's arms contract debt to Iran noted that the legal process of the case was coming to an end," Baeedinejad tweeted on Sunday night.

The Iranian ambassador noted that a hearing will be held on a small part of the amount of British arms deal debt to Iran in London in British Court of Appeal on Wednesday and Thursday of this week.



He noted that by assigning this small part, the legal process of the case will come to its end and there will be no excuse for paying the debt.

This debt is related to the purchase contract of tanks in 1971 signed by the British Ministry of Defense and the Pahlavi regime according to which the UK was supposed to deliver 1,500 tanks and armored vehicles to Iran.

The debt, or court award, originated from the non-delivery of contracts to the Iranian ministry of defense of Chieftain tanks dating back to before 1979.

The UK refused to complete the contract after the Shah was deposed, even though Iran had paid the money fully in advance.

The marathon court battle is meant to enforce an international court order dating back to 2012 awarding Iran £400m over the UK's government's non-completion of the contract to provide Iran with Chieftain tanks.

The UK has put nearly £500m into court as a surety for the award, but insists it cannot make the payment, let alone pay any interest accrued since 2008, on the grounds that Iran's Defense Ministry is a sanctioned entity.

Iran has two major routes left to unlock the cash put into court by the UK. The first is a request to the Treasury's office of sanctions implementation (OFSI) to accept voluntarily that the £400m can be paid to the Central Bank of Iran and not to Iran's Defense Ministry. The Central Bank is not an EU-sanctioned entity.

Iran lodged its appeal in writing two years ago, but no ruling has emerged from the OFSI.

Iran is due to seek a UK court judgment in a case set for directing the UK to pay the £400m award into the coffers of the Central Bank. Lawyers for the UK government in court made clear to Justice Phillips that they will resist any requirement to pay the money to the Central Bank either in cash or kind since the ultimate beneficiary will in effect be Ministry of Defense.

Gen. Soleimani's path will continue powerfully: new IRGC Quds Force chief

POLITICAL **d e s k** **TEHRAN** — The newly appointed commander of the Quds Force of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps, said on Monday that Iran will powerfully continue Lieutenant General Soleimani's path.

The path on which Soleimani took "powerful steps" will be continued, Brigadier General Esmail Ghaani said in a ceremony arranged by the military.

Ghaani went on to say that resistance is the only way to defeat enemies.

"We have to strongly stand against enemies. All threats can be turned into opportunities if we fulfil our duties," he pointed out.

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei appointed Ghaani as the new commander of the IRGC Quds Force on January 3, following assassination of Soleimani in a United States' airstrike in Baghdad.

In a retaliatory move, Iran fired dozens of ballistic missiles at a major U.S. military base in Iraq on January 8.

Top Iranian political and military figures had vowed "harsh revenge" for the martyrdom of General Soleimani.



Ayatollah Khamenei said on January 8 that such military actions are not enough and the U.S. forces must leave the region.

"The issue of revenge is another issue.

They were slapped last night which is another issue. Such military actions will not be enough. The United States' corruptive presence in the region must come to an end.

They have brought war, sedition, destruction, and also destruction of infrastructures to the region," he stated.

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

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

He also described the assassination of Soleimani as a cowardly act that brought disgrace upon the U.S.

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

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

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

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

Iranians are pro-peace people who know well how to defend: Mousavi

POLITICAL **d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi underscored on Monday that his people have never been after waging war against any country but they are very good warriors.

"Our pro-peace nation can also fight well. Our history is full of epics and gallantries, but Iran is a country where used to prioritize peace and dialogue," Mousavi told a regular news briefing.

He further said that in case of any threat, his country will not remain silent and will give "crushing response" to the aggressors.

"We do not want escalation of tensions in the region," Mousavi underlined.

Quoting Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Khamenei, the Foreign Ministry spokesman said, "We do not want to negotiate with the U.S. We also are not after waging war."

On January 8, the Aerospace Force of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) fired ballistic missiles at the U.S. Ain al-Assad airbase in western Iraq in retaliation for the assassination of IRGC Quds Force Commander Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani.

The missiles were launched at 1:45am to 2:15am at dawn.

Top Iranian political and military figures had vowed "harsh revenge" for the

martyrdom of General Soleimani.

A U.S. military sources said on Thursday that eleven American troops were treated for concussions after Iranian missiles struck the airbase where the service members were stationed.

■ 'Attack on U.S. airbase was just part of our response to Soleimani assassination'

The Foreign Ministry official also said the pounding of the U.S. airbase was just "part of our response" to the assassination, adding "the assassination of General Soleimani will not be compensated just with this action."

Iran has said it struck Ain al Asad be-

cause the U.S. had flown drones from there to assassinate General Soleimani.

■ 'Iran informed Iraq about attack on U.S. airbase'

On a question that Iraq has filed a complaint against Iran for pounding the U.S. airbase in Iraq, Mousavi said, "We had informed the government and armed forces of Iraq about our self-defense and decisive response to Americans."

He added, "Protection of Iraq's territorial integrity for Iran as an ally and friend of this country has always been important and based on this principle have always called for non-interference of foreign forces in this country."

Iranians' resistance has angered Washington, Ayatollah Khamenei says

POLITICAL **d e s k** **TEHRAN** — The Iranians' resistance in the face of the increasing U.S. pressure has angered Washington as a "bully", the Leader of the Islamic Revolution noted as he was speaking on the merits of religious democracy.

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who was addressing officials of Hajj and Pilgrimage Organization,

said the Hajj ceremony is the best opportunity to clarify the model of religious democracy to hundreds of thousands pil-

grims from across the world.

The Leader said religious democracy is still unknown to the world.

"In face of millions of propaganda sources that are against the Islamic Republic, the Hajj rituals should be utilized

as an opportunity to clarify this (religious democracy) pattern and other issues, including the U.S. enmity towards Iran and our nation's logic of refusing any oppression," the Leader pointed out.

He further said that basics of the Is-

"The attraction of an independent establishment's resistance against a bully is the cause of the U.S. rage against the Iranian nation."

lamic thoughts and the Islamic Republic's resistance are attractive to the world.

"The attraction of an independent establishment's resistance against a bully is the cause of the U.S. rage against the Iranian nation. The mentioned attraction should be used to spread the realities of Islam and the Iranian nation."

The Leader added that the U.S. intention behind this statement that "Iran should be turned into a normal country" is meant that the Islamic Republic abandon its approach as a model for the world.

U.S. eviction from region is certain: military advisor

POLITICAL **d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Major General Yahya Rahim

Safavi, a top military advisor to the Leader, said on Monday that the eviction of the United States from the region is definite.

"Definitely, the United States and its allies will be expelled from the region of West Asia and they will not stay in this region," he said.

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said on January 8 that the U.S. must leave the region.

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

During a meeting with Syrian Prime Minister Imad Khamis on January 14, President Hassan Rouhani said that the U.S. military presence in the region must come to an end.

■ 'Medical sanctions are crime against humanity'

Rahim Safavi also said that sanctions on food and medicine are "human terrorism"



and "crime against humanity".

"The United States has imposed most shameful sanctions on Iran," said Rahim Safavi, the former chief of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps.

Minister of Health Saeed Namaki has said the sanctions have made it virtually impossible for Iran to import medicine and medical equipment.

Namaki made the remarks in a letter to the director-general of the World Health Organization (WHO).

He said the Iranian people have fallen victim to an economic war waged against them by the United States, Iran Press reported on January 1.

Iran expresses opposition to S. Korea's naval mission in Persian Gulf

TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi on Monday declared Tehran's opposition to the deployment of the South Korean naval fleet in the Persian Gulf.

"The Korean government has informed us that it wants to dispatch a part of its fleet in Aden to the region (Persian Gulf) for patrolling mission, but outside the U.S. coalition, and we have told them that the decision is unacceptable," Mousavi told reporters in a press conference.

He underlined that such a decision, if implemented, will be in line with the U.S. adventurism policy and does not fit the age-old and friendly relations between Tehran and Seoul, the FNA reported.

After speculations about a Korean naval mission in the Persian Gulf, the East Asian nation's Foreign Ministry spokesman said earlier this month that his country has thus far not decided to forward any naval force to the Strait of Hormuz connecting the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman in the Middle East.



"We are assessing and monitoring developments, including escalation of tensions, in the (Persian Gulf) region," Kim In Chol said.

"We all have possible plans to safeguard our nationals, vessels and tankers," he went on to say.

"We continue consulting other countries to promote efforts aimed at restoring peace and stability in the region," the spokesman said.

Meantime, Yonhap news agency reported that South Korea attaches great importance to the Strait of Hormuz through which the country imports nearly 70 percent of its crude.

Leaving NPT an option if Iran case sent to UN Security Council, Zarif warns

1 → "Steps in reducing the [JCPOA] commitments have already been taken. However, Iran will quit the NPT if the Europeans continue their behavior or send Iran's case to the Security Council," Zarif stated.

Zarif went on to say that the Foreign Ministry is legally pursuing the triggering of dispute mechanism by Europeans.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran officially started the dispute mechanism in May 2018 after the United States' withdrawal from the JCPOA. Three letters were sent to Mrs. Mogherini [then European Union foreign policy chief] on May 10, 2018, August 26, 2018 and November 2018 in which it was announced officially that Iran has started the dispute mechanism."

He added, "In the letter which was sent in November 2018, we said that Iran has started the dispute mechanism and therefore, we have no choice but to reduce commitments to the JCPOA."

"After the aforementioned letter, the Islamic Republic



of Iran gave the European Union seven months and then started to reduce the JCPOA commitments in May 2019," the foreign minister explained.

Zarif noted that Iran will reverse its decision once the Europeans return to their commitments.

U.S. President Donald Trump quit the nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action,

in May 2018 and introduced the harshest ever sanctions in history on Iran as part of his administration's "maximum pressure" strategy against Iran.

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

Under the dispute resolution mechanism, countries have 30 days to resolve the problem, though that can be extended. If it cannot be solved, the matter could be brought before the UN Security Council and could then result in the snapback of sanctions that had been lifted under the deal, according to The Guardian.

Chairman of the Majlis Nuclear Committee Mojtaba Zonnour said on Monday that Iran will mull leaving the NPT if the Europeans fail to salvage the pact before the 60-day deadline set by Iran.

Pezeshkian: Officials should show tolerance toward people

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iranian Deputy Parliament Speaker Masoud Pezeshkian on Monday urged authorities to show tolerance toward the people, noting violence should be avoided in dealing with protestors.

“The authorities should treat people with tolerance and patience; they should not treat them with violence and should avoid treating them autocratically and tyrannically,” Pezeshkian told an open session of the parliament.

“The authorities should not say ‘we command and others must follow,’” he said, Mehr reported.

He stated that authoritative behavior by officials would blemish the religion, darken hearts and bring about hasty revolutions and transformations.

“We, the authorities, should not treat people in a way that would drive them away from us,” he added.

Widespread protests erupted in Iran in November 2019 after the government announced an increase in the price of gasoline, a subsidized commodity that is still cheaper in Iran than other countries in the world.



Protests turned violent in some cases. A number of banks and government buildings were set ablaze. Soon after the protests erupted, Lead-

er of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei supported the government's decision, putting an end to doubts and possible moves to reverse the decision.

Ayatollah Khamenei urged the authorities to take good care of the affected people and assuage the hardship caused by the move.

He also called on the people to take note of the enemies' plots to disrupt security and take a separate path from the rebels that try to foment insecurity in the country.

The protests came a year and a half after U.S. President Donald Trump withdrew the United States from the historic Iran nuclear agreement, which was struck between Iran and six world powers. The nuclear deal was reached during the administration of Trump's predecessor, Barack Obama.

Following the withdrawal, the U.S. adopted a “maximum pressure” policy against Iran, which has taken its toll on Iran's economy, namely the country's oil exports as well as its currency which plunged afterwards.

Meanwhile, Pezeshkian said in his speech that Iran is faced with an “all-out economic war” imposed by the U.S. and “they are standing with all their might to bring us to our knees.”

If the Iranian people get actively involved “America cannot do a damn thing against us”, he said.

Iran thwarting threats by staging over 130 cyber drills: civil defense chief

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Chief of Iran's Civil Defense Organization announced on Monday that his department has staged over 130 professional cyber drills to protect the country's infrastructure against possible threats.

Pointing to his organization's measures in cyber-based immunization of key infrastructure, including gas, water, electricity and oil companies to lessen possible threats, Gholam Reza Jalali said, “We, in coordination with executive bodies, managed to stage over 130 expert cyber drills in key infrastructure bodies to find out shortages and weaknesses.”

In the second round of these drills the organization paid attention to shooting the troubles, the brigadier general said, adding, “A part of shortages are linked to the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology and other ministries which have been informed about their shortages.”

In December, Jalali warned engineering-technical



institutions to be vigilant in the face of plots by the enemies to access infrastructure data, vowing that his organization would do its best to thwart such hostile acts.

Jalali's remarks came in the seminar of officials of executive bodies who were in charge of civil defense issues at the time.

Jalali said, “In engineering concepts, we face an issue titled trade of infrastructural, technical and engineering data. In fact, foreign companies managed to access the date of our country's infrastructure and considered them as data assets which they can sell to the costumers.”

“Therefore, trade of infrastructure data is itself an issue whose accurate protection is a national commitment. The customers of such data are usually some enemy countries, including the U.S., the Zionist regime of Israel and Saudi Arabia,” Jalali added.

“We must prepare a technological-based modern pattern for civil defense against non-military threats. We must institutionalize the new pattern in our programs' nature.”

Judiciary chief wishes Ayatollah Sistani full recovery

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Judiciary Chief Ebrahim Raisi sent a message to Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, expressing hope that the prominent cleric of Iraq would rapidly recover from his surgery.

In his message which was released on Monday, Raisi also expressed satisfaction at the news of Ayatollah Sistani's “successful surgery”, Tasnim reported.

He further prayed for the Iraqi cleric's full recovery.

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

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, in a message on Friday, prayed for a speedy recovery of Ayatollah Sistani.

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

the Leader said.

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani also expressed hope for a speedy recovery of the leading Iraq cleric.

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

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



Russia's UN envoy says E3 were first to reduce their commitments

triggered the dispute mechanism that may lead to the snap-back of UN sanctions against Iran.

In an interview with IRNA published on Saturday, Ulyanov warned the EU trio of the consequences of triggering the dispute mechanism.

“The Kremlin has negative view on this action of the three European countries,” he said.

“We have warned Western partners of negative consequences of this mechanism and such step.”

Russia's Foreign Ministry announced on January 14 that Moscow sees no grounds to trigger the dispute mechanism, Reuters reported.

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

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said on Friday that the decision adopted by the European Union trio is “worrisome”.

“The three European countries' decision on the JCPOA and start of the dispute mechanism are worrisome,” IRNA quoted Lavrov as saying in a press conference.

