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Trump also misled Americans about Iran's attack on U.S. airbase

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TPO to establish specialized export terminals for certain products

TEHRAN — Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) of Iran is tasked to establish specialized export terminals in certain provinces to facilitate the exports of some commodities, IRIB reported, quoting a senior official.

According to the Deputy Industry, Mining, and Trade Minister Hossein Modares Khiabani, dates, fishery products, fruit and vegetables, flowers and plants, barberry, saffron and jujube are among the

export commodities for which specialized export terminals are going to be launched to provide the necessary infrastructure for the development of non-oil exports.

"The Trade Promotion Organization is expected to pay particular attention to providing the necessary infrastructure for the expansion of the country's non-oil exports," Khiabani stressed in a meeting on exports quality control at the place of TPO in Tehran. **→4**

Iran's new ambassadors to 13 countries meet president

TEHRAN — President Hassan Rouhani met on Tuesday with new ambassadors of Iran to Belgium, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Belarus, Armenia, Serbia, South Africa, Nigeria, Kyrgyzstan, Sri Lanka, Mauritania and Croatia.

Rouhani wished the new ambassadors success in fulfilling their duties and asked them to introduce Iran's potential and capabilities to the investors and private and public sectors of their country of mission.

Following is the list of the names of the ambassadors published by the

presidential website:

Afsaneh Naderipour, ambassador to Denmark; Gholamhossein Dehghani, to Belgium; Ahmad Masoumifar, to Sweden; Alireza Yousefi, to Norway; Saeid Yari, to Belarus; Abbas Badakhshan Zohouri, to Armenia; Rashid Hassanpour Baei, to Serbia; Mahdi Agha Jafari, to South Africa; Mohammad Ali Bak, to Nigeria; Saeid Kharrazi, to Kyrgyzstan; Hashem Ashjam Zadeh, to Sri Lanka, Amirali Emam Jom'e Shahidi, to Mauritania and Parviz Esmaili, to Croatia.

Russia warns EU of devastating consequences if Iran referred to UN

By staff and agency

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov has said that referring Iran's case to the UN Security Council by Europe will have devastating consequences.

Russia cautions "hotheads in Europe" that may have the illusion that moving the whole issue to the UN Security

Council will help resolve the problem, Famagusta Gazette quoted him as saying on Tuesday.

Such a step may have devastating consequences, he said, adding that "currently there is a crucial moment and everyone should be careful and balanced in their actions." **→3**



EDITORIAL
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U.S. resorts to every ploy to stay in the region

Despite the passage of two weeks since the approval of a parliamentary resolution to expel U.S. troops from Iraq and its formal announcement to the U.S. ambassador by the prime minister, Washington has made every bid to prevent the issue as it knows that leaving Iraq is considered as an important step toward leaving the entire region.

With a closer look we will find out that the basis of U.S. presence in the Western and Southwestern Asia, especially Iraq, is rooted in the strategy of "the regional partition" and establishing a "new Middle East". The initial ideas of the strategy were formed during Bill Clinton's presidency and it was practically launched under George W. Bush.

The strategy has been applied in all the tactics and policies of U.S. foreign and defense policies in the past two decades, and there is no ambiguity or disagreement between Democrats and Republicans regarding the necessity of its implementation. Criticizing Donald Trump's recent behavior in the region by his Democratic rivals is related to the failure of the White House in carrying out the strategy.

The U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA, exerting pressure for a new deal or at least including new articles in the current deal, and insisting to limit the Iranian influence in the region can be assessed in this regard.

Washington has made great investment to exploit the terrorist potential of Takfiri groups for the implementation of the partition project in the region. Therefore, U.S. presence in the region, under the pretext of the fight against ISIS, is an issue of crucial importance for the White House, which it will not easily ignore.

On the other hand, Americans, who have undergone major defeats in the political, military and intelligence areas by the axis of resistance, failed to keep up with their plans, despite spending huge sums of money. This became an important matter in Iraq and officials provided the conditions for greater synergy with the axis of resistance, a move that infuriated the White House. **→10**

Ex-inspector tells UN how OPCW whitewashed findings on Douma chemical attack

A former inspector with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) — tasked with investigating a suspected "chemical attack" on Syria's Douma in 2018 — says the final report that the watchdog issued on the incident ran contrary to the findings of its own fact-finding mission. Ian Henderson, who was a member of the OPCW team on Douma, made the comments in a recorded address to the UN Security Council during a session on Monday about the alleged chemical attack that occurred in April 2018, at a time when the Syrian army was about to win a battle against the foreign-backed militants then holed up in Douma.

Western states were quick to blame the Syrian government for the attack, and one week later, the U.S., Britain and France launched a coordinated missile strike against sites and research facilities near Damascus and Homs.

In the report released in March last year, the OPCW claimed it concluded that a toxic chemical containing chlorine had been used in the attack. The team was not mandated to assign blame for who used the toxic chemical.

However, Syria and Russia both rejected the findings, saying they believed the incident had been staged by the White Helmets, a group which claims to be a humanitarian NGO but has long been accused of working with anti-Damascus terrorists and staging false-flag gas attacks.

A now former OPCW specialist, Henderson, told members of the UN Security Council that the OPCW omitted key findings of its own inspections team which would have cast serious doubt on whether a chemical attack took place at all.

"The findings in the final [Fact Finding Mission] report were contradictory, were a complete turnaround with what the team had understood

collectively during and after the Douma deployments," Henderson said.

The Security Council meeting was called upon by Russian Permanent Representative Vasily Nebenzya to discuss the report prepared by OPCW into the alleged chemical attack.