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

According to UrduPoint News, Lavrov also suggested to

hold a meeting on the JCPOA among its member countries in order to understand the future fate of the agreement.

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

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

In response to this move, on May 8, 2019, Iran announced that its “strategic patience” is over and started to gradually reduce its commitments to the JCPOA at bi-monthly intervals. At the time Iran announced if the European parties to the deal take concrete steps to shield Iran's economy from the U.S. sanctions it will reverse its decision.

However, seeing no action by the Europeans, on January 5 Iran took the last and final step by removing all limits on its nuclear activities.

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

Despite taking the last step, Iran has reminded the Europeans to fulfill their commitments in order to keep the deal alive.



POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Mikhail Ulyanov, Russia's permanent representative to the Vienna-based international organizations, has said that the European Union trio, known as E3, were the first to reduce their commitments to the JCPOA under a pressure by Washington.

According to the 2015 nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, Iran agreed to put limits on its nuclear activities in exchange for termination of economic and financial sanctions.

“E-3 explain triggering Dispute Resolution Mechanism by reduction of Iranian commitments under #JCPOA. They forget that E-3 were the first to reduce their economic commitments under US pressure,” he tweeted on Monday.

He also added, “It is high time for both sides to think about reciprocal steps to mitigate concerns.”

France, Germany and the United Kingdom issued a joint statement on January 14, announcing they have formally

Iran warns to take ‘effective step’ if JCPOA demands not met

TEHRAN (MNA) — Iran has warned Britain, France and Germany over their recent decision to trigger a dispute settlement mechanism featured in the 2015 nuclear deal, saying Tehran will consider taking another ‘effective step’ if its demands in the deal are not met.

Foreign Ministry Spokesman Abbas Mousavi dismissed the claims by Britain, France, and Germany on Iran's repeated violations of the nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), saying “We are still staying in the deal.”

“We have rightfully balanced our commitments to the deal based on the other parties' measures,” Mousavi said

at a presser on Monday.

Mousavi said although Tehran has taken the fifth and the last step to reduce commitments to the nuclear pact, it is designing a new and “more effective” step that will be taken in case the Europeans do not fulfill their responsibilities to the deal and continue their claims.

Britain, France, and Germany, collectively known as the E3, have formally triggered a dispute settlement mechanism featured in the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran, a step that could lead to the restoration of UN sanctions against the Islamic Republic.

After the mechanism is implemented, Iran would be given 15 days to resolve the

dispute with the threesome states.

The JCPOA lifted nuclear-related sanctions imposed on Iran by the UN and some other signatories of the deal, particularly the U.S.

The Islamic Republic, in return, limited its nuclear program. The agreement was later ratified in the form of Security Council Resolution 2231, which terminated previous UN resolutions against the Islamic Republic.

Bowing to Washington's pressure, the three remaining European signatories failed to protect Tehran's business interests under the deal after the U.S.'s withdrawal and started to tow Washington's sanction line. Consequently, Iran began in May 2019

to gradually reduce its commitments under the JCPOA to both retaliate for Washington's departure and prompt the European trio to respect their obligations towards Tehran.

Recently, Iran took a final step in reducing its commitments and said it would no longer observe any operational limitations on its nuclear industry.

Tehran has, however, reminded that all its retaliatory steps fitted within Paragraph 36 of the JCPOA and that its countermeasures are “reversible upon effective implementation of reciprocal obligations.”

The E3, however, refuted the argument that Iran is entitled to reduce compliance with the JCPOA.

Top MP rejects cyber-attack as reason behind plane crash

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Chairman of the Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee has rejected speculation that the shooting down of a Ukrainian plane was due to a cyber-attack.

“According to examination of this committee, the reason behind the downing of the Ukrainian plane was human error, and speculations such as electronic warfare is not proven yet,” Mojtaba Zonnour said on Sunday, Mehr reported.

He made the remarks after the parliamentary committee held a special meeting attended by representatives of the armed forces and the IRGC aerospace unit as well as deputy chief of the Army, chief of Iran's Civil Aviation Organization and director of the Imam Khomeini International Airport.

“One of the issues raised in this meeting was ambiguities with regard to the possibility of an electronic warfare and a cyber-attack in this incident,” he said.

“So far, this possibility is ruled out, unless information regarding this issue emerges in the future and proves the existence of cyber-attacks,” he added.

The Ukrainian passenger plane, with 176 people aboard, was mistakenly downed on January 8 near Tehran by an 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 the morning of January 11 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.

In his Sunday remarks, Zonnour said the authorities who attended the committee's meeting responded to every question with expertise and full accuracy.

The top MP explained that due to the possibility of a U.S. retaliation, the Iranian armed forces were fully ready but were not ordered to fire at will, “so this incident was fully due to human error of the air defense system and the operator had made such error and made such decision based on his own assessment.”

Woman rejoicing at Soleimani assassination works for Libya's Saudi-backed militia: report

(Press TV) — An Iranian-American woman who rejoiced at the assassination of Iran's General Qassem Soleimani by U.S. terrorists in Baghdad works for the Saudi-backed Libyan militia led by Khalifa Haftar, who is known to have worked for the CIA spy agency for many years, says a report.

According to the report published by BuzzFeed, Saghar Erica Kasraie posted a viral video on YouTube recently in which she falsely claimed that after the assassination of Lt. Gen. Soleimani and his companions in Iraq, the Iranian nation was happy and celebrated his death.

According to the report, Kasraie, who describes herself as an Iranian activist in the video, claimed that Iranians across the country were celebrating the assassination, thanking Trump and giving out cakes in public to express their joy.

“I feel like we're living in the Twilight Zone, guys. I'm completely outraged at this notion that the propaganda machine that is the media is glorifying Qassem Soleimani,” she says in the video.

The video titled “Truth From an Iranian,” amassed more than 10 million views across Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube.

The YouTube version of Kasraie's video has been viewed 5.5 million times, going viral as a link on Facebook after it was posted to a right-leaning lifestyle page called Bakersfield Tuff and a slew of pro-Trump sites and pages. Another copy of the video, shared on Kasraie's Facebook page, has been viewed another 3.7 million times.

The video was also boosted by large right-leaning Facebook pages, like the American Preppers Network and Chicks on the Right.

In the first six days following the martyrdom of Soleimani, the video was the single most popular piece of content about Iran on Facebook, aside from posts from Trump's own page.

At no point during the five-minute video did Kasraie (pictured above) mention that she had worked in 2019 for Linden Government Solutions, which is a Texas-based lobbying firm hired to represent the so-called Libyan National Army (LNA) — a rebel group of militias commanded by renegade General Haftar.

When asked if the Libyan National Army was the firm's only client, a representative for Linden Government Solutions told BuzzFeed News, “I don't know what you're talking about, but I'd say no and I'd prefer not to continue.”

Haftar, himself, was an officer in the government of late dictator Muammar Gaddafi and has spent much of the last two decades living in the U.S. state of Virginia and working with the CIA.

Moreover, Kasraie did not list her time with Linden on her LinkedIn profile and claimed that her work for the firm in Washington DC was strictly logistical.

“I worked directly for Linden and helped with logistics for meetings in Washington,” Kasraie admits, adding, “Just facilitated and coordinated meetings for Linden. It was a short project as a consultant.”

However, public documents filed through the Foreign Agent Registration Act in the United States showed that she worked as a part-time lobbyist last year.

According to her registration, Kasraie's job entailed “Planning, coordinating meetings with Government, Business representatives, and think tanks, and other government relations services in support of Client's diplomatic goals” on behalf of the “Decision Support Center of Libya (on behalf of the Libyan National Army).”

Her lobbying activity had previously been reported on by Al-Monitor. Kasraie has also been an adviser to the National Iranian Congress, a dissident group with a headquarters in Washington, DC.

Since 2014, Libya has been divided between two rival camps: the government in Tripoli, and a camp based in the eastern city of Tobruk. Haftar, who is backed mainly by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, both known for their hostile policies toward Iran, is the self-proclaimed commander of an array of militia groups apparently supporting the eastern camp. He launched an offensive to capture Tripoli and oust the government in April.

His forces have been bogged down near the capital; yet, he has pledged to continue the offensive.

After months of combat, which has killed more than 2,000 people, a ceasefire was agreed to take effect on January 12 but was soon ignored and also, on Tuesday, Haftar walked away from peace talks in the Russian capital of Moscow.

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	409807.8
IFX	5301.01

Sources: tse.ir, ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	46,601 rials
GBP	54,614 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$65.33/b
WTI	\$59.07/b
OPEC Basket	\$65.62/b
Gold	\$1,560.95/oz
Silver	\$18.09/oz
Platinum	\$1,027.40./oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

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

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

The official said that the meeting was participated by the representatives from related governmental and private organizations aiming at investigating the hurdles in the way of exporting constructional materials, plastic products, and minerals to Syria and finding the ways to boost exports to the Syrian market, ILNA reported.

The participants explored the latest status of trade between Iran and Syria, mentioned the extant problems and it was decided that the related organizations take necessary follow-up measures to remove the discussed barriers.

Iran and Syria have been taking major steps for expansion of their mutual trade ties. The two sides have exchanged numerous trade delegations in the past few months and Iranian private companies are investing in various fields of Syrian economy like providing construction materials especially cement and working on several reconstruction projects.

Back in November 2019, Syrian ambassador to Tehran expressed his country’s readiness for providing facilities to Iranian companies which contribute to Syria’s reconstruction.

“The country is fully prepared to provide facilities for Iranian state-run and private companies to participate in reconstruction of Syria and also in other joint venture projects,” Adnan Hassan Mahmoud said in a seminar on Iran-Syria’s business opportunities in Tehran hosted by Iran’s Trade Promotion Organization (TPO).

Currently, the condition is ripe for the presence of Iranian state-run and private companies to carry out joint venture projects all across Syria, Mahmoud said.

Mentioning the long-term strategic cooperation agreement which was signed between the two countries in 2018, the official said there are many working and investments opportunities for Iranians in Syria, including building housing units, infrastructure, rebuilding the Syrian factories as well as providing raw materials to them.

The governments of the two countries are now working on resolving banking issues, and a memorandum of understanding has been signed between the central banks of the two sides which entails opening of bank branches in the two countries and the establishment of a joint bank, he added.

Establishing sea and road transportation companies to exchange goods and meet the needs of both sides are also on the agenda for both countries, the envoy said.

Addressing the same seminar, Chairman of Iran-Syria Joint Economic Committee Keyvan Kashefi delivered his speech in which he noted that considering the two sides’ determination, reaching \$500 million - \$1 billion of trade turnover within the next two years is completely plausible.

“Over the past year, more than 10 economic delegations have been exchanged between Iran and Syria, however lacking enough information and knowledge about the other side’s market is one of the biggest problems for Iranian economic activists,” he said.

TEDPIX slides after 2 days of gains

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN**— Iran’s major stock market, Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), witnessed drops on Monday, while it had experienced growth since the start of this Iranian week (Saturday), IRNA reported.

As reported, TEDPIX, the main index of TSE, that notched a fresh record high on Sunday, fell 939 points to 409,755 on Monday.

Over 6.266 billion securities, valued at 35.25 trillion rials (about \$839.2 million) were traded at TSE on Monday. The first market’s index and the second market’s index dropped 931 points and 517 points, respectively.

TEDPIX also experienced its highest ever weekly rise 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.

While TSE witnessed some slight drop on Monday, Iran’s over-the-counter (OTC) market known as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB), experienced a little growth.

IFX, the main index of IFB, rose four points to 5,301, as 1,717 billion securities worth 18.146 trillion rials (about \$432 million) were traded at this market.

Iran aiming to promote engineering services export to neighbors

I → Realization of direct exports requires direct investment in the target markets which would guarantee the support of the projects in these markets, Nouri said.

According to the official data, the value of the country’s engineering and technical services exports reached \$600 million in the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-December 21, 2019).

To support the export of engineering

services, this section should be excluded from some of the country’s export bans so that next year, meaningful steps could be taken to develop exports in this sector, Nouri stressed.

According to the Association of Iranian Exporters of Technical and Engineering Services, Iran has the potential and capability to export technical and engineering services worth \$25 billion in a year.

Taking this huge potential into consid-



eration, boosting such exports would be an advantage for expanding the country’s foreign trade especially with the neighbors.

Some Iranian companies including Magna Group have already had a fruitful

presence in the completion of infrastructure projects in several countries including Iraq and Oman and if such contribution will be expanded it will be a good source of export revenues while job creation.

CBI to control forex market more through new monetary policy

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN**— The governor of Central Bank of Iran (CBI) said the bank is controlling the forex market and plans to strengthen this control through a new monetary policy, IRIB reported.

Making the remarks on the sidelines of a meeting of the Economic Committee of Majlis on Sunday, Abdolnasser Hemmati mentioned launching open market operation (OMO) system as the new policy of CBI in the monetary market and said this system will control inflation in a target-oriented way.

OMO is one of the significant monetary instruments all over the world and this system has been operating in the global markets for many years, the official noted, adding, “We will operate it in Iran gradually.

“Of course operating this system precisely and completely takes some time, but the important point is that



it has been launched and there is some determination to operate it”, Hemmati underscored.

CBI officially launched an open market operation system on January 16, as part of its monetary policy to

Iranian insurers pay over \$5b in compensation



ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iranian insurance companies paid 225 trillion rials (about \$5.3 billion) for damage compensation in the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-December 21, 2019), IRNA reported.

As reported, the figure has registered a 24.2-percent rise in comparison to the last year’s same nine-months.

Driver, treatment, third party and vehicle insurances were the most paid categories in the mentioned time span, with payment ratios of 69.5 percent, 61 percent, 61 percent and 52.9 percent, respectively.

The insurance industry in Iran has been growing in recent years, so that the rate of insurance penetration in Iran has increased significantly over the past two years, while the average coverage rate in the world has remained stable and even

declining in some regions (including the Middle East, the Caucasus and Central Asia).

According to official statistics, the insurance penetration rate in Iran increased from 2.3 percent in the Iranian calendar year of 1396 (March 2017-March 2018) to 2.4 percent in the last year (March 2018-March 2019) and is expected to continue this upward trend in the current year.

Based on the latest report from the Central Insurance of Iran, the insurance premium for the first nine months of this year amounted to about 430 trillion rials (about \$10.2 billion), up 41.4 percent from the same period last year.

In the said time span, the third-party insurance had the highest share among the various insurance categories with 33 percent, followed by treatment insurance with 25.8 percent and life insurance with 14 percent.

Comprehensive Islamic banking bill should be modified: former CBI governor

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN**— A former governor of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) says that the country’s comprehensive Islamic banking bill requires some modifications, IRNA reported

Making the remarks during a financial and monetary policy making session on Monday, Ebrahim Sheibani said, “While the bill includes some positive points, there are also some sections to be modified specially those related to the CBI.”

If those sections are not modified, the banking operations will face problems, Sheibani cautioned.