Henderson presented himself as a non-political professional who is concerned with the integrity of the organization he worked with for many years.

Henderson described himself as a "former OPCW inspection team leader who served for about 12 years." He said he had been invited by the Chinese minister counselor to the UN to attend the Security Council meeting, but had been denied a visa.

Along with his video statement, Henderson provided the council with a written statement. (Source: Press TV)

Baghdad to send delegates to Russia, China, Ukraine to buy latest air defense systems: Iraqi MP

An Iraqi lawmaker says the Baghdad government is planning to send delegations to Russia, China and Ukraine to discuss the procurement of modern air defense missile systems to protect its territory from any possible act of aggression.

"The delegations intend to visit countries like Russia, China and Ukraine to negotiate the purchase of modern systems to protect Iraq's airspace," Badr al-Ziyadi, a member of the Parliamentary Security And Defense Committee, told Arabic-language al-Sabaah newspaper.

He added, "The Iraqi parliament is right now forming a joint executive and legislative delegation to visit developed countries and sign contracts on procuring advanced weapons."

Ziyadi further noted that Iraqi lawmakers are looking into obtaining weapons in exchange for Iraqi oil shipments, similar to the "oil for reconstruction" agreement signed with China recently.

"Many nations have indicated [their] readiness to ship modern weapons to Iraq in exchange for oil. This is the best way to ensure the shipment of good weapons to Iraq without corruption and bribery," the lawmaker said.

Ziyadi went on to say that the delegations would also hold talks over completing the installation of modern thermal imaging devices at the border, which will help detect and prevent any terrorist infiltration.

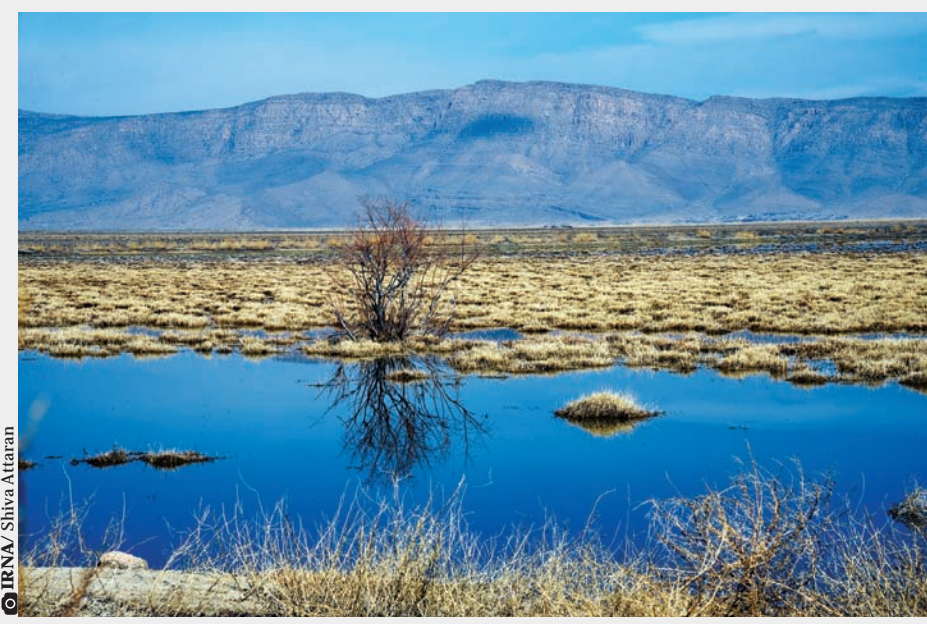
"The inadequate arming of border forces with modern weapons was the result of a mistake in relying

on an agreement with the United States which spent enormous sums of money and never fully finished [the project]," the legislator highlighted.

"This is why the Iraqis must count on themselves and turn to the eastern bloc to equip its army," Ziyadi concluded.

On January 16, Ali al-Ghanmi, a member of the Parliamentary Security and Defense Committee, dismissed U.S. threats to impose sanctions on Baghdad over its procurement of advanced Russian-made S-400 missile defense systems, saying such pressure is far away from realities on the ground.

"U.S. sanctions on Iraq need the approval of decision-making bodies in that country," Ali al-Ghanmi said in an interview with Arabic-language Baghdad Today news agency. **→10**



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Komjan wetland brought back to life

Komjan wetland with an estimated area of 4,000 hectares is located 120 kilometers northeast of Shiraz, southern Fars province.

The wetland has been recorded in the Ramsar Convention which was signed in 1971 for the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands. Komjan was said to be a habitat for one percent of migratory birds in the Middle East. But it was dried up in the 1980s due to irregular use of water for agriculture.

Recently, the wetland has been revived through utilizing efficient irrigation methods by local farmers. About 100 species of aquatic birds have so far been identified at the wetland.



ARTICLE
Fatemeh Salehi
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Berlin conference on Libya, a breakthrough or the rivals' saber-rattling

The Berlin conference was held on Sunday to find a solution to put an end to the crisis in Libya. The meeting, which was attended by representatives of 12 countries, ended without achieving any practical breakthrough out of the crisis.

The conference had gathered the governments of Algeria, China, Egypt, France, Germany, Italy, Russia, Turkey, the Republic of Congo, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom and the United States of America and High Representatives of the United Nations, the African Union, the European Union, and the Arab League in Berlin.

This report is trying to clarify some aspects of the failure of conference.

The conference's motto-like final statement, in which ceasefire, peace, foreign interference, oil, gas, etc. has been stipulated, shows ultimately that no any new solution has thus far been found by the participants which means it ended without any result.