The CBI’s former governor further cited those sections of the bill that give strength to the authorities of the central bank, for example giving the CBI’s full authority over the



Taro Aso vows sustainable growth for Japan, led by private sector

Japan’s Finance Minister Taro Aso on Monday pledged to put Japan on a path of sustainable growth driven by the private sector by increasing productivity and revitalizing the world’s third-largest economy even as its population rapidly grays.

In a speech at the Diet’s first session of 2020, Aso also underscored the importance of ensuring fiscal health so the government can build a social security system that will benefit all generations.

In addition, he vowed to redouble efforts to achieve a primary balance surplus by fiscal 2025 and improve the government’s debt-to-gross domestic product ratio, which is the worst among advanced countries.

Referring to the large stimulus package Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s Cabinet approved last month, Aso said its aim was to “bring about sustainable and private sector-driven economic growth through the strengthening of productivity and the growth power of the Japanese economy.”

Stimulus steps involving some ¥13 trillion are designed to “accelerate restoration and recovery from natural disasters and steadily overcome downside risks to the economy,” he said, referring to the typhoons and torrential rain that hit the archipelago last year.

Moderate recovery

The economy is still in a “moderate recovery” spurred by domestic demand, Aso

said, citing improvements in employment, income and corporate earnings.

But Aso, who doubles as deputy prime minister, acknowledged that “various uncertainties,” such as trade tensions between the United States and China, present risk factors to an otherwise solid economy.

To achieve sustainable growth, Aso asked his fellow lawmakers to swiftly enact the fiscal 2020 state budget and a supplementary budget for fiscal 2019, which will close at the end of March.

The record ¥102.66 trillion budget for 2020 features ¥1.67 trillion for social security, ¥1.78 trillion for steps to offset the impact of the October tax hike, and steps to bolster the country against natural disasters.

Loading, unloading in Hormozgan ports hit 70m tons



ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Nearly 70 million tons of commodities were Loaded and unloaded in the ports of the southern Hormozgan province during the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-December 21, 2019), director general of Hormozgan province’s Ports and Maritime Department said.

According to Allahmorad Afifipour, of the total 69.418 million tons of commodities, 44.505 tons were non-oil goods while the other 24.912 million tons were oil products, the portal of Iran’s Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) reported.

The official put the volume of non-oil exports from the province’s commercial ports at 27.619 million tons, adding that in the mentioned nine months, 2.356 million tons of commodities were trans-

shipped and 2.317 million tons were also transited through the province’s ports.

He further noted that in the said period, over 1.2 million Twenty-foot Equivalent Unit (TEU) of commodities were also loaded and unloaded in the province’s ports.

According to Afifipour, more than 50,450 vessels berthed in the ports of the province during the mentioned time span, of which 3,696 were vessels with over 1000 tons of capacity.

Over 14.07 million passengers were also transported through Hormozgan ports in the said nine months, 5.5 percent more than the number for the past year’s same time span.

Located in southern Iran on the shores of the Persian Gulf and Oman Sea, Hormozgan province currently has 11 active ports.

performance of banks and credit institutes through setting up some data bases.

On December 12, 2019, Iranian parliament (Majlis) approved the outlines of the country’s banking rules under the name of the “Comprehensive Islamic Banking Bill”.

The bill comprises a scheme for revising the country’s decades-old banking laws.

Lawmakers passed the blueprint of the bill amid concerns that it will undermine the independence of Central Bank of Iran.

In late August 2019, CBI Governor Abdolnasser Hemmati said the bank has been working hard to reform the banking system long grappling with mismanagement and financial indiscipline.

The tax rose 2 points to 10 percent, completing the plan to double it from 5 percent in 2012. The proceeds are expected to cover the increase in social security spending.

In a separate speech, Yasutoshi Nishimura, minister for economic and fiscal policy, said he was determined to push ahead with the “digital new deal” as a national strategy.

Investment for future

Nishimura called for “investment for the future” and reviews of existing systems to spur innovation for the development of post-5G communications networks, quantum technology and artificial intelligence as a means to achieving the “smartization” of industries and lives.

(Source: japantimes.co.jp)

South Pars gas field's steady output at 630 mcm/d

ENERGY TEHRAN — Managing Director of Pars Oil and Gas Company (POGC), which is in charge of developing South Pars gas field, says all the field's platforms are currently operational and producing 630 million cubic meters (mcm) of gas every day, Shana reported.

Mentioning the recent surge in the country's natural gas consumption due to the cold weather, Mohammad Meshkinfam called on households and commercial users to manage their consumption.

He pointed to the installation of new platforms in the field (which Iran shares with Qatar in the Persian Gulf) and said: "We are taking necessary measures for the new platforms to go operational soon."

"The 24B platform is expected to be operational within the next two weeks," he added.

The POGC head also mentioned the D platform as the latest phase 14 platform, saying that the platform is currently sailed out to be installed on its offshore



location and POGC is waiting for the weather conditions to get better to install

the platform.

In late November 2019, POGC had

announced that three remaining platforms of South Pars gas field were planned to be installed at their designated offshore places by the end of current Iranian calendar year (March 19, 2020).

Meshkinfam further emphasized that about 70 percent of the country's gas consumption is supplied from the South Pars field, adding that "Our partners at Pars Oil and Gas Company are working day and night to avoid interruptions in this process."

South Pars gas field, which Iran shares with Qatar in the Persian Gulf, covers an area of 9,700 square kilometers, 3,700 square kilometers of which, called South Pars, are in Iran's territorial waters. The remaining 6,000 square kilometers, called North Dome, are situated in Qatar's territorial waters.

The field is estimated to contain a significant amount of natural gas, accounting for about eight percent of the world's reserves, and approximately 18 billion barrels of condensate.

'Completion of Sistan-Baluchestan dam projects to be accelerated'

ENERGY TEHRAN — Iranian Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian said the completion of two dam projects in the flood-stricken Sistan-Baluchestan province in south-eastern Iran will be accelerated, IRNA reported.

According to the official, following President Rouhani's recent visit to the mentioned province, he obliged the energy ministry to prioritize the completion of Kahir and Shahri-Pour dam projects in the region.

President Hassan Rouhani visited Sistan-Baluchestan early Saturday to monitor rescue and relief operations to people affected by massive floods caused by heavy rains in the province.

Ardakanian noted that Kahir and Shahri-Pour dam projects have had 85 percent and 93 percent of physical progress, respectively.

Mentioning the recent floods in Sistan-Baluchestan province, the official said: "It was an unprecedented flood, the amount of rainfalls in Sistan-Baluchestan province this [water] year was 45 times more than [that of] the last year."

According to the energy minister, all



the five dams in the province are now full and some of them have overflowed.

Unprecedented heavy rainfall which began on January 10 has led to flash flooding in the southern provinces, including Sistan-Baluchestan. Some 95 stations have reported receiving more than 50 mm of rain and 17 stations received 100-200 mm of rain.

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

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

ICOFC supplies 254 mcm/d of gas to NIGC amid record high consumption

ENERGY TEHRAN — Iranian Central Oil Fields Company (ICOFC) has supplied 254 million cubic meters per day (mcm/d) of natural gas to the National Iranian gas Company (NIGC) in the past two days in which the country's gas consumption hit new records, IRNA reported on Monday quoting ICOFC's managing director.

"In the past two days, 254 million cubic meters of gas has been delivered to the National [Iranian] Gas Company for public and industrial uses as scheduled," Ramin Hatami said.

The official noted that his company has been taking necessary measures for preparing its infrastructure and equipment to supply a part of the country's natural gas needs in the cold seasons, and it has succeeded in this regard.

"All the field facilities and wells undergo overhaul operations to be prepared for the cold season, and as a result, we have been able to fulfill our commitments," Hatami said.

Last week, 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.

Established in 1999, Iranian Central Oil Fields Company is one of the five major subsidiaries of the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC).

The company is the second-biggest gas producer in the country. This company has undertaken the production and development of most of the country's onshore fields located in Ilam, Bushehr, Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari, Northern Khorasan, Khuzestan, Fars, Qom, Kermanshah, Kohgiluyeh-Boyerahmad, Lorestan and Hormozgan Provinces.

According to the ICOFC, the company currently supplies almost half of the country's gas demand.

Oil markets look to potential disruption with halt in Libyan production

Oil prices could see prices going up in the short term with a disruption in supply after oil production in Libya was down by 800,000 barrels on Friday, analysts said.

Oil markets on Friday saw Brent trading on \$64.85 and West Texas Intermediate (WTI) at \$58.54, both down on the week with continued oversupply concerns and weak economic data coming out from China.

Geopolitical tensions, however, may take center stage again this week after oil exports were blocked from ports in Libya along with oil field closures. International peace talks are set to take place in Berlin, Germany, on Sunday in an attempt to reach a settlement between conflicting Libyan factions.

"While the Persian Gulf region has dominated geopolitics to start the year, North Africa will set the tone last week. Reportedly half of Libya's oil production has been shut in as political rivals seek to exert influence over pending negotiations to end hostilities," said Edward Bell, commodity analyst at Emirates NBD.

The "country continues to endure political unrest that threatens the stability of supplies and exports. Hence, we assign a relatively low probability to Libya maintaining recent high production levels for most of 2020," he added.

"Unlike the circumstances in the Persian Gulf, the tensions in Libya are actually affecting physical markets thus allowing a price rally to have more solid footing," he said.

■ A pressing challenge for markets

On a more long-term look, Bell said that market oversupply remained a pressing challenge for markets even with geopolitical tensions, with monthly reports last week by OPEC and the International Energy Agency (IEA) forecasting a surplus of oil.

"Fundamentals forecasts from the IEA and OPEC highlighted a large gain for non-OPEC suppliers this year — the IEA expecting 2.1 million barrels per day of supply growth — and limited room for OPEC producers to increase production at any point this year.

"Both agencies looked through the recent escalation in geopolitical tension although the IEA has noted that Iraq's production growth trajectory could be at risk from a prolonged period of hostilities.

"Nevertheless, demand and non-OPEC supply forecasts from both agencies imply a strong build in inventories in H1 (first half of the year) 2020, capping any upward moves in prices," he added.

Ole Hanson, head of commodity strategy at Saxo Bank, said Brent would likely find continued support in the low to high \$60 price range.

The "short-term outlook points to range-bound trading between \$63/barrel and \$68/barrel, barring any renewed threat to supplies from the Middle East and especially Libya.

"While OPEC raised non-OPEC production in 2020 to 2.35 million barrels/day, the IEA kept it unchanged at 2.1. Global demand growth is expected by both to be around 1.2 million barrels which will continue to leave the market oversupplied, especially during the first half of 2020," Hanson said.

(Source: gulfnews.com)



SHOUDER Faucet Ware Selected Exemplary Industrial Unit in 2019

SHOUDER Faucet Ware was selected as the exemplary and model industrial-production unit in the country in 2019.

A commemoration ceremony of World Standard Day was held in Tehran in the presence of deputies and some managers of Institute of Standards and Industrial Research of Iran (ISIRI), chairman of Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA) and also a great number of producers and industrialists in Tehran, based on which, SHOUDER Faucet Ware managed to be selected as exemplary industrial unit in the field of "Construction Industry".



In this prestigious event, which is held annually on the occasion of World Standards Day, different domestic brands are monitored and tested in qualitative terms. Eventually, the exemplary industrial units are selected according to the quality of products they produce.

SHOUDER Faucet Ware Production Company started its activity in 1991 with the aim of producing and supplying high-quality sanitary faucet wares in

line with manufacturing high-quality products and gaining satisfaction of both domestic and foreign customers. Benefited from the most experienced manpower and equipped with high technical knowhow and knowledge, this industrial and production unit is busy active in producing high-quality faucet ware, observing requirements of international standards.

It should be noted that 300 and 5,000 manpower are cooperating with this industrial unit directly and indirectly respectively in a way that high quality products of this company are exported to more than 15 countries in the world.

First Announcement



1398.6528

NATIONAL IRANIAN SOUTH OILFIELDS COMPANY AHVAZ-IRAN

TENDER NO.: 01-31-9250047

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

items	Material Description	Quantity
50	PARTS FOR "ATLAS COPCO "SCREW AIR COMPRESSOR MODEL ZT 145	129

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

The applicants should have relevant background in supplying the required goods and capability to provide and submit a bid bond of 1,655 EURO or 236,577,500 RIAL, in favor of NISOC

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

NO ADVANCE PAYMENT WILL BE PAID

FOREIGN PURCHASING DEPARTMENT
Bldg. No. 104, Material Procurement Management Complex
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تهران تایمز: نوبت اول ۹۸/۱/۱ نوبت دوم ۹۸/۱/۵



Agricultural Support Services Company

INVITATION TO A RENEWAL OF ONE STEP INTERNATIONAL TENDER SECOND ANNOUNCEMENT

55/98/26273
21/01/2020



Ministry of Jihad-e-Agriculture

AGRICULTURAL SUPPORT SERVICES COMPANY

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

All of the qualified and interested companies are invited to receive tender documents from Monday dated 20/01/2020 until Tuesday dated 28/01/2020 (7 working days) from our purchasing committee (located at the 9th floor, no. 1, fourth alley, Gandhi st., Tehran, Iran). The bidders are requested to submit their letters of introduction, along with remittance bill of I.Rials 1,200,000 to ASSC's account no. 4001039704005791 with SHEBA no. IR250100004001039704005791 at the Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran through payment order of SATNA or PAYA with the 30 character identification code of 35803978226350065000000000000006.

The bidders are required to submit their sealed and stamped envelopes containing offers latest on Monday dated 02/03/2020 (during official working hours) to our security office, located on the 8th floor. Meanwhile the meeting for the opening of the envelopes will be on Tuesday dated 03/03/2020 at 2:00 PM with the presence of bidders' representatives in our purchasing committee (9th floor, no. 1, fourth alley, Gandhi St., Tehran, Iran).

The bid bond value should be € 283027 or in equal value of that in any other foreign currencies, except US dollars, with the official exchange rate of CBI on 11/1/ 2020 for 35000 MT ± 5% in bank guarantee.

– The bidders are permitted to submit the bid bond in Iranian Rial. Therefore, the value of bid bond for 35000 MT ± 5% will be IR13214000000, which must be only submitted by the bidders.

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

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

PR & Intel Affairs Dept. of Agricultural Support Services Company (ASSC)

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Putin the Immortal

The Russian leader is maneuvering to stay in power indefinitely. Why stop there?

Old autocrats rarely resign, nor do they just fade away. So when Vladimir Putin slipped proposals for a few changes to the Russian Constitution into his annual state-of-the-nation talkathon last Wednesday, followed immediately by the resignation of the entire government, the presumption was that the president, who is 67, was laying the groundwork to extend his 20-year reign past the expiration of his current term in 2024.

What he proposed, however, was nothing so simple as changing the two-consecutive-terms limit set by the Russian Constitution. Putin doesn't like to tamper with the existing order, which is fully under his control, and the last time he pulled a fast one to prolong his stay in power — the infamous office swap with Dmitri Medvedev — Russians took to the streets in indignation.

So this time, mused the Kremlinologists, the president was starting his machinations four years in advance and keeping them sufficiently confusing to blunt resistance, head off an incipient succession struggle and keep everyone off balance.

What he proposed was: to give the lower house of Parliament more power to pick cabinet ministers, including the prime min-



Vladimir Putin in Sochi, Russia, in December. (Mikhail Svetlov/Getty Images)

ister, all of whom are currently proposed by the president and rubber-stamped by the legislature; to bar a president from serving more than two terms overall (it's currently two consecutive terms); and to

give some teeth to the currently toothless State Council.

Putin named as prime minister someone who had been on nobody's radar, Mikhail Mishustin, until now the head of the tax

authority. Mishustin is considered competent but not threatening to Mr. Putin, and he knows a lot of secrets that could help his boss should anyone among the elite get uppity.

The measures suggested several scenarios. The most compelling was that Putin would retain control through the newly empowered State Council. His successor as president will be downgraded, so Putin would retain considerable power from behind the scenes.

The advantage of this system would be that, while exercising command, Putin could blame the prime minister for any shortcomings, and also the Parliament for appointing the prime minister. Staying off the main stage would also allow Putin to reduce his workload and better enjoy his many billions.

Whatever his ultimate intentions, Mr. Putin has the authority and popularity to get the constitutional amendments through a referendum without any serious resistance, and the time to plot his next move. What that means for the West is that there will be no change in policy until 2024, and possibly very little after that.

(Source: NYTimes)

Acclaimed scientist gets brain surgery for alcohol addiction

Microbiologist Frank Plummer has been on the frontlines of the battle against some of the world's most alarming epidemics, from HIV to Ebola - but his illustrious career masked a growing reliance on alcohol. Now, the researcher has become the guinea pig in a clinical trial investigating whether brain implants can help treat alcohol use disorder.

Alcohol was always a big part of Frank Plummer's life. At the beginning of his research career, in the early 1980s in Nairobi, he began to lean on scotch to relax, and to the handle stress, disappointment and grief related to his work.

He and his colleagues were feeling the visceral urgency of their work as they watched the African HIV crisis unfold. "I felt just like a fire fighter or something but the fire didn't go out," Plummer, 67, told the BBC.

"It just kept going and going and going. There was this sense that you needed to do something and that the world needed to do something. And I was trying to draw attention to it and get money to continue our work. So it was a time of intense pressure."

Plummer's research subjects were Kenyan women, sex workers, some who were found to have a natural immunity to the virus.

It was pioneering research, and over the 17 years Plummer spent in Kenya, he and his colleagues made groundbreaking discoveries made about how HIV spreads - breakthroughs that have helped inform how we reduce transmission risk and that raised the possibility a vaccine against the virus could be developed one day.

In those stressful times, five or six glasses of scotch a night were giving him room to exhale after hectic days and weeks.

When he returned to Canada, he took a leadership position at Winnipeg's National Microbiology Laboratory, one of a handful of laboratories in the world with the capacity to work with highly pathogenic viruses like Ebola.

At the lab they dealt with the outbreaks of Sars in 2003 and the H1N1 influenza in 2009. It was there Plummer contributed to the development of Canada's Ebola vaccine.

It was vital, exciting, and stressful work, with 12-hour days that began with coffee and would end with several glasses of scotch. His drinking escalated to about 20 ounces of the booze a night.

It didn't seem to affect his work - until 2012, when it caught up with him.

"My liver packed it in," he says. "Before that I knew I drank a lot but I didn't think I had a problem."

The diagnosis of chronic liver failure was followed by a liver transplant. He had to watch his alcohol intake to preserve his new liver - but he found his alcohol had become

a powerful thirst.

Plummer tried treatment - rehab programs, support groups, counselling, medications - but any relief was temporary. He would inevitably slip back into drinking.

"It was pretty hopeless cycle and it was very tough on my family and my wife, Jo, and on my children and my stepchildren," he says. "I was in the hospital a lot, I almost died several times."

He went looking for help - "a more robust clinical solution, perhaps one not yet discovered" - and was referred to two neurosurgeons at Toronto's Sunnybrook Hospital.

They were recruiting patients for an experimental procedure being conducted in North America for the first time, using deep brain stimulation (DBS) to help patients with treatment-resistant alcohol use disorder. The surgical trial is testing how safe and effective DBS is for alcohol addiction.

DBS has been used for over 25 years to help treat movement disorders like Parkinson's disease. Roughly 200,000 DBS surgeries have been performed around the world, many for the nervous system disorder.

In recent years, it's been explored as a treatment for a range of other diseases. At Sunnybrook, clinical trials are underway exploring DBS for use in disorders like post-traumatic stress disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, major depressive disorder, and alcohol use disorder.

What changes is the part of the brain being targeted, says Dr Nir Lipsman, the trial lead investigator and the neurosurgeon who performed Plummer's surgery.

"[For] things like Parkinson's disease we target motor circuits in the brain, in addition, alcohol use disorder, we're



The DBS surgery performed on Frank Plummer targets the brain's nucleus accumbens, or pleasure center. (Source: Sunnybrook Hospital)



Frank Plummer, seen with his wife Jo, says he has rediscovered life since the surgery. (Sunnybrook Hospital)

targeting reward, pleasure circuits of the brain," he says.

DBS treatment involves implanting an electrical device directly into a patient's brain to stimulate circuits where there is abnormal activity, or dysfunctional "wiring", and help reset them. DBS is frequently described as a type of "pacemaker" for the brain.

Electrodes are inserted into a targeted region of the brain to recalibrate activity in that area using electrical impulses - controlled by a pacemaker-like device placed under the skin of the patient's chest - and ease cravings.

Plummer was the trial's first patient and underwent the experimental surgery just over a year ago. A total of six people are expected to eventually participate - all with a history of chronic alcohol use disorder proven resistant to other types of treatment.

Patients are awake for the surgery. Plummer says the worst part of the procedure were the noise and vibrations when surgeons drilled into his skull in order to implant the electrodes.

"It was a large drill that drills about a 25 cent piece out of your skull on both sides - that wasn't painful but it was annoying," he says.

The brain pleasure centers being targeted in this study - the nucleus accumbens - is also involved in mood, anxiety and depression.

That factor is potentially key since many addiction disorders frequently coexist with mood disorders, the neurosurgeon says.

The surgeon says Plummer has seen an improvement in both his cravings and his mood.

In those who've had the surgery, "we are seeing some signs, some early signs that we are having an impact on those kind of behaviors and those kind of measures that we want to influence", says Dr Lipsman.

The surgeons hope the study will shift some of the stigma around addiction disorders. Addictions are still often seen as a weakness or a failure of willpower, which can prevent people seeking treatment.

"We need to change the way we view addiction, change the way we view alcohol use disorder as a condition in its advanced stages, in the treatment resistant stages as being driven by circuits in the brain that are not functioning properly," he says.

But he cautions the research is in early stages - and that it's not a silver bullet.

"It's not just put in the implant, say goodbye and you're done," he says. Patients should still continue their conventional treatment for their alcohol addictions, like therapy or rehab programs.

"It's really about viewing this as part of a larger strategy to treat what is an incredibly complex and challenging condition."

Any results from DBS are not instantaneous - it can take weeks to feel a change. For Plummer, after a little while, "life just became so much better, so much richer."

"I suddenly decided that I wanted to write a book about my experiences as a scientist, and experiences living in Kenya," he says.

He's back to getting up early, writes daily and has returned to HIV research with the hopes of developing a vaccine for the disease.

He drinks occasionally but says he doesn't have the same compulsion or the physical dependency as before.

"Life is on the table again," he says.

(Source: BBC)

Yemen resilient and 'unscathed' in face of latest Persian Gulf crisis

Despite the threat posed by recent tensions in the Persian Gulf, Yemen was able to weather the crisis thanks in part to restraint exercised by its political leaders, the UN Special Envoy for the country said on Thursday.

Martin Griffiths was speaking in the Security Council, where he updated ambassadors on developments towards ending nearly five years of war between Government forces, backed by a Saudi-led coalition, and the rebel group commonly known as the Houthis.

He stated that "no major acts of military provocation" occurred in Yemen during the latest Persian Gulf crisis, which was sparked by the killing of a top Iranian general by the United States.

"Indeed, it has been one of the quietest weeks of the war in Yemen since the war began, with only one airstrike, very limited military movement on the ground and no drone or missile attacks on neighboring States", he said.

"This achievement has not come by chance. Yemeni leaders and leaders from the region have deliberately exercised restraint and withheld from acts of provocation."

Griffiths said the country "has been brushed by potential tragedy from regional tensions and, so far, appears to have emerged from it unscathed. This is evidence of its leaders' desire to keep Yemen safe from such tensions but also to restore to its people, this year, the peace they so evidently deserve."

■ Ceasefire working

The Envoy noted that the tensions overall have tested the resilience of efforts to de-escalate military hostilities and implement two peace agreements.

Warring parties met in Sweden in December 2018 for UN-brokered peace talks which led to a ceasefire in the rebel-held port of Hudaydah, critical for aid flows into a country that is experiencing the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

Griffiths underlined that although implementation has been unsatisfactory, the UN and both sides remain committed to the Stockholm Agreement.

"Though violence unfortunately continues in the southern districts, the relative calm at the frontlines in Hudaydah city shows that the measures to enhance the de-escalation—the ceasefire mechanism—is working, and this is something we can, and should, build on," he said.

Yemen also is now less dangerous for civilians than prior to the Stockholm Agreement, according to a senior official with the UN humanitarian affairs office, OCHA.

Ramesh Rajasingham, Director of the Coordination Division at OCHA, told Council members that casualties last year were about 35 per cent lower than in 2018, while fatalities dropped by nearly half.

"But it is still a very dangerous place", he said, pointing to deadly attacks and flare-ups along several front lines.

"Every day we receive reports of civilians killed or injured when shells land on their homes, snipers fire on their communities, or landmines or other munitions explode. These smaller-scale incidents occur in a constant stream and receive less attention than they should."

■ Positive signs in Aden

Last November, the UN Special Envoy welcomed the signing of the Riyadh Agreement, aimed at ending infighting between the Yemini Government and separatist allies in the south, known as the Southern Transitional Council.

Fighting broke out between the two sides in August when the Southern Transitional Council seized control of the city of Aden, where the Government is based.

"The parties' recommitment recently to time-bound measures to support implementation of the Riyadh Agreement is a very positive sign", Griffiths said.

He also reported "relative" improvement in the security situation in Aden, and that "key appointments" there could be announced in the coming days.

"Overall, this is good news, of course, but not least because it is also a starting point for opening a new page to be dominated, and noted, and themed, by sincere consultations between the Yemeni parties to reach a political solution to end the Yemeni crisis," he stated.

(Source: news.UN.org)

China owns largest number of nuclear power units under construction in the world

By the end of 2019, there were 11 nuclear power units under construction in Chinese mainland, representing the largest number of nuclear power units under construction in the world, and 47 nuclear power units operating safely and stably, ranking third in the world.

Since the birth of China's nuclear industry on Jan.15, 1955, when the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China made the strategic decision to develop nuclear energy in China, the country has accumulated enormous experience in such areas as reactor research and development, nuclear power station design, equipment manufacturing, engineering construction, as well as operation and management of nuclear power units, with the country's capacity in certain areas reaching leading levels in the world.

According to the press conference held by China National Nuclear Corporation (CNNC) on Wednesday (Jan. 15) to commemorate the 65th anniversary of the birth of China's nuclear industry, CNNC has built five nuclear power bases in China, with its commercial nuclear power units amounting to 21, and 6 nuclear power units currently under construction.

CNNC's nuclear power units generated about 136.2 billion kilowatt hours of electricity in 2019, and accumulatively about 969.1 billion kilowatt hours, helping save the world from the consumption of about 390 million tons of standard coal, which would have added about 966.1 million tons of carbon dioxide and about 29.1 million tons of sulfur dioxide into the atmosphere.

The ecological benefit of the electricity generated by CNNC's nuclear power units over these years is also equivalent to that of 2.6 million hectares of trees.

China has never had a level-2 or worse nuclear incident in the 65-year history of its nuclear industry. The country has maintained a great safety record of its nuclear materials, characterized by the slogan "not one gram lost and not one piece missing".

As one of the global leaders in industrial security, China's experience and achievements in the nuclear industry has contributed significantly to the development of the global nuclear industry.

(Source: People's Daily)

First Announcement



N.I.S.O.C

NATIONAL IRANIAN SOUTH OILFIELDS COMPANY AHVAZ-IRAN

TENDER NO. : 01-31-9680032

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

items	Material Description	Quantity
13	PARTS FOR "BROWN BROVERI- SULZER" GAS TURBINE TYPE NS70	286 NOS

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

The applicants should have relevant background in supplying the required goods and capability to provide and submit .a bid bond of 6,283 EURO or 898 ,144,500 RIAL, in favor of NISOC

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

NO ADVANCE PAYMENT WILL BE PAID

FOREIGN PURCHASING DEPARTMENT
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تهران تایمز : نوبت اول ۹۸/۱/۱ نوبت دوم ۹۸/۱/۵

Markazi province exports over \$46,000 of handicrafts

HERITAGE **TEHRAN** — Handicrafts exports from Markazi province reached \$46,400 during the first nine months the current Iranian calendar year (started March



21, 2019), compared with \$36,000 in the same period last year. “As of beginning of the year, handicrafts worth over 46,400 dollars, have been exported from Markazi province to overseas destinations,” Qassem Kazemi, a provincial tourism official said on Saturday, ISNA reported.

Enameled metalworks, Giveh shoes (a kind of traditional footwear), wooden statues, embossed decorations, potteries and marquetry pieces were among handicrafts, which were exported to England, Germany, France, Italy, Greece, Iraq, Turkey, India, and Canada, the official explained.

Earlier this month, the Iranian parliament (Majlis) approved a bill to exempt craftspeople and handicraft producers from paying value-added tax (VAT). However, the law is needed to be endorsed by the Guardian Council to take effect.

Handicraft exports from Iran reached \$146 million since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year, deputy tourism minister Pouya Mahmoudian said on December 31, 2019. “Iraq and Persian Gulf littoral countries are among the main target markets for Iranian handicrafts,” she added.

Louvre reopens after being blocked by strikers

The Louvre in Paris, the world’s most visited museum, reopened on Saturday after being shut down by workers striking over government plans to overhaul France’s pension system.

On Friday, hundreds of disappointed visitors had massed outside the Louvre, some hurling insults at strikers who had blocked the entrance.

It was the first time since the strike began on December 5 that the museum had shut completely although it was forced to close some galleries last month.