Based on the final statement, the participants in the conference agreed not to meddle in any armed clash as well as the Libyan internal affairs, but indeed the war-hit country is still witnessing alien forces' presence which are after guaranteeing their own interests.

The statement says that each and every of the trans-regional power, involved in the Libyan crisis, including Turkey, Russia and the axis of Western countries, are determined to only materialize their own objectives in Libya.

It is worth to say that objectives of the above-mentioned foreign meddlers are in contrast with each other, and none of the meddlers try to appease the other one.

Turkey that had concentrated its foreign policy on the eastern Mediterranean region as well as Libya in the recent months, has recently inked a sea border agreement with the Libyan Government of National Accord. The move has caused Ankara's rivals to resume approval processing of an eastern Mediterranean border agreement in order not to miss their interests in the region. **→10**

Iran's Hormuz peace initiative a dialogue-based catalyst for durable security: MP

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — An Iranian lawmaker said on Tuesday that the Hormuz Peace Endeavor (HOPE) proposed by President Hassan Rouhani is capable of leading the region towards durable peace and security based on dialogue.



Ali Sari made the remarks during a speech at a conference in the Qatari University of Doha with the subject of moving towards new security system in the Persian Gulf.

"The Hormuz peace plan, offered by Iran, is an initiative in line with restoration of peace and security based on dialogue," Sari told the conference.

"We will bring development and progress to the regional nations via dialogue and cooperation. The regional countries will enjoy stronger and friendlier ties by relying on the Hormuz Peace Endeavor," Sari added.

He further pointed to the Zionist regime of Israel's negative role in the region and said, "Israel is pursuing a policy based on which Tel Aviv tries to portray Iran as a threat to the Middle East and the Persian Gulf. This policy is in line with arms trade."

"Israel is providing billions of dollars for arms manufacturing companies via destabilizing the region and creating tensions," he added.

Addressing the UN General Assembly late in September 2019, President Rouhani unveiled Iran's new initiative for the establishment of peace and security in the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz.

"The goal of the Coalition for Hope is to promote peace, stability, progress and welfare for all the residents of the Strait of Hormuz region, and to enhance mutual understanding and peaceful and friendly relations amongst them," Rouhani told the delegates at the UN.

"This initiative includes various venues for cooperation, such as the collective supply of energy security, freedom of navigation and free transfer of oil and other resources to and from the Strait of Hormuz and beyond," he added.

"The Coalition for Hope is based on important principles such as compliance with the goals and principles of the United Nations, mutual respect, equal footing, dialog and understanding, respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty, inviolability of international borders, the peaceful settlement of all disputes, and more importantly, the two fundamental principles of non-aggression and non-interference in the domestic affairs of each other. The presence of the United Nations is necessary for the creation of an international umbrella in support of the Coalition for Hope," Rouhani underlined.

Iran civil aviation body issues 2nd report on Ukraine jetliner tragedy

(Press TV) — Iran's civil aviation agency has released its second preliminary investigative report on the accidental shooting down of a Ukrainian passenger plane near Tehran earlier this month.

The report, published by the Civil Aviation Organization of Islamic Republic of Iran (CAO.IRI) on Monday, includes detailed technical information about the Ukraine International Airlines flight PS752.



According to the report, the Kiev-bound Boeing 737-800 took off from runway 29R at Imam Khomeini International Airport at 06:12 a.m. local time on January 8 and was then delivered to approach unit at Mehrabad Airport in the capital.

From 06:18 a.m. onward, the radar controller repeatedly tried to contact the pilot as the flight information was lost, but he received no answer, it added.

The radar data showed the plane was flying at an altitude of 8,100 feet, but the aircraft identification and altitude information later disappeared from the radar screen, and no radio messages were received from the pilot regarding unusual circumstances.

After samples were examined at the crash site, the possibility of laser and electromagnetic (radioactive) rays having hit the aircraft was excluded.

Samples were also tested at laboratories to look for traces of explosives both inside and outside the aircraft.

According to the report, preliminary examinations suggest the need for the plane wreck to be subjected to thorough investigation for possible traces of explosives.

The report further noted that the flight data recorder and the cockpit voice recorder — commonly known as black boxes — feature cutting-edge technology and Iran lacks the technical facilities to decode them.

"If devices are provided, the information (on the black boxes) can be restored and retrieved in a short period of time," it added.

Iran's civil aviation agency has requested French and U.S. accident investigation agencies, the BEA and NTSB, respectively, to provide a list of the equipment required to decode the black boxes and to examine the possibility of transferring them to Iran.

However, it pointed out, neither organization has "so far responded positively" to the request, adding Iran is considering the purchase of those equipment.

The report emphasized that Ukraine's team of investigators, under the supervision of an Iranian team, were inspecting the plane wreck to assess the impact of any foreign object debris, or FOD.

Iranian, Omani foreign ministers hold talks in Tehran

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and his Omani counterpart Yusef bin Alawi, held talks over key regional and international issues in Tehran on Tuesday. Bin Alawi visited Tehran on Tuesday and was welcomed by Zarif in the Martyr Soleimani Center at the Foreign Ministry's Institute for Political and International Studies.

In reaction to bin Alawi's trip to Iran, Abbas Mousavi, the Foreign Ministry spokesman, wrote on his Twitter account, "Mr. Yusef bin Alawi arrived in Iran minutes ago in line with continuous consultations between the two countries' officials."

It was bin Alawi's trip to Tehran in 2020. He made three visits to Iran in 2019, the last of which was in December.