Union leaders are seeking to widen opposition to the pension reforms proposed by President Emmanuel Macron’s government, which have triggered the longest transport strike in France in decades.

The unions are looking for a second wind as the movement starts to flag, with the proportion of striking workers at national railway operator SNCF falling to less than five percent on Friday.

The overhaul aims to forge a single pensions system from the country’s 42 separate regimes, which offer early retirement and other benefits to public-sector workers as well as lawyers, physical therapists and even Paris Opera employees.

Critics say it will effectively force millions of people to work longer for a smaller pension.

The Louvre, which lies near the banks of the Seine, received 9.6 million visitors last year, most of them foreigners including Americans, Chinese and Europeans.

(Source: MSN)



ROUND THE GLOBE

Historic Centre of Vienna

Vienna, situated on the Danube River in the eastern part of Austria, developed from early Celtic and Roman settlements into a medieval and Baroque city, eventually becoming the capital of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

It played an essential role as the leading European music center, hosting major personalities in the development of music from the 16th to the 20th centuries, particularly Viennese Classicism and Romanticism, consolidating Vienna’s reputation as the ‘musical capital’ of Europe.

Vienna is also rich in architectural ensembles, particularly Baroque mansions and gardens as well as the late 19th-century Ringstrasse ensemble lined with grand buildings, monuments, and parks.



The property consists of the city’s medieval core (based on the Roman settlement), the principal Baroque ensembles with their axial layouts, and the Grunderzeit constructions from the beginning of the modern period.

At the beginning of the 12th century the settlement here expanded beyond the Roman defenses, which were demolished. During the Ottoman conflicts in the 16th and 17th centuries, the medieval town’s walls, which surrounded a much larger area, were rebuilt and provided with bastions.

This remained the core of Vienna until the medieval walls were demolished in the second half of the 19th century. The inner city contains a number of medieval-era buildings, including the Schottenkloster, the oldest monastery in Austria, the churches of Maria am Gestade (one of the main Gothic structures), Michaelerkirche, Minoritenkirche and Minoritenkloster from the 13th century, and St Stephen’s Cathedral, which dates from the 14th and 15th centuries.

(Source: UNESCO)

Sistan-Baluchestan: A must-see tourism destination in southeast Iran

TOURISM **TEHRAN** — UNESCO sites both historical and natural, varied landscape, cozy guesthouses, rugged sea coasts, mouth-watering local dishes, reasonable prices, and above all, hospitable and welcoming people well contribute to make the lesser-known Sistan-Baluchestan a must-visit destination for any traveler to Iran.

The collective Sistan-Baluchestan Province -- Sistan in the north and Baluchestan in the south -- accounts for one of the driest regions of Iran with a slight increase in rainfall from east to west, and an obvious rise in humidity in the coastal regions. In ancient times, the region was a crossroads of the Indus Valley and the Babylonian civilizations.

The province possesses special significance because of being located in a strategic and transit location, especially Chabahar which is the only ocean port in Iran and the best and easiest access route of the middle Asian countries to free waters.

For mainstream Iranians, the name of Sistan-Baluchestan conjures up stories of drought, desiccated wetlands, and dust storms. On the international scale foreigners may consider it a reminiscent of the big red blot on the Iran safety map.

The vast province is home to several distinctive archaeological sites and natural attractions, including two UNESCO World Heritage sites, namely Shahr-e-Soukhteh (Burnt City) and Lut desert.

Some of the most notable historical and natural tourist attractions of the province are as follows:

■ Seb castle

The historical Seb castle stands tall in a village of the same name, the castle was extensively used during the Qajar era (1789–1925) as a borderline surveillance base. However, narratives say that its heyday dates back to the time of the Safavids (1501–1736).

The castle is constructed of clay and mortar



Darak beach is where the barren desert meets sea in Iran’s southeastern province of Sistan-Baluchestan

blend with loads of sticky plant seeds. In some parts wooden slabs cut from palm trees have been used to strengthen the overall layout, enabling it to withstand the natural disasters in particular mellow seismic vibrations.

■ Mud fountains

Mud fountains are one of the most amazing phenomena and tourism attraction of the province. There are three Mud fountains in this area that are located in Kahir, Konarak and Khash, two of them are in the form of a hill and the other is volcano.

■ Darak beach

It is in fact an amazing place where intersection a thirsty desert meets the sea. Darak beach and a nearby village are a destination for avid nature lovers. The beach and the amazing village of Zarabad, along with Oman Sea, are where sand dunes, palm trees and

blue sea in a frame together create pictuasque sceneries.

■ Darren Negaran

Darren Negaran (literally meaning illustration of valley) is home to tens of carved pictures of different animals such as wild cows, camels and antelopes with large horn in variety of styles are drawn in most of the scenes. Some say it’s the largest stone gallery of the country. Hunters’ motifs, men’s conflicts with each other and the images of moon and sun are other subjects of these ten thousand years old stones illustrations.

■ Chabahar beach

Chabahar is the only oceanic port of Iran and it is attached to the Sea of Oman and Indian Ocean. In the southern part of the Chabahar city, there are large rocks with the advent of seawater and erosion of sedi-

mentary rocks that have created a beautiful landscape. Sunset and sunrise on this beach are one of the most spectacular views that you may have in your life. Do not miss these beautiful beaches during your Iran tour.

■ Martian mountains

About 40 to 50 kilometers away from Chabahar, lies one of the wonders of Iran’s nature known as the Martian mountains or miniature. Also, it is called Kalani or Aria in the local language. Along the roadside, you can see another planet in front of you that can be easily touched.

Colors of the Martian mountains varies from gray to white and displays different colors during the day due intensity of the daylight. This 4-5 million years old mountainous area features hills from 5-meter-high to the ones rising over 100 meters.

Potteries to take center stage at Fajr crafts festival

HERITAGE **TEHRAN** — A select of top Iranian potters have been invited to promote the millennia-old craft at the 4th Fajr national handicrafts festival, which will be held at the National Museum of Iran in downtown Tehran from February 2 to 10.

The event is a venue for showcasing tens of ancient and modern Iranian handicrafts, however, potteries are scheduled to take the center stage in the festival, an official with tourism ministry announced on Sunday, CHTN reported.

“In this edition, we will have a special look at potteries,” Hossein Khajeh-Bidokhti, an official with the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, said.

So far, 300 pieces [of pottery] have been offered to be showcased in the festival, ten of which will be



Spouted bull vessel, Gilan province, northern Iran; 1200-800 BC (Photo courtesy of Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts)

awarded, the official added.

The Fajr handicrafts festival routinely honors its winners of various fields with exquisite handicrafts, cash prizes or honorable mentions.

Handicrafts exports of the country reached \$289 million in the past Iranian calendar year (ended March 20, 2019) showing three percent growth year on year, according to data announced by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts. The exports included traditional ceramics, pottery vessels, handwoven textiles, glasswork, woodwork, metalwork, embroideries, personal ornamentations, as well as precious and semi-precious gemstones.

Dozens of Iranian handicrafts have gained the UNESCO Seal of Excellence during the past couple of years.

Australian tourism suffers \$4.5b blow as Americans, Brits, Chinese cancel holidays

The Australian bushfires may cost tourism \$4.5 billion as Americans, Brits and Chinese stop traveling there.

News of mass evacuations, burnt-out communities, dead wildlife and thick smoke haze beamed around the world have taken their toll says the tourism industry. Both domestic and overseas holidayers, scared off by the fires, are cancelling holiday trips and hotels.

Holiday cancellations from key markets including the US, Britain and China have flowed in according to peak industry body, the Australian Tourism Export Council. The entire industry has been hit says its director, Peter Shelley. Poor air quality, safety concerns, and lack of certainty on recovery are the key culprits he tells The Financial Review.

The figure comes from a survey of the ATEC’s members, who say all sectors of the tourism market have been affected: “from high net worth individuals cancelling a trip that was to include multiple luxury lodges in most states, through to “mums and dads” opting out of a local cruise or a nature-based experience,” Shelley says. ATEC says Australia’s tourism export sector is worth about \$40 billion to the economy. So it would seem over a tenth of that has gone down the drain with the bushfires. The losses way outshine the \$1b losses put by the Australian Tourism Industry Council (ATIC).

■ Fires keep Australian & international holidayers at home

The fires have killed 29 people and “razed bushland across an area the size of Bulgaria” according to SBS news.

Now largely under control, the infernos that ripped down the southeast coast of Australia over the New Year wiped

out high-season tourism in many coastal towns.

ATIC says booking cancellations for hotels and other accommodation even in non-fire zones have reached 60% and over. Make that nil for fire-hit areas.

■ Boom or bust with bushfire toll

It’s still too early to know how the fires will impact overseas tourism for Q1-2020. International visitor numbers have been steadily rising over past years, with a 10% jump between 2017 and 2019. That’s up to 9.3 million from 8.1 million according to Tourism Australia statistics.

This owes largely to booming markets such as India, China, the US and New Zealand flagged in a recent government report. Now the “industry hopes the bushfires won’t bust our boom,” reports The Australian.

■ “Holiday in your own backyard”

Tourism players country-wide are calling on holidayers to help the recovery, and return to their regions.

A social media movement, Stay With Them has joined the drive to help these communities. As has naturally Tourism Australia.

“Now’s the time to really kick start the recovery, by holidaying in our own backyard and supporting the many communities and local operators who rely so much upon our patronage and our tourism dollars,” says spokesperson Leo Seaton. The fires he says have put a huge damper on the New Year for Australia’s travel industry.

“The start of 2020 should have been a milestone for celebration. Sadly, Australia’s tourism industry has ushered in the decade in much more somber fashion, with the



Images and headlines like this in the UK’s Guardian newspaper have not helped attract British tourists during the bushfires. If anything they have scared them away.

devastation caused by the terrible bushfires.”

Viral images, spread on social media, exaggerating the fire situation, have not helped. Pictures showing the entire country ablaze are being blamed for playing a hand in scaring off many tourists.

Meanwhile Tourism Australia was forced to pull its Kylie Minogue-led \$15m advertising campaign in Britain, launched as the bushfires raged late December. The contrast between the images it projected and those of the fires and burnt-out communities was too much for some.

(Source: Forbes)

Southwest pushes 737 Max return to early June canceling 330 flights

Southwest has extended the cancellation of its Boeing 737 Max planes to early June, joining the two other U.S. carriers with the beleaguered planes in their fleets — American and United — each of which have done the same.

The planes have been grounded around the world since March 2019 following two fatal crashes in Indonesia and Ethiopia that killed a total of 346 people.

On Thursday, Southwest said in a statement it would remove the Boeing planes from its flight schedule through June 6. It said

this was “based on continued uncertainty around the timing of MAX return to service, as well as Boeing’s recommendation for Pilot simulator training.”

The airline added: “We remain confident that, once certified by the FAA, the enhancements will support the safe operation of the MAX.”

This move will result in about 330 weekday flights removed from the carrier’s schedule of more than 4,000 daily flights, according to Southwest.

Southwest had 34 of the 737 Max planes in its fleet, according to USA Today, and was

expected to add another 41 by the end of last year. And it’s possible that the plane’s return to service may be prolonged even further because Boeing has recommended that pilots complete more rigorous pilot simulator training, the paper noted.

Earlier this week, American Airlines said it was pushing the 737 Max from its schedule until June 4. And last month, USA Today also reported United Airlines removed the planes through June 4 as well.

Several airline executives have previously said they will conduct their own tests once

the planes are certified as safe to fly before commercial passengers are asked to board.

“Once the aircraft is certified, American will run flights for American team members and invited guests,” American Airlines said in its statement this week.

In December, Boeing fired its CEO as the crisis surrounding the grounding of what was once the manufacturer’s best-selling plane continued. A week before his firing, the company decided to temporarily halt production of newer 737 MAX planes.

(Source: travelandleisure.com)

Nine Iranian projects nominated for WSIS Prize 2020

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — Nine Iranian projects have been nominated for the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) Prize 2020, IRNA news agency reported on Sunday.

If Iranian users vote for the nominees, they can move on to the next stage of evaluations in a group consisting of top five projects.

The list of nominated projects will be publicly announced and WSIS multi-stakeholder community will be invited to participate and cast their vote for one project in each of 18 categories.

Of the 806 projects that were submitted, 353 were approved in 18 groups, and the top nine Iranian projects were nominated for WSIS Prize 2020.

Asa mobile services application was nominated in the E-Business category, as well as the Open Sesame project (a cloud banking system for startups).

The product of Abr Aravan company in the category of building confidence and security in use of ICTs and the Kind Comrade project in the category of E-learning



have been nominated in the competition.

DADVAR system in the enabling environment category, SAAM system in the E-government category and the YAAVAR in the category of access to information and knowledge. All the three are the state-run projects by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs.

Also, the application of Augmented Reality (AR) educational apps in E-learning category, Robotic Remote Surgery in E-Health and Ganj system in E-science are also part of the projects of the country's academic and research sector.

WSIS is a United Nations-sponsored summit on information, communication and the information society, which has been taking place since 2003.

The WSIS Prize contest was developed to evaluate projects and activities that leverage the power of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to advance sustainable development. Since its inception, the contest of WSIS Prize has attracted more than 300,000 stakeholders.

Text neck becoming epidemic: threats and prevention

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — Excessive texting and staring at the handheld smartphones, done almost every day by millions of people, brings a heavy burden on spine and neck injuries which can cause serious health threats to mobile user population all over the world.

Known as text neck, turtle neck, or anterior head syndrome, the condition is growing along with the number of mobile users.

Apart from neck pain, it can also cause shoulder pain, upper back pain, headaches and increased thoracic kyphosis.

Ahmad Moazen-zadeh, head of the Iranian association of physiotherapeutic sciences, told IRNA that bending the neck while using a mobile phone will cause neck tension.

This action will harm the natural curves of the spine and cause neck pain and other musculoskeletal disorders, and in the long run, can lead to deterioration and surgery, he added.

He went on to explain that as the neck bends forward and down, the weight on the cervical spine begins to increase, at a 15 to 20-degree angle, the weight of head is nearly doubled, placing about 27 pounds of force on the neck.



If left untreated, the text neck can cause chronic problems such as spinal degeneration, arthritis, disc herniation, and nerve damage, he concluded.

Based on a recent data released by Communication Regulatory Authority of Iran, the number of mobile users stood at 93.36 million over the previous Iranian calendar year 1397 (ended March 20, 2019), while increased up to

over 116.51 million by the end of the year.

■ Symptoms and prevention

The most common presentation of text neck is neck pain, stiffness and soreness. The main symptoms include radiation of pain into the shoulders and arms, muscular weakness, headache, disc compression, early onset arthritis.

Prevention is the key when it comes to text neck, the following recommendations from a systematic review of text neck should be kept in mind while using smartphones or other hand held devices, such as avoiding excessive mobile usage and take frequent breaks, avoiding prolonged static postures, positioning the device such that it reduces stresses on the head, neck and the upper extremities.