Bin Alawi's trip to Tehran comes as the tension between Iran and the United States has reached a dangerous level.

The conflict between Iran and the U.S. entered such a stage as the U.S. military, upon a direct order by Donald Trump, assassinated top Iranian military commander



Qassem Soleimani near Baghdad's international airport on January 3.

Five days after the assassination, which Zarif called "U.S. adventurism", Iran retaliated by firing dozens of ballistic at a major U.S. military airbase in western Iraq.

During Barack Obama's presidency, Oman acted as an intermediary between Iran and the United States.

Analysts say Oman is still trying to deescalate tension between Tehran and Washington.

Tension between Iran and the U.S. started unfolding after Trump unilaterally and illegally withdrew the U.S. from the 2015 nuclear deal and put the harshest ever sanctions in history against Iran under his "maximum pressure" strategy against Tehran.

Analysts have called Oman the Switzerland of the Middle East. The country has also been mediating Yemen and Saudi Arabia which have been at war since March 2015.

In their December meeting, Zarif and bin Alawi conferred on key international and regional issues, particularly the Tehran-initiated Hormuz Peace Endeavor (HOPE).

‘Iran gave strong warning to British ambassador’

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said on Monday that Iran had given a strong warning to British Ambassador Rob Macaire, who was arrested briefly by police for attending an unauthorized demonstration in central Tehran on January 11.

"Following the British ambassador's presence in an illegal gathering, he received a serious warning to avoid repeating such behavior," IRNA quoted Araqchi as saying.

"We summoned the ambassador. We reprimanded him severely and after that the Foreign Ministry issued a statement in last line of which we warned of tougher action than summoning in case such behavior is repeated," he said.

He added, "I think this is a very clear message about this unconventional action of the British side."

On January 12, Iran's Foreign Ministry summoned Macaire for his "unconventional behavior and presence" in the illegal gathering.

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



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

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

Araghchi said in a tweet on January 12 that Macaire had been temporarily arrested for participating in an "illegal gathering" in Tehran.

Rouhani: Trump just implementing Israeli policies

Iranian president calls U.S. illegal sanctions crime against humanity

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — President Hassan Rouhani said on Tuesday that the United States' "illegal sanctions" against Iran and its plots against Venezuela are "crime against humanity". Rouhani made the remarks during a meeting with Venezuelan Foreign Minister Jorge Arreaza in Tehran.

"Undoubtedly, the independent nations will resist pressure and plots and will definitely gain victory at the end of this path

and will make the United States regret," Rouhani predicted.

Rouhani noted, "The current administration of the United States takes actions against independent governments and people and also harms itself."

He added that the Trump administration is just implementing policies of the Zionist regime of Israel.

Rouhani also said Iran will stand beside Venezuela in countering the U.S. pressure.



Elsewhere, Rouhani called for expansion of relations and cooperation in various areas.

"In this line, we are ready to hold joint commission of cooperation in near future," he added.

Arreaza, for his part, called for expansion of cooperation.

He also said that the independent countries will definitely resist pressure, counter plots and defend their interests.

Trump quits nuclear deal because it had Obama's name on it: U.S. senator

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — U.S. Senator Chris Murphy said on Monday that U.S. President Donald Trump quit the 2015 nuclear deal, known as the JCPOA, just because it had President Barack Obama's name on it.

"The Iran deal was working, but Trump ripped it all up just because it had Obama's name on it," he said in a tweet.

He also said in his tweet that Trump's blind escalation put U.S. on the brink of war and has led Iran to restart their nuclear program, adding, "And all for nothing."

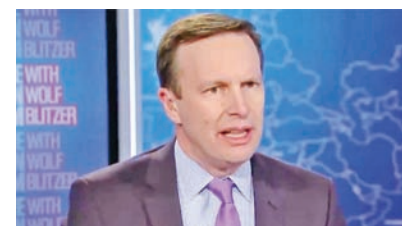
Iran suspended all limits on its nuclear program on January 5.

Trump withdrew the U.S. from the nuclear deal in May 2018 and imposed the toughest ever sanctions on Iran.

Ben Rhodes, former Obama's adviser, said in July 2019 that Trump quit the JCPOA, because Obama negotiated it.

"Did anyone really need a leaked document from the UK Ambassador to know that Trump pulled out of the Iran Deal because Obama negotiated it?" Rhodes tweeted.

Kim Darroch, the former British am-



bassador to the U.S., has said Trump seemed to be discarding the Iran nuclear deal for "personality reasons," as the deal had been agreed to by Obama, the Daily Mail reported in July 2019.

Darroch said the Trump administration was "set upon an act of diplomatic vandalism" in its decision to abandon the JCPOA.

Former British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw told IRNA in an interview in October 2019 Trump quit the nuclear deal because Obama signed it.

He said that the U.S. must admit that it made a wrong decision to quit the nuclear deal, urging the White House to return to the pact.

Straw said that the United States' withdrawal from the JCPOA had "no logic".

Venezuelan FM calls U.S. assassination of Gen. Soleimani 'treacherous'

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Venezuelan Foreign Minister Jorge Arreaza said on Tuesday that the United States' assassination of Iranian Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani was "treacherous" act.

"The United States took a treacherous action by assassinating General Qassem Soleimani, because he fought terrorism," he said in a press conference.

He praised the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps and other branches of the Iranian military for stabilizing the region.

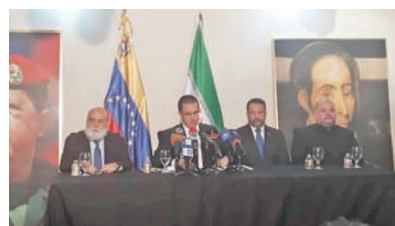
Pointing to Iran's missile attack on a major U.S. military base in Iraq in retaliation on January 8, Arreaza said Iran has to defend itself and its sovereignty, adding that Iran's action prevented a "more serious tension" in the region.

If Iran had not taken a retaliatory measure the U.S. would have taken more actions against Iran, he predicted.

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

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... The United States' corruptive presence in the region must come to an end. They have brought war, sedition, destruction, and also the 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.

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

Remains of 167 war time martyrs back home

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Remains of 167 Iranians martyred in Iraq's war against Iran in 1980s- been brought back to the country through the southwestern borders, a military official announced on Tuesday.

Brigadier General Mohammad Baqerzadeh, the head of committee in charge of searching for those missing in action, said, "On the threshold of martyrdom anniversary of Fatemeh Zahra (the daughter of Prophet Muhammed), January 29, the remains of 167 martyrs of the sacred defense have been brought back to the country."

According to Mohammad Baqerzadeh, a funeral procession was to be held for the martyrs on Tuesday in the port city of Khoramshahr.



"The bodies of these martyrs have been unearthed by the committee in the southern Iraqi provinces of Basra and Maysan," the commander stated.

Baqerzadeh added that they had been martyred in military operations of Moharam, Valfajr Moqadamati, the First Valfajr, Kheibar, the Fourth and the Fifth Karbala, the Seventh Beit- ul- Moqadas as well as attacks by the army of the toppled Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein.

Iraq under Saddam Hussein launched war against Iran on September 22, 1980, and captured swathes of Iran's territory in southwestern and western Iran.

By misusing the situation that had followed the 1979 revolution, Saddam planned to annex the oil-rich Khuzestan province. The war lasted until the summer of 1988.

E3 made 'strategic mistake' on Iran nuclear pact: MP

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Spokesman **d e s k** of the Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee has slammed the three European countries' decision to trigger the dispute mechanism under the Iran nuclear deal, saying the move was a "strategic mistake".

Hossein Naqavi Hosseini said the decision by France, Britain, and Germany has been taken under the pressure of the Americans and will definitely damage the European countries' prestige in the world, Tasnim reported on Tuesday.

Triggering the dispute mechanism does not have much effect on the process of Iran's reduction of its obligations under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), said Naqavi Hosseini.

The MP also said the European countries have begun "to take an adventurous course regarding the JCPOA and Iran's nuclear activities, which would not be good for them in the end."

France, Germany and the United Kingdom issued a joint statement on January 14, announcing they have formally triggered the dispute mechanism that may lead to the snapback of UN sanctions against Iran. Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad



Zarif said later that day that the European Union trio, known as E3, was making a "strategic mistake" by triggering the dispute mechanism.

"Europeans' action in using the dispute

mechanism is baseless from legal point of view and strategic mistake from political point of view," he said during a meeting with Niels Annen, a German foreign office minister, in New Delhi.

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

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

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.

Ukrainian president: Iran has fulfilled most plane crash commitments

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky has said Iran has complied with most arrangements in the matter of clarifying the circumstances of the Ukrainian plane crash.

"Everything we talked about with the president of Iran was mainly done," Ukrainian President said on Monday, according to Mehr.

He was pointing to the access for 45 Ukrainian specialists to work in Tehran, a prompt identification of the bodies of Ukrainian citizens and their return.

He made the remarks during a meeting in Kiev with Mohammad Eslami, the special representative of the Iranian president.

Heading a delegation, Eslami traveled to Kyiv on Monday to discuss the details of the Ukraine International Airlines plane crash that occurred on January 8 in Tehran.

Zelensky stressed the need for a further effective investigation into the crash.

The two sides also discussed the issue of the transfer of the Ukrainian aircraft's flight data recorders to Ukraine for the purpose of their decryption.

Zelensky said Ukraine had the necessary technical means



and experienced specialists to perform this work properly.

The parties agreed that all remnants of the aircraft preserved after the accident should be returned to Ukraine.

They also raised the issue of compensation to the relatives of those killed in the plane crash and the creation of a joint investigation team.

The parties expressed their condolences over the deaths of the citizens of Ukraine and Iran.

The Ukrainian passenger plane, with 176 people aboard, was mistakenly downed on January 8 near Tehran by the 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 Iranian military announced on January 11 morning that the plane had been mistaken for a cruise missile.

On Friday, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said, "The plane crash was a bitter incident."

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

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

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

Russia warns Europe of devastating consequences if it refers Iran to UN Security Council

1 → Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif warned on Monday that Iran will consider the option 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.

"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.

On May 8, 2019, exactly one year after the U.S. illegal move, the Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) announced that Tehran's "strategic patience" is over and ordered the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) to start reducing commitments to JCPOA at bi-monthly intervals.

Since that date, Iran has been insisting that if the European side takes concrete measures to shield Iran's economy from sanctions Tehran will reverse its decisions.

Iran has said its decision is based 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."

Seeing no action on the part of Europeans, early this month Iran took the last and final step of ending its JCPOA commitments. However, Iran insisted the Europeans still have the chance to save the JCPOA.

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.

Defense minister: Reinvigorating deterrence power is a religious must

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — The defense minister announced **d e s k** on Tuesday that enhancing deterrence power is a religious necessity for the Iranian Armed Forces.

Brigadier General Amir Hatami made the remarks in a ceremony introducing Second Brigadier General Afshin Khajefard as the new director of the Defense Ministry's Aviation Industries Organization.