Also avoid high repetitions of movements such as prolonged typing or swiping, and refuse holding large or heavy devices in one hand for long duration.

Rehabilitation is found to be very effective in treating the stress injury, which can be designed as a 2-4-week program starting with soft tissue mobilization, active and passive stretches of tight muscles and progressing to muscle strengthening, posture retraining and home exercise program.

China announces plan to phase out single-use plastics

China has announced it is taking measures to curb single-use plastic products in a bid to address one of the nation's worst environmental issues.

The country chucks out around 60 million takeaway food containers each day and huge quantities of untreated plastic waste are submerged in landfills or discarded in rivers.

While the average person living in China produces about half the solid waste of the average American, the Asian country has a far larger population.

China is ramping up restrictions on the production, sale and use of single-use plastic products, the state planner said on Sunday.

Single-use plastics have been classified as one of the world's biggest environmental challenges by the United Nations.

Plastic bags will be banned in all of China's major cities by the end of 2020 and banned in all cities and towns in 2022, the National Development and Reform Commission and the Ministry of Ecology and Environment, which issued the new policy, said.

Markets selling fresh produce will be exempt from the ban until 2025. Other items such as plastic utensils from take-away food outlets and plastic courier packages will also be phased out.

The restaurant industry will be banned from using single-use straws by the end of 2020. Towns and cities across China must reduce the consumption of single-use plastic items in the restaurant industry by 30 per cent by 2025.

Some regions and sectors will also face restrictions on the production and sale of plastic products but it is not yet clear which geographical areas they are.

China also banned the import of all plastic waste.

The production and sale of plastic bags less than 0.025mm thick will be banned, as will plastic film less than 0.01mm thick for agricultural use.

China is already boosting recycling rates and is building dozens of "comprehensive resource utilisation" bases to ensure that more products are reused as part of its war on waste.



According to the environment ministry, more than 200 million cubic metres of waste was found floating off Chinese

shores in 2018, up 27 percent on the previous year.

(Source: The Independent)

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → ج

500,000 policemen ready to ensure road safety during Noruz

Traffic police teams comprising 500,000 policemen will stand guard to ensure safety by monitoring road regulations during the new year holidays (Noruz, starting March 21), road traffic police chief Mohammad Hossein Hamidi has announced.

In this regard, coordination has been made with the related bodies to fully control the country's roads and prevent the probable accidents, he added.

Given that this year's holiday is longer, trips certainly increases compared to past years, so we decided to constantly monitor the highways, he stated.

۵۰۰ هزار پلیس نوروز ۹۸ جاده های کشور را کنترل می کنند

محمد حسین حمیدی رئیس پلیس راه راهور نیروی انتظامی کشور گفت: با هدف ارتقا هرچه بیشتر امنیت مسافران، ۵۰۰ هزار نیروی پلیس در ایام نوروز ۱۳۹۸ جاده های سطح کشور را کنترل می کنند.

سردار محمد حسین حمیدی روز دوشنبه در گفت و گو با خبرنگار انتظامی ایرنا افزود: در این ارتباط هماهنگی های لازم با دستگاه های مربوطه نیز به انجام رسیده است و آمادگی برای کنترل هر چه بیشتر سطح جاده های کشور برای جلوگیری از تصادفات وجود دارد. وی خاطرنشان کرد: پیش بینی امسال ما با توجه به میزان تعطیلات نوروز افزایش سفرها در مقایسه با سال گذشته است که همین امر موجب شده از همه ظرفیت ها به صورت ۲۴ ساعته بهره مند شویم.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“-crat”

■ **Meaning:** government

■ **For example:** The **bureaucrats** imposed rules and regulations on big business.

PHRASAL VERB

Hinge on/upon something

■ **Meaning:** if a result hinges on something, it depends on it completely

■ **For example:** His political future hinges on the outcome of this election.

IDIOM

A bundle of nerves

■ **Explanation:** if you describe someone as a bundle of nerves, you mean that they are very nervous, tense or worried

■ **For example:** My son is doing his driving test today. Needless to say he's a bundle of nerves!

Humans risk living in an empty world, warns UN biodiversity chief

Humanity will have given up on planet Earth if world leaders cannot reach an agreement this year to stop the mass extinction of wildlife and destruction of life-supporting ecosystems, the United Nations' new biodiversity chief has warned.

Elizabeth Maruma Mrema, the acting executive secretary of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, has implored governments to ensure 2020 is not just another "year of conferences" on the ongoing ecological destruction of the planet, urging countries to take definitive action on deforestation, pollution and the climate crisis.

The warning comes on the eve of the Davos World Economic Forum, where biodiversity loss has been highlighted as the third biggest risk to the world in terms of likelihood and severity this year, ahead of infectious diseases, terror attacks and interstate conflict.

The ongoing destruction of life-supporting ecosystems such as coral reefs and rainforests means humans risk living in an "empty world" with "catastrophic" consequences for society, according to Mrema, who is responsible for spearheading a Paris-style agreement for nature that will be negotiated this year.

"People's lives depend on biodiversity in ways that are not always apparent or appreciated. Human health ultimately depends on ecosystem services: the availability of fresh water, fuel, food sources. All these are prerequisites for human health and livelihoods," she told the Guardian in her first major interview since taking up the role.

In May last year, the world's leading scientists warned that nature is disappearing at a rate ten to hundreds of times higher than the average for the past 10m years. Experts have previously warned that humans are driving the sixth mass extinction event in Earth's history, cautioning there is a short time to act.

"Business, local communities, civil society, the youth, all of us led by governments must take action. We have been talking of action for many years. Really, we need transformative action to make a difference," Mrema said.

Last week, the long-awaited draft of a Paris-style UN agreement on nature was published for the first time, calling for a commitment to protect at least 30% of the planet, controls on invasive species and pollution from plastic waste and excess nutrients to be reduced by 50%.

The commitments in the draft text, which is expected to be adopted by governments in October at a crucial UN summit in the Chinese city of Kunming, have been kept intentionally modest after the failure of the international agreement on biodiversity conservation made for the previous decade.

Some campaigners have criticised the draft agreement, insisting that governments must do more to protect the planet. Mrema said she had hoped negotiators would create something more ambitious than the current proposal.

When asked what would happen if governments did not take sufficient action, Mrema said: "The risks will be major. One is that we will not have listened to the science and the evidence provided. Because we will not have listened, it means the global community will have said: let biodiversity loss continue, let people continue to die, let the degradation continue, deforestation continue, pollution continue, and we'll have given up as an international community to save the planet.

"I hope that's not where any of us would want to be."

Mrema, who took over the role in November last year after former chief Cristiana Pasca Palmer stepped down, recalled growing up in Tanzania, where her home looked out on Mount Kilimanjaro, the tallest mountain in Africa.

"When I grew up as I child, I could see and hear water flowing in the banana plantations. But now I am an adult, those streams have completely dried. Every time I deal with biodiversity issues, I reflect what I used to see as I grew up and went to school. What I see today, I cannot compare the two. More devastation now, the water is no longer there, the bush, the forest, the entire area is now bare," she said.

The UN has organised a youth summit this April in Miyazaki, Japan, which the organisation hopes environmental activists such as Greta Thunberg will attend.

"Being an adult, I can say that we have failed and are failing our children and the youth," Mrema said.

"Our children are asking what climate are they going to inherit from us if the planet they are seeing is polluted. The ocean they are seeing is full of plastic, the forest they are told to be seeing becomes bare land, the consumption patterns are leading to more pollution.

(Source: The Guardian)

WORDS IN THE NEWS

East Timor militia leader found guilty

(November 27, 2002)

One of the most prominent militia from East Timor, Eurico Guterres, has been found guilty of crimes against humanity over a 1999 massacre in East Timor, and sentenced to 10 years in prison. The verdict was delivered by a special human rights tribunal in Jakarta. This report from Jonathan Head.

His **trademark** long hair still **flowed** down his back. But Eurico Guterres arrived here at the Jakarta central court this morning without his usual **swaggering** self-confidence. Gone were the **military fatigues** and nationalist symbols he once liked to wear. This morning, he was dressed in a **sober** suit. There were none of the noisy crowds of supporters who attended earlier hearings. **Ominously** for him, none of his military allies who'd once **nurtured** him as a **protégé** were here either. Eurico Guterres had been deserted.

A panel of five judges read out the **testimony** of the witnesses who'd seen him on the seventeenth of April 1999 urge his followers to kill pro-independence activists, and then they said he led the attack on Manuel Carrascalao's house that left twelve people dead. Eurico Guterres was involved in many other violent incidents in East Timor.

■ Words

trademark: a typical feature

flowed: hung loosely

swaggering: proudly arrogant

military fatigues: military clothing

sober: respectable

ominously: worryingly

nurtured: developed

protégé: someone helped and guided by others over a period of time

testimony: a formal statement

(Source: BBC)

Why did Britain boycott Hezbollah?

→ 1 condemning Iran's retaliatory operation following the assassination of commander Soleimani, and finally listing Hezbollah as terrorist are just few examples hostile moves by Britain.

Given Hezbollah significant role in the fight against terrorism, boycotting the movement can be regarded as another aspect of Britain's obvious support for terrorism, which reveals the British inhuman nature more than ever.

The British behavior indicates the fact that all crises in the Western and Southwestern Asia are rooted in the interventions by the hegemonic system. The only way to put an end on this situation is to form a global unity to expel foreigners out if the region, a move which will result in stability and security.

Israeli security officials affirm Tel Aviv's vulnerability

→ 1 The regime is deeply concerned about the situation on its domestic front and is trying to practice a possible war with Hezbollah by conducting maneuvers. It has allocated 30 billion shekels to its army to protect the domestic front from missiles attacks launched from Gaza or by Hezbollah from the north.

Maariv released the reports of the Israeli military, quoted by the Executive Director of the Institute for Policy and Strategy (IPS) Amos Gilead, regarding the upcoming war scenario in the northern front, including the evacuation of hundreds of thousands of Israelis, the daily impact of hundreds of missiles and a shortage of electricity.

Warning of a military confrontation on the northern front and taking the threat to the domestic front very seriously, Gilead said that the resistance movement in the north has targeted Israel, especially Tel Aviv, so the army and security agencies are needed to be fully prepared.

Alongside the domestic front, the Israeli officials' another concern since the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah War is the inefficiency of the army, which has not worked properly in wars with Lebanon's Hezbollah and Hamas. Therefore, Tel Aviv has resorted to its air force, which the Zionists themselves admitted is not enough to determine the fate of war alone.

From the point of view of Amos Harel, the military analyst for the Israeli newspaper Haaretz, due to major problems, the Israeli military consider the ground war as a nightmare and avoid it each time because of possible damages and casualties.

The Israeli analyst said that the army failed to defeat the missiles launched from Gaza during Operation Protective Edge, and its air force did not have accurate information on Hamas targets. The units were not well prepared to accomplish the task, and the Israeli army suffered from a lack of innovation.

It is clear that Israeli forces are afraid of war and this has become a challenge for their officials. The regime's military is still inefficient, despite the propaganda about equipping it with new weapons, and Tel Aviv is already content with the air force.

Putin suggests sacking Russia's top prosecutor

Russian President Vladimir Putin has suggested dismissing Prosecutor General Yuri Chaika and nominated Deputy Head of the Investigative Committee Igor Krasnov as a candidate for the post, the presidential press service said on Monday.

"Vladimir Putin submitted for consideration by the Federation Council the candidacy of Deputy Head of the Investigative Committee Igor Krasnov for the post of the Russian Prosecutor General and a proposal to dismiss Yuri Chaika from this position due to his transfer to other work," the press service said.

Chaika, 68, has served as Russia's top prosecutor since 2006. Krasnov, 44, was in charge of the Main Department for investigating particularly important cases and the Main Investigative Department. He has worked for prosecution bodies since 1997. Since 2007, Krasnov started working as a senior investigator in the newly-formed Investigative Committee and was appointed as the deputy head of the IC in April 2016. Krasnov investigated such cases as a plot to kill Russian politician and businessman Anatoly Chubais, and the murders of opposition figure Boris Nemtsov, lawyer Stanislav Markelov and journalist Anastasia Baburova as well as embezzlement during Vostochny spaceport's construction.

(Source: TASS)

Russia repels drone attack on Hmeimim base in Syria

Russian air defenses have repelled a drone attack launched by unidentified militants on the strategic Hmeimim airbase in Syria's western coastal province of Latakia.

The Russian Defense Ministry said in a statement on Sunday, "With the standard anti-aircraft missile systems deployed by the Russian air base, air targets were destroyed at a safe distance."

The statement noted that the incident inflicted no damage on the airbase. "There were no injuries or material damage. Russia's Hmeimim airbase is operating in normal mode."

The ministry added that the militants used three small-sized drones in the attack, which approached the base from the northeast on Sunday.

Over the past year, the Russian military has thwarted several drone and mortar attacks launched by militants on the airbase, destroying 53 drones, and 27 multiple-launch rocket system shells.

Russia has been helping Syrian forces in the ongoing battles across the conflict-plagued Arab country.

The Russian military assistance, which began in September 2015 at the official request of the Syrian government, has proved effective as Syrians continue to recapture key areas from Daesh and other terrorist groups across the country thanks to Russian air cover.

Syria has been gripped by foreign-backed militancy since March 2011. The Syrian government says the Israeli regime and its Western and regional allies are aiding Takfiri terrorist groups that are wreaking havoc in the country.

■ **U.S. soldiers block Russians heading toward oil field**
Meanwhile, U.S. forces stationed in areas controlled by militants from the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) have prevented Russian troops from approaching an oil field located in Syria's northeastern province of Hasakah.

Turkey's state-run Anadolu Agency reported that the American forces had stopped a Russian military patrol that was on its way to the Rumeylan oil field in Hasakah on Saturday.

(Source: agencies)

Berlin summit on Libya conflict: What did world powers agree?



World powers held a high-stakes summit in Berlin on Sunday to discuss the way forward to end the conflict in Libya.

Leaders and officials from Turkey, Russia, Egypt, France, Italy, the United Kingdom and the United States attended the gathering in the German capital, while representatives from the UAE, Algeria, China, the Republic of the Congo, the United Nations, European Union and African Union were also present.

Renegade military commander Khalifa Haftar and his rival, Faye al-Sarraj, who leads the internationally recognised Government of National Accord (GNA) based in Tripoli, attended the summit but did not participate.

Haftar, who is backed by a rival administration based in eastern Libya, launched a military offensive on Tripoli in April which has since stalled. Some foreign powers had upped their support to the warring factions in an attempt to break the deadlock, but in Berlin, world leaders agreed on a joint course of action to de-escalate the conflict.

Here are the main points they agreed on their final communique, to be put forward as a UN Security Council resolution.