Touching upon the statements of the Leader in the Friday Prayers sermons, Hatami said Ayatollah Khamenei as the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces underscored the strategy of "being strong and trying to be stronger" as a key to overcome problems.

"Iran has proved that, based on its own might and power, it will respond to any threat at any level," the minister said, adding that his forces consider the Leader's strategy as a religious obligation.

Last October, Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Hossein Baqeri said that Iran had developed such a high level of deterrence that all threats and plots against it would be vigorously responded.

Addressing a national gathering of commanders and staff officials of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), Major General Baqeri said the Islamic Republic utilizes sustainable and strong deterrence power to ward off plots by enemies who think about any form of aggression against the country.

Russia: U.S. 'myth-making' about Iran's enrichment right

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Russia has said the United **d e s k** States is misleading the international community on Iran's right to enrich uranium, emphasizing that such "myth-making" has long been part of the U.S. approach toward nuclear non-proliferation.

"We consider it necessary to respond to the U.S. special representative for Iran Hook about the existence of some kind of 'UN standard' prohibiting the Islamic Republic of Iran from enriching uranium," the Russian Foreign Ministry said in a statement on Monday.

"Unfortunately, such myth-making has long been part of the U.S. approach toward nuclear non-proliferation ... In this case, we have, essentially, an accusation against the UN Security Council of making decisions contradicting the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)," the ministry added.

It came after U.S. Special Representative for Iran Brian Hook told journalists on Friday about an alleged UN resolution passed in 2006 or 2007 prohibiting Tehran from uranium enrichment.

Iran and the five permanent UN Security Council members — the United States, Russia, China, France, and the UK — as well as Germany and the European Union struck a nuclear agreement, called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), back in 2015.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Monday that if the three European countries continue their "unjustifiable conduct" and move to send Iran's nuclear case to the United Nations Security Council, Tehran would have the option of leaving the NPT.

Zarif explained that Iran was the party to initially trigger the dispute mechanism in 2018 by sending three letters to the European Union to notify them of Tehran's dissatisfaction with Europe's non-commitment to the agreement. The Islamic Republic, he added, was then forced to resort to countermeasures as the Europeans remained in violation of the accord.

In its Monday statement, the Russian Foreign Ministry also said the NPT allows the signatories to develop nuclear energy for non-military purposes.

It said the NPT does not impose any restrictions on non-nuclear states in terms of uranium enrichment as long as they are under the IAEA control and pursue peaceful purposes.

"The NPT puts no limitations on the non-nuclear countries regarding uranium enrichment or developing other stages of the nuclear fuel cycle. There is only one condition: that all work must be directed toward peaceful ends and be under IAEA supervision," the ministry added.

Borrell says Iran nuclear deal mediation timeline still not clear



When it comes to preserving the Iran nuclear deal, the EU seems purposely lost in time, or to have lost track of time, or perhaps to have lost the ability to tell time at all.

The European architects of the nuclear deal — Britain, France and Germany — announced nearly a week ago, on January 14, that they had triggered the dispute-resolution mechanism provision in the accord, in response to Iran stepping back from its commitments.

But the EU's foreign policy chief, Josep Borrell, who is the manager of the dispute process, said Monday that he was still not

sure if it had started — a bizarre assertion considering that he is supposed to be the one who decides.

"The only thing I can say is that we are continuing in touch with all participants," Borrell said at a news conference in Brussels. "We are discussing the way forward. It's not clear on the wording of the agreement, how to manage the date, when the delay starts, and in any case — no, no it's not clear — and in any case it's part of the Annex 2 and this is supposed to be a part in which we have to work confidentially."

The Europeans have made little secret that their main goal at this point is to keep the clock ticking, and what better way to do that than to say you are still trying to find the clock, and figure out if it's actually working.

Iran has taken a series of steps to reduce its compliance in response to the unilateral

withdrawal from the nuclear deal by U.S. President Donald Trump in March 2018. And though the Europeans took steps aimed at preserving the deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), they have been unable to maintain the economic benefits that Iran was supposed to enjoy in exchange for curtailing its nuclear program.

The dispute-resolution mechanism is a process that entails at least two 15-day mediation periods, with the possibility of nearly indefinite extensions provided there is unanimous agreement among Iran and the remaining guarantors of the deal, including the Europeans plus China and Russia.

But pressed at the news conference on Monday about whether the first 15-day period had even begun, Borrell said he could not say.

As Borrell insisted that he was still in communication with the various players,

Europeans triggered mediation process with 15-day deadline, but Borrell says it's not clear if the clock has started.

(Source: Politico)

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	406008.9
IFX	5258.43

Sources: tse.ir, ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	46,606 rials
GBP	54,652 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$64.22/b
WTI	\$57.86/b
OPEC Basket	\$65.58/b
Gold	\$1,556.45/oz
Silver	\$18.01/oz
Platinum	\$1,012.20./oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

TEDPIX drops 3,798 points on Tuesday

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), fell 3,798 points to 406,008 on Tuesday, IRNA reported. As reported, 6.743 billion securities worth 41.444 trillion rials (about \$986.7 million) were traded at this market. The first market's index dropped 3,639 points and the second market's index fell 3,794 points.



IFX, the main index of Iran's over-the-counter (OTC) market known as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB), also slid on Tuesday, the same report confirmed. The index fell 42 points to 5,258 as 1.665 securities valued at 14.689 trillion rials (about \$349.7 million) were traded at IFB.

Intl. glass exhibition to open on Thursday

ECONOMY **TEHRAN**— Iran's 3rd International Exhibition of Glass, Equipment and Related Machinery will kick off at Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds on Thursday.

Edris Mazandarani, the chairman of the exhibition's organizing headquarters, said this year's event will be participated by 60 Iranian companies in addition to some exhibitors form Turkey and China, Public Relations Department of Iran's International Exhibitions Company reported.

Mentioning the four-percent share of glass industry in domestic economy, Mazandarani said this exhibition is a valuable opportunity to boost this share.

Saying that Iran exports its glass to 35 countries, the official also stated that this exhibit can promote the export of this product. He said the 3rd International Exhibition of Glass, Equipment and Related Machinery lays the ground for the Iranian exhibitors to present their products, services and achievements while benefiting from B2B meetings with the foreign companies to create some fruitful partnerships.

TPO to establish specialized export terminals for certain products

1 → “We believe that if such specialized export terminals are created, many of the problems pertaining to the exports of certain commodities will be resolved,” he said.

He further pointed to his ministry's programs for development of exports by guilds, adding that TPO is also focusing on supporting the exports of products provided by the country's guilds including clothing, bags and shoes, leather and furniture.

The official also emphasized the significant role of the non-oil exports in the country's economy considering the U.S. sanctions on the oil industry.

“In the current situation, given the restrictions imposed on Iran's oil sales, the country is running mostly by the non-oil export revenues. In the face of the sanctions, our non-oil exporters have managed to export \$32 billion worth of commodities [during March-December, 2019 period] which is very significant,” Khiabani said.

Increasing non-oil exports to the neighboring countries is one of the major plans that Iranian government is pursuing in the current Iranian calendar year (began on March 21, 2019).

Back in August 2019, Khiabani said the industry ministry has it on the agenda to increase the value of non-oil exports to Iran's 15 neighbors up to \$50 billion.

Iran shares border with fifteen countries, namely the United Arab Emirates, Iraq, Turkey, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Russia, Oman, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Kuwait, Qatar, Kazakhstan, Armenia, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia.

Based on the data published by TPO, the value of trade with the neighboring countries stood at over \$36.5 billion in the past Iranian calendar year.

Tavaniran match-making system to strengthen domestic production

By Mahnaz Abdi

TEHRAN — During a press conference on Tuesday, Domestic Production Center of Iran's Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade unveiled “Tavaniran system”, which is aimed at invigorate and strengthen domestic production through strong match-making between producers of Iranian products and the consumers inside the country.

Addressing the conference, Mohammad-Mehdi Hadavi, the head of the center, elaborated on the performance and objectives of the system and said promotion of domestic production through benefiting from Iranian producers' potentials and capabilities is the major goal of this system.

Referring to the law on the most use of domestic production capacity and supporting Iranian products, which was approved by the Iranian parliament (Majlis) on May 5, 2019, the official said the center is launching Tavaniran as an approach to materialize the targets set by this law.

Hadavi further explained, “The mentioned law is to support the production projects. These projects are mainly implemented by state-run organizations, semi-governmental bodies, and private organizations and companies, while the banks, universities and most of other institutes and centers are also involved; therefore, it could be said that this law is addressing almost all organizations, companies, centers and institutes.”

Mentioning Tavaniran, the official said, “Through this system we are pursuing three major policies. The first one is to introduce our domestic capabilities. The second one is to inform the importers of foreign equipment and products about existence of similar do-



mestic goods. And the third one is making a strong relation between the producers and buyers and preserve it.”

Elsewhere in his remarks, the head of Domestic Production Center explained the process of setting up factories and plants in line with the law on the most use of domestic production capacity and supporting Iranian products.

He said, “The process includes four major stages. The first one is designing, which was many times conducted by the foreign companies. So, for the similar projects we needed foreign technology. But the mentioned law obliges the producer to design its plant relying on domestic knowledge and technology.”

The second stage is installation of equip-

ment and machinery, which should be domestically manufactured as well, Hadavi said, adding the third stage is launching the plant, and the fourth one is guaranteeing the products. All these stages should be completely done relying on domestic capabilities.

The official further mentioned the domestic productions desks set up in the ministry and said about €1.2 billion have been saved through measures taken through the nine desks operating in this regard, while the amount of saving will rise through eight more desks which are planned to be established.

Hadavi went on to say that import of foreign products has two main reasons. One is that the importers do not know about the domestic products. So, Tavaniran aims to lay

a proper ground to make them acquainted with the Iranian products and equipment.

“The second reason is quality of domestic products that in some cases is lower than the quality of foreign products. In this case, it is our duty in the Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade to cooperate with the country's universities and also the President's Office for Scientific and Technology Affairs to elevate quality and standard of Iranian products”, the official added.

Promotion of domestic production has been one of the major strategies that Iran has been following since the U.S. re-imposition of sanctions on its economy.

In order to increase the country's independence, the Iranian government has put supporting domestic producers atop agenda in the current year which is named the year of “Pickup in Production” by Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei.

Realization of this motto toward Iran's self-reliance is in fact the only way to tackle the U.S. cruel sanctions and all governmental bodies have defined programs to boost and flourish domestic production and are seriously pursuing them.

Providing the required working capital for the production units and offering them facilities is one of the major measures being pursued by the government to support such units.

And in this due, the Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade has defined seven major plans to materialize this significant objective, among them the most important one which is development of domestic production has specified programs for boosting production of products in different sectors.

‘CBI taking necessary measures to support private sector, cooperatives’

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — The governor of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) said on Monday that his bank is focusing all its efforts to remove the currency-related barriers in the way of the country's private sector and cooperatives' trade activities, IRIB reported.