■ End to foreign interference

The Berlin participants «commit to refraining from interference in the armed conflict or in the internal affairs of Libya» and urge all international actors «to do the same».

■ UN arms embargo

The participants «commit to unequivocally and fully respect and implement the arms embargo» established by the UN in 2011 but frequently violated, and «call on all international actors to do the same».

«We call on all actors to refrain from any activities exacerbating the conflict... including the financing of military capabilities or the recruitment of mercenaries,» the text adds.

The document also asks UN experts to monitor and investigate any breaches of the arms embargo «on a continuous basis» and called all actors to enforce

UNSC sanctions against those found to be in breach of the embargo.

■ Ceasefire

The signatories to the final statement «call on all parties concerned to redouble their efforts for a sustained suspension of hostilities, de-escalation and a permanent ceasefire».

They also urge «the redeployment of heavy weapons, artillery and aerial vehicles» and an end to all military movements by, or in direct support of, the conflict parties - throughout Libya and in its airspace, the text reads.

The participants invite the UN to establish «technical committees» to monitor the implementation of the truce.

They call on the UNSC «to impose appropriate sanctions on those who are found to be in violation of the ceasefire arrangements and on member states to enforce these».

■ Dissolving militias

According to the text, the participants

want to see «credible steps» towards «the dismantling of armed groups and militias» in Libya, whose members should then be integrated «into civilian, security and military state institutions». The UN is asked to assist in the demobilization process.

The participants also call for the restoration of the monopoly of the state to the legitimate use of force. They support the establishment of unified Libyan national security, police and military forces under central, civilian authority, building upon the Cairo talks, and the documents produced therein.

■ Return to political process

The Berlin document urges «all Libyan parties to resume the inclusive Libyan-led and Libyan-owned political process under the auspices of the UNSMIL [the UN Support Mission in Libya]» to reach an intra-Libyan solution.

The goal is to pave «the way to end the transitional period» through free, fair and credible parliamentary and presidential elections.

■ Human rights

The participants «urge all parties in Libya to fully respect international humanitarian law and human rights law».

They call for an «end to the practice of arbitrary detention» and urge the Libyan authorities to «gradually close the detention centres for migrants and asylum seekers».

■ Economy and oil

The participants stressed the importance of restoring and safeguarding the integrity of Libyan institutions, in particular the Central Bank of Libya and the National Oil Corporation (NOC).

They urge all parties to guarantee the security of the country's crucial oil infrastructure, and reject «any illicit exploitation of its energy resources».

■ Distribution of wealth

The document calls for transparent, accountable, fair and equitable distribution of public wealth and resources between different Libyan geographical areas, including through decentralization and support for municipalities.

■ Strengthening of institutions

The agreement urges Libyan authorities to further strengthen «transitional justice institutions, including prosecution initiatives, reparations, truth-seeking and institutional reform, which should be in line with internationally recognized standards and principles».

■ Follow-up talks

At a news conference announcing the communique, UN chief Antonio Guterres said al-Sarraj, the GNA head, and Haftar, had each appointed five military representatives to attend follow-up talks in Geneva «in the next few days».

(Source: al Jazeera)

Virginia gun rally: Fears of violence as militia groups gather

The U.S. state of Virginia is bracing for a pro-gun rally on Monday that experts and political leaders warn could descend into violence.

The rally, billed by its organisers as a peaceful event to lobby legislators to protect the Second Amendment, is expected to draw dozens of militia groups to the state capital, Richmond, according to social media and statements by the groups.

"We have received credible intelligence from our law enforcement agencies of threats of violence surrounding the demonstration planned for Monday,

January 20," said Virginia's Democratic Governor Ralph Northam.

"This includes extremist rhetoric similar to what has been seen before major incidents, such as Charlottesville in 2017," he tweeted, referring to the Virginia white supremacist rally in which a neo-Nazi rammed his car into a group of anti-racist protesters, killing 32-year-old anti-racist demonstrator Heather Heyer.

Citing the threats, Northam declared a state of emergency in the state capital that bans all weapons from the Capitol grounds from Friday through Tuesday.

Protests resume in Iraq, demanding reforms, new govt.



Protesters have returned to the streets in cities across Iraq, sealing roads with burning tires and threatening further escalation at a time of difficult economic conditions.

Demonstrations were reported across Baghdad, the holy cities of Karbala and Najaf, as well as the western cities of Nasiriyah, Diwaniyah, Kut, and Wasit on Sunday.

The capital alongside several southern cities began witnessing protests calling for political and economic reforms last October, but they had thinned out in recent weeks in the wake of U.S. assassinations and airstrikes.

On Sunday, young protesters descended on Baghdad's Tahrir Square and nearby Tayaran Square, burning tires to block highways and bridges and turning back cars and causing traffic jams across the city.

Footage showed protesters throwing projectiles and rocks at police officers who tried to clear the sit-ins. Medical and security sources said dozens of protesters had been wounded.

Riots were also reported in the cities of Kut, Diwaniyah and Amara, where most government offices, schools and universities have been shuttered for months.

In the holy city of Najaf, a number of young protesters in checkered black-and-white scarves lit tires and blocked a main road leading to the capital.

The fresh protests come ahead of a rally called by prominent Iraqi cleric Moqtada Sadr on January 24 to demand the withdrawal of U.S. forces following their recent aggression in the country.

Last week, Sadr urged Iraqis to hold "a million-strong, peaceful, unified demonstration to condemn the American presence and its violations".

Iraqi political figures have stepped up their calls for foreign forces -- including some 5,200 U.S. troops -- to leave the country.

They are outraged by U.S. assassination of top Iraqi military official Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis and Iran's General Qassem Soleimani who was visiting Iraq on an official invitation.

Iraq's parliament voted on January 5 in favor of ousting foreign forces, but U.S. President Donald Trump threatened to seize Iraqi oil revenues of up to \$35 billion held in a bank account in New York if American troops were asked to leave.

(Source: press TV)

UK legal team urges police to arrest Egypt's Sisi during London visit over Morsi death

A legal group in the UK has lodged complaint with the London police, calling for an arrest warrant against Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi over his alleged role in the death of Mohamed Morsi, the country's first democratically elected president, at a Cairo court session last year.

The International Justice Chambers (Guernica 37) asked London's Metropolitan Police Service Counter Terrorism Command (SO15) to launch a probe into the "credible allegations of torture made against the Egyptian Government

and its State organs" in the complaint filed ahead of Sisi's arrival in the UK on Monday for a two-day visit.

Morsi, a senior figure in Egypt's now-outlawed Muslim Brotherhood organization, was elected as Egypt's president after a 2011 revolution.

He was, however, deposed through a bloody military coup led by his then-army chief and now President Sisi in July 2013.

Morsi, 67, had been serving prison terms on several charges before passing away in a Cairo court while on trial

on espionage charges last year in June. He suffered from medical neglect during his imprisonment as well as poor conditions in prison.

"In particular, the complaint will request that the death of... Morsi, and the treatment suffered prior to his death, which constitutes torture, be investigated," the legal group said. "the United Kingdom cannot be seen as a safe haven for those who consider themselves immune from prosecution."

(Source: Press TV)

Fears of radicalization as violent protests hit Lebanon



Lebanese security forces have clashed with protesters whose once peaceful protests have increasingly turned violent after about three months of unrest.

Demonstrators hurled rocks, fireworks and other projectiles at security forces who responded by firing teargas, rubber bullets and using water cannon to disperse the crowds outside the parliament in Beirut Sunday.

The Lebanese Red Cross said it had treated 52 people at the scene of the clashes and rushed 38 to hospital.

The renewed clashes came a day after about 400 people were injured during the most violent weekend of protests in Beirut since Lebanese staged protests against the ruling elite in October.

The protesters chanted "Not peaceful, not peaceful" during the Sunday's protests, contradicting "peaceful, peaceful" slogan that was heard in the early days of demonstrations.

"Lebanon is being pushed to the brink of chaos and anarchy," Maha Yahya, director of the Carnegie Middle East Center.

"This is a country that is spiraling economically downwards, you have increasing frustrations among a young

population, and things could get out of hand very quickly. It's only a matter of time."

Some protesters blamed "instigators" for the violence, saying they are working to radicalize the protests and push them toward violence.

"There are instigators here," Elias, one of the protesters, said. "It's people who are not with the protests and want to give us a bad name."

Lebanon has been rocked by nationwide protests since October 17 against rising inflation and living costs as the government struggles to attract investment amid increasing economic hardships and a decreasing capital flow to the country.

The protests began when the government proposed imposing a tax on Whatsapp calls, along with other austerity measures.

The protesters blame the faltering economy on widespread corruption and abuse of privileges among politicians.

On October 29, Lebanon's Prime Minister Saad Hariri submitted his resignation to President Michel Aoun.

(Source: agencies)

Ali Daei inches closer to Team Melli hotseat

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Multiple media reports suggest that Ali Daei will be the new head coach of Iran national football team.

After the Football Federation Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI) parted ways with Marc Wilmots, several coaches were shortlisted to take charge of Team Melli, however the federation has not appointed the new head coach so far.

Ex-Persepolis coach Branko Ivankovic was among the candidates but the Croat was named as Oman head coach on Sunday.

Amir Ghalenoei is also a nominee to take charge of Team Melli but he is under contract with Sepahan football club.

Yahya Golmohammadi had been also shortlisted to replace Wilmots but he was appointed as Persepolis coach last week.

Now, the media reports suggest that the federation has reached an agreement with Daei.

In his first stint in Team Melli in 2008, the Iranian team managed the weakest World Cup Qualification results in their history with only one win out of five matches.

Iran will have four must-win matches in the 2022 World Cup qualification 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 football teams refuse to play in neutral field

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Four teams representing Iran in the AFC Champions League - Persepolis, Esteghlal, Sepahan and Shahr Khodro – have announced that they will not play in neutral field.

They have made the decision in response to a new letter from the Asian Football Confederation (AFC)'s Secretary General.

Following a new released letter from the AFC Secretary General regarding hosting international matches by the Iranian teams in the new season of the AFC Champions League, a meeting was held on Monday in the presence of Iran Football Federation officials and General Managers of Persepolis, Sepahan, Esteghlal and Shahr Khodro clubs.

At the end of the meeting, they wrote an official letter



in response to the letter of Secretary General of the AFC, which reads as follows:

1. Iranian clubs believe that there is no legitimate reason

for being banned from their hosting rights, declaring that they will not transfer their hosting right outside the Islamic Republic of Iran.

2-All Iranian clubs participating in 2020 AFC Champions League announce that they will only participate in the tournament if the Asian Football Confederation formally declares that these Iranian clubs will host their rivals in the territory of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

3-If AFC accepts the above-mentioned terms, the Iranian clubs will only accept a change of schedule within the calendar.

4-Managers of the Iranian clubs request to meet as soon as possible with the President and the Secretary General of the AFC.

Iranian teams withdrawal from ACL will damages the competition's reputation: Forbes

The Asian Football Confederation has reportedly banned Iran from hosting international matches based on safety fears over the current tensions in the region. Iranian club sides have responded by planning to withdraw from the AFC Asian Champions League. The clubs have said Iran is "safe", while Iranian media and fans have claimed that politics, rather than security, is behind the AFC's decision.

Iran are one of the top nations in the Asian Champions League, and have some of the best supported clubs in Asia. Iranian clubs had a poor campaign last year, but the year before that, Persepolis reached the final of the competition. They, along with Esteghlal, Sepahan and Shahr Khodro, will withdraw from the competition should the AFC's fixture ban not be reversed.

Iranian sides played their matches against Saudi Arabian sides on neutral territory last season, so the move by the AFC isn't completely unprecedented. But playing any games on neutral territory is damaging to the competition's reputation. When over 40,000 people turn up in Tehran to watch Estaghlal or Persepolis, it's a much better advert for the Asian Champions League than when a thousand fans turn up in Doha to watch Estaghlal's 'home' match against Al-Hilal.

The absence of Iranian clubs in the competition would be similar to Italian clubs deciding to boycott the UEFA Champions League. Few other Asian countries can match

Iran's top clubs in terms of fans. The Asian Champions League is struggling to grow, with low attendances and regular scandals or other embarrassments, so having one of its most important members boycott the competition is the last thing the AFC needs.

But as well as damaging Asia's main club competition, the current tensions could also damage the United Arab Emirates' and Qatar's attempts to bolster their sporting credentials.

The UAE and Qatar have benefited in the past from their relative stability compared to other countries in the region, often hosting ties that can't be played at the home country's stadium for security reasons. If Iran is banned from hosting international matches, then it is possible that Iran's 'home' games would be played in the UAE or Qatar.

But it seems the current tensions in the Middle East have finally caught up with Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Doha, as other soccer teams are staying away.

The USA men's soccer team cancelled its camp in Doha earlier this month due to the "developing situation in the region", holding it in Florida instead. And last week Manchester United scrapped plans for a training trip to the Middle East in February, while Arsenal have said they are assessing security measures before deciding whether to head to Dubai for warm weather training.

Qatar and the UAE have been popular destinations for these winter training



camp in the past few seasons, with many of Europe's top clubs heading there for the warm weather and high-quality facilities. Qatar's FA says that "time and again, these teams return to AZF [Aspire Zone Foundation] to benefit from Qatar's perfect outdoor training weather at this time of year." This year, Bayern Munich, Ajax and PSV Eindhoven all used the Aspire facilities, apart from Ajax's US international Sergino Dest who said he "didn't feel comfortable" due to the tensions.

While showcase events like the Qatar 2022 World Cup or the Club World Cup might grab the headlines, these camps have been like a dripping tap, helping to slowly establish the two countries as reliable regional soccer hubs. With the teams come

media, agents, sponsors and so forth, over time making the countries a good place for related businesses to set up offices, helping the local tourism sector, and boosting these countries' soft power.

The Qatar 2022 World Cup and other showcase events are unlikely to be affected unless things really escalate in the region, but should the security situation in the region remain tense, top European clubs might decide to switch their future winter plans to Florida or to Spain and Portugal where many other clubs from around the world hold their winter training camps, putting a major dent in Qatar and the UAE's aspirations to boost their global standing through sports.

(Source: Forbes)

Iran is a safe country: Igor Kolakovic

TASNIM — Iran national volleyball teams Igor Kolakovic feels really good being in the Middle East country and says that Iran is a safe country.

The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) has recently banned the Iranian teams from hosting international matches based on safety fears over the current tensions in the region, however Kolakovic says Iran is a safe country.

"The Iranian people are very hospitable and the country is safe. I receive so many messages from my friends per day and they ask after the Iranian people. They, indeed, support the Iranian people. I have good memories from Iran and I am sad because I have to leave the country after the Olympics," he said.

Under stewardship of Kolakovic, Iran booked a place at the 2020 Olympic Games after becoming champion at the Asian Volleyball Confederation (AVC) 2020 Olympic Qualification Tournament in Jiangmen, China.

"To win an Olympic berth is not an easy task because the all teams took part in the competitions with the best preparation. The best Asian teams were in the China but they had nothing to lose against Iran. They played



against us without any fear. On the other hand, we had so many problems ahead of the event because our key players like Farhad Ghaemi and Amir Ghaffour missed the competition due to injury and several players got cold when arrived in Jiangmen," Kolakovic said.

Iran fought back from a set down to beat South Korea 3-2 in the competition's semis.

"We had problem against Korea because they played very better than expected. And we could not play as usual. The final match against China was very easier than we expected. Our players were ready, both physically and mentally. Iran has so many rising stars and I am sure that they will be added to Team Melli in the near future," Kolakovic stated.

"To be present in Olympics is very good for Iran's volleyball. It's not a long time that Iran has introduced itself as a world power. Iran has qualified for the Olympics for the second successive time and it proves that Iran also is a powerhouse team in volleyball. The team has a bright future. A team like Serbia, who is champion of the Europe, has failed to win a place in the Olympics because the qualification in the Europe is very difficult," the Montenegrin trainer went on to say.

"I am happy for what I have done for Iran volleyball. I called up Morteza Sharifi, Amir Hossein Tukhteh and Saber Kazemi and Mohammad Reza Hazratpour to Team Melli for the 2018 World Cup and now they can replace the big stars like Saeid Marouf and Mohammad Mousavi. I am proud of my team," Kolakovic concluded.

Iran wins world Zurkhaneh sports team championship

IRNA — Iran won the championship in the team category of the 3rd World Zurkhaneh Sports & Koshti Pahlavani Championship held in Bojnourd, Iran.

The team category of the competition began on Monday with the presence of six teams from Iran, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Uganda.

Technical director of the competition Elyas Amirabadi said that the Iranian team claimed the first place with 701 scores and Iraq, Azerbaijan and Afghanistan took the following places with 484, 470 and 373 points, respectively.

The 3rd Zurkhaneh Sports and Koshti Pahlavani World Cup kicked off on Monday with the participation of 100 athletes from 22 countries in Bojnourd in North Khorasan Province of Iran.

Participating countries include Iran, Poland, Estonia, Turkey, Cyprus, Hungary, South Korea, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Iraq, Afghanistan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zimbabwe and Cameron.

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

Greek team Larissa eye Iran's Ali Ghorbani

TASNIM — Greek football team Larissa have set their sight on signing Iranian forward Ali Ghorbani in the January transfer window.

Ghorbani, who currently plays in Sepahan, is not in starting lineup of the Iranian football team.

The 29-year-old forward was a member of Slovakian team Spartak Trnava in 2018 but joined Sepahan in the last year January.

Ghorbani has scored four goals in 29 matches for Sepahan in the Iran Professional League.

Larissa, based in the city of Larissa, play in Super League 1.

Larijani reacts to AFC ban on Iranian clubs

MNA — Iranian Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani said that Tehran expects international bodies to not be biased against Iran's sports.

Iran is a safe and strong country the rights of its football fans should not be neglected, he said in a Monday meeting with Iranian Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports Masoud Soltanifar in Tehran.

"We expect international and Asian bodies to not be biased against Iran's sports and football and to act according to international charters," he added.

The meeting 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. Meanwhile, the four Iranian teams have announced that they will participate in the event only if they can host their opponents in Iran.

Correct stances of clubs and the Football Federation to defend Iran's rights are supported by the Parliament, Larijani said, hoping that the problem would soon be solved.

he AFC's controversial decision is likely due to the unintentional downing of a Ukrainian airliner on Jan 8 by Iranian air defense which claimed the lives of all 176 passengers and crews on board.

Persepolis keeper Radosevic hits out at AFC's decision

TASNIM — Persepolis' Croatian goalkeeper Bozidar Radosevic criticized the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) for banning Iranian teams from hosting their matches at home at the AFC Champions League.

Radosevic was a member of Persepolis team who advanced to the final match of the 2018 AFC Champions League.

"I am here in Iran for many years and I have to say the country is a safe country. I think the AFC has made the wrong decision to ban the Iranian teams from hosting the home matches," Radosevic said.

"I hope that AFC will reverse its decision because the Iranian people are very hospitable and I feel good here. The Iranian people are so lovely and I like to retire from football in the country," he added.

"Iran has become my second home and I am very happy to be in the safe country. I will definitely return to Iran after my playing career because I feel good here," Radosevic concluded.

Djokovic survives scare as rain causes chaos at Australian Open

Novak Djokovic survived a scare to join Roger Federer and Serena Williams in the Australian Open second round as heavy downpours caused chaos on Monday, forcing organizers to postpone a swathe of matches.

Defending champion Djokovic was made to sweat before beating Germany's Jan-Lennard Struff in four sets on the first day, when fears over air pollution were replaced by disruption caused by rain.

While play continued at the three stadiums with retractable roofs, half of the 64 scheduled matches were postponed, ensuring a big backlog for Tuesday.

Wet conditions are unusual for the Australian Open, which is more used to extreme heat and was plagued by smog from bushfires during qualifying, when players suffered coughing fits and breathing problems.

Air quality was rated 'good' as the first round started on Monday but about four hours later play was suspended on outside courts when the heavens opened in Melbourne.

World number three Federer was briefly hauled off court while the roof was closed on Rod Laver Arena before returning to complete a routine 6-3, 6-2, 6-2 victory over American Steve Johnson.

Williams, on the hunt for a record-equaling 24th Grand Slam title, won the first set against Anastasia Potapova in just 19 minutes as she cruised to a 6-0, 6-3 win in less than an hour.

"I feel like I can still improve and get better throughout this tournament, for sure. This is a good stepping stone for right now," Williams said. (Source: AFP)

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GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

O son of Adam, remember that what you have secured in excess of your subsistence, you are storing for others and handing it over to them.

Imam Ali (AS)

Sure-Mehr seeks to implement Leader's guideline on translation movement

1 → "A Trip to the Prohibited Zone" and "Hand in Hand with Rain", both by Hedayatollah Behbudi, were also among the audiobooks.



Books on display in the Translation Movement exhibit at the Art Bureau in Tehran.

The organizers also plan to hold the exhibition in several other countries in the near future.
The exhibit will be running until January 23.

Big Sky festival picks three Iranian docs

A R T d e s k TEHRAN — Three Iranian documentaries "Asak", "Asho" and "Sunless Shadows" will be competing in the 17th Big Sky Documentary Film Festival, which will be held in the U.S. city of Missoula, Montana from February 14 to 23, the organizers have announced.



Scene from "Asho" by director Jafar Najafi.

A remarkable relationship with a group of adolescent girls that serve their sentence for the grave crime of murdering their father, their husband or another male family member in an Iranian juvenile detention center.

Directed by Mehdi Zamanpur, "Asak", which means a small hand-mill in the local language of southern Iran, is about the life of a blind 80-year-old man who lives in that area.

He earns money by making handicrafts and utensils from stone. He chooses stones he needs from the mountains by touching and tasting them.

"Asho" by director Jafar Najafi is about a shepherd boy who is obsessed with Hollywood movies and wants to become an actor.

In "Sunless Shadows", director Mehrdad Oskui builds

UK issues commemorative coin celebrating rock band Queen

LONDON (Reuters) — Britain's Royal Mint has issued its first commemorative coin featuring a British rock group, in a tribute to the late Freddie Mercury and the three other band members of Queen.

"This is a 'who would've thought it' moment. Here we have a coin of the realm, a five-pound coin in fact, made by The Royal Mint, in the customary fashion," said Queen lead guitarist Brian May in a video clip, holding a one ounce silver proof coin.

"On one side we have The Queen (Elizabeth), on the other side we have Queen. This never happened before," he said.

All British coins and banknotes bear the head of the monarch. The coin, released on Monday, features the band's logo and instruments played by the Queen members: the Bechstein grand piano played by Freddie Mercury for "Bohemian Rhapsody", May's "Red Special" guitar, Roger Taylor's Ludwig bass drum with an early-day Queen crest and John Deacon's Fender Precision Bass.

The coin's designer Chris Facey also paid tribute to "Bohemian Rhapsody", the band's most celebrated hit, with the keys of the piano on the coin pressed down for the opening notes of the song. The Royal Mint said in a press release.

Iraqi musician Jehad says Tehran concert will reflect his native culture

By Manijeh Rezapoor

TEHRAN — Iraqi oud virtuoso Moaana Jehad has said that his Tehran performance will give the Iranian audience a true reflection of Iraq's ancient and profound culture.

"The important point about my performance in Tehran is that the idea was derived from my memories of the years when I was studying at the Baghdad Music School," Jehad told the Tehran Times in an email interview on Monday.

Jehad is scheduled to give a performance named "The Memories of Baghdad" at Tehran's Rudaki Hall on January 26 at an invitation of the Iran Music Association. This is his first official and solo performance in Iran.

Jehad was born in Baghdad and studied oud at the music school and the Music Faculty at the Baghdad Art University.

"When I was a student, I gave numerous

performances along with some musical groups in France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Sweden, India, Jordan and Egypt, and I collaborated with some famous masters like Al Oud Zahabi, Munir Bashir and Amassi Alsharq," explained Jehad, who has released several albums, including "Halit Sehat", "Shanashil Baghdad" and "Tekno Oud".

Jehad has carried out research on Iranian classical and folk music for about two years and plans to continue his studies at Tehran's University of Art.

"I have good relations with many Iranian music masters and the younger generation of music students," he said and added that he plans to improve his connections with the Iranian music community.

He also said that he is eager to record an album with an Iranian publisher in the near future.

France and Aljazeera will host Jehad's two concerts in summer 2020.



Iraqi oud virtuoso Moaana Jehad in an undated photo.

Iranian institute releases audiobooks of Azerbaijani poems, folktales

CULTURE d e s k TEHRAN — Avaye Chirok, a major Iranian institute that produces audiobooks, has released three books of Azerbaijani poetry folktales recited by Bahman Vakhshur.

One of the audiobooks is "The Collection of Azerbaijani Poems of Shahriar" composed by Iranian poet Mohammad-Hossein Behjat, who wrote under the pseudonym Shahriar.

"Qachaq Nabi" ("Qaqaq Nebi") is

another one that recounts the bravery of Qachaq Nabi, an Azerbaijani national hero who led a peasant uprising against the tsar in Russia during the 19th century.

"Koroghlu" ("Koroglu") tells the story of Koroghlu, a semi-mystical hero and bard among the Turkic peoples who is believed to have lived in the 16th century.

The parts of woman characters in the audiobook "Koroghlu" have been narrated by Atefeh Afaqi.

Iranian Artists Forum to host exhibition of theater posters, photos



A poster for an exhibition of theater photos and posters named "A Certain Moment".

CULTURE d e s k TEHRAN — Collections of theater posters and photographs will be showcased in an exhibition, which will open at the Iranian Artists Forum on Friday.

Entitled "A Certain Moment", the exhibit will be organized by the 37th Fajr International Theater Festival.

Fifty-nine photos by 49 photographers

along with 60 posters by 35 graphic designers will be displayed at the exhibition, the organizers have announced.

The two collections represent plays or theatrical events performed in Iran over the past year.

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

Art exhibit raising funds for flood victims of Sistan-Baluchestan



A painting by Elaheh Mazaheri, which is on display at Mojdeh Gallery's online charity exhibition "We Are Not Alone".

A R T d e s k TEHRAN — Tehran's Mojdeh Gallery is organizing an online exhibition of visual arts to raise funds for the flood victims in Sistan-Baluchestan Province.

Over 100 artworks by 95 artists are on display on the gallery's Instagram page.

Entitled "We Are Not Alone", the exhibit

has so far raised 440 million rials (over \$10,000), the director of the gallery, Mojdeh Tabatabai, announced on Monday.

The online exhibit will be running until Friday.

An unprecedented heavy rainfall, which began on January 10, has led to flash flooding in the southern provinces, including Sistan-Baluchestan.

De Niro takes shot at Trump as he accepts SAG lifetime award

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — Robert De Niro, considered one of the finest motion picture performers of his generation, was saluted on Sunday with a lifetime achievement award from his acting peers, and used the occasion to take a veiled jab at U.S. President Donald Trump.

The two-time Academy Award winner and star of Oscar-nominated mob film "The Irishman" received the annual Screen Actors Guild (SAG) tribute celebrating a 50-year career in films ranging from dramas like "The Deer Hunter", "Raging Bull" and "The Godfather: Part II" to comedies such as "Meet the Parents" and "Silver Linings Playbook."

Stepping onto the stage to a rousing standing ovation and cheers at the Shrine Auditorium on Sunday evening, De Niro took another swipe at Trump, without mentioning him by name, as the president faces a Senate trial this week on impeachment charges of abuse of power and obstruction of Congress.

"There's right, and there's wrong and there's common sense, and there's abuse of power, and as a citizen I have as much right as anyone else ... to voice my opinion," the actor said. "And if I have a bigger voice because of my situation, I'm going to use it whenever I see a blatant abuse of power.

And that's all I'm going say about that tonight."

He then went on to thank his "comrades in arms" for bestowing the life achievement honor, presented by the SAG-AFTRA (American Federation of Television and Radio Actors) union.

A versatile actor with more than 100 films to his credit, De Niro, 76, also is co-founder of the Tribeca Film Festival in New York City, established to help revitalize lower Manhattan after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks that reduced the World Trade Center to ruins.

Although known for his often-taciturn demeanor in public appearances while strictly guarding his private life, De Niro has emerged as one of Trump's most vocal critics outside of political circles.

In 2018, he launched an expletive-laden attack on Trump on live television as a presenter on stage of the Tony Awards for Broadway theater. Trump responded on Twitter by calling De Niro "a very low-key individual."

A frequent collaborator with director Martin Scorsese, De Niro built his career with haunting portrayals of loners and tough guys - a deranged ex-convict in "Cape Fear," a disturbed vigilante in "Taxi Driver", a disillusioned Vietnam War veteran

in "Deer Hunter," a ruthless gangster in "Goodfellas."

A method actor and perfectionist who trained at the Stella Adler Conservatory and the American Workshop and with Lee Strasberg, De Niro earned a reputation for intense preparation.

He learned to speak a Sicilian dialect to play the young mobster Vito Corleone in "The Godfather: Part II", a role that earned him his first Oscar in 1975. And he famously gained 60 pounds (27 kilos) for his second Oscar-winning performance as boxing great Jake LaMotta in 1980's "Raging Bull".

He also found success playing his hard-bitten screen image for laughs, in such comedic roles as an insecure mob boss in "Analyze This" and a retired CIA operative in "Meet the Fockers."

Nevertheless, De Niro has been largely overlooked this awards season for his acting work as hitman Frank Sheeran in "The Irishman", failing to garner nominations as a performer in the Golden Globes, Oscars, or SAG contests. He did, however, share an Academy Award nomination in this year's best picture race as one of four named producers of "The Irishman".