“The private sector and cooperatives are the driving force behind the country's economic growth, and the central bank is working to eliminate all the currency-related barriers in their way as far as possible,” Abdolnasser Hemmati said in a periodic meeting session of the heads of the country's chambers of commerce, cooperatives and guilds.

“Given the heavy and unprecedented sanctions against the country, our economy is in a difficult condition, and the central bank is forced to adopt policies which are in line with the interest of the country as a whole,” Hemmati said.

He underlined the important role of the private sector and cooperatives in supporting the country's economy in the sanctions era, saying “It would not have been possible to withstand the sanctions without the support of them [the private sector and cooperatives] and the central bank alone would not be able to handle the difficult situation.”



He further mentioned the Open Market Operation (OMO) which was officially launched in the country last week, noting that “this operation is a new monetary policy which has been implemented in the country after decades of speculation, and we cannot expect it to work overnight.” CBI officially launched an OMO system on January 17, as part of its monetary policy to curb inflation, control interest rates in the interbank market and manage liquidity, IRIB reported.

According to Hemmati, the main purpose of the open market operations is to control liquidity and inflation in the market.

“Typically, central banks conduct open market operations or buy and sell securities to achieve their macroeconomic goals, namely inflation control and economic growth stability”, Hemmati said.

Non-oil exports rise 20% in weight



ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iran's non-oil exports during the first 10 months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2019-January 20, 2020) has experienced a 20-percent rise in terms of weight while contracting three percent in terms of value, according to the country's finance and economic affairs minister.

“Despite the pressures and restrictions imposed by the United States [on the country's economy], Iran's non-oil export has changed only three percent in the past ten months compared to the same period last year,” Farhad Dejpasand told the press on Tuesday after a meeting of the parliament's Economic Committee.

The official noted that the decrease in the value of the non-oil export has been mostly due to a 30-percent decrease which the government has applied on the value of the exported items, since the reported prices were believed

to be more than the real value of the goods. “The three-percent fall in terms of value is because exporters believed that the value assigned to the exported goods was more than their real value considering their base prices,” Dejpasand said.

Asked about deposition of commodities in the country's customs, the minister said: “The goods and materials which haven't been declared to the customs are not considered deposited so we have minimal deposition of raw materials, and basic goods in the country's customs at the moment.”

Iran's non-oil trade with other countries registered a \$100-million positive balance in the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21 – December 21, 2019).

The country's non-oil exports reached \$31.9 billion in the first nine months of the current year, while the imports stood at \$31.8 billion.

Conference on prospect of steel, mining industries underway in Tehran

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — A two-day national conference on the future prospects of Iran's steel and mining industries is being held at the IRIB International Conference Center in Tehran.

As reported by IRIB, during this conference which is attended by senior officials including the Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Reza Rahmani, several key issues in the mentioned industries are being explored and discussed.

The national master plan for steel industry, boosting exports in the face of international and domestic challenges, utilizing domestic capacities, barter trading, reviving small-scale mines, indigenization of equipment and machinery and supporting domestic production in the mentioned industries, promoting innovation and new technologies, as well as the effective communication between industry and academic bodies like universities are among the topics which are being covered in the said conference.

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

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



independence.

To this end, the Iranian government has put supporting domestic producers atop agenda in the current year.

In this regard, the industry ministry has been pursuing a movement for promotion of domestic production and defined a plan to reduce the imports in various sectors by \$10 billion through domestic production of some products by [Iranian calendar] year 1400 (March 2021-March 2022).

While the U.S. unilateral sanctions on Iran in recent years have upset the Iranian industry in some sectors, the statistics indicate that the minerals sector has not been affected by the sanctions, while it's been also improved.

The improvement is more noticeable in the steel sector, as according to the World Steel Association (WSA), Iran became the world's tenth largest steel producer in 2018.

Iran exports \$1.4b of plastic products in a year



ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iranian manufacturers exported 590,000 tons of plastic products worth over \$1.4 billion, mostly to the neighboring countries, during the past Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2018-March 20, 2019), IRNA reported on Tuesday, quoting an industry official.

Speaking in a national conference on innovation in the plastic industry, the Deputy Industry, Mining and Trade Minister for Industry Affairs Mehdi Sadeqi Niaraki stressed the need for increasing investment in the plastic industry and promoting the use of innovative ways and modern technologies for producing new products with higher quality.

He also emphasized the need for completing the petrochemical products value chain adding that the petrochemical industry has strong links with other industries

such as rubber and plastic, pharmaceuticals and textiles, furniture, automotive, cosmetics, clothing, food and beverage, packaging, as well as construction and energy sectors.

“Completing the value chain of petrochemical products and preventing crude selling can lead to greater added value in other sectors like plastic and rubber products,” he said.

According to the official, currently more than \$50 million tons of petrochemical products are produced annually inside the country, a big chunk of which (about \$12 billion) is being exported in the form of basic raw products.

“If these raw materials are converted into products with higher value added in the downstream sector, the value of exports from the country's petrochemical industry would be multiplied,” Niaraki stressed.

Kish Island hosting intl. energy exhibition

ENERGY DESK TEHRAN — Iran's southern Kish Island is hosting the 16th edition of its international energy exhibition (Kish ENEX 2020) which is hosting over 140 foreign and domestic companies, IRNA reported.

Exhibitors from various countries including China, Italy, Japan, Britain, the Netherlands, the United Arab Emirates, Russia and South Korea along with Iranian companies, associations and institutions active in a variety of energy areas, are participating in this four-day exhibition which kicked off on Tuesday.

As reported, this international

exhibition is sponsored by the Oil and Energy Ministries as well as the Kish Free Zone Organization, National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC), National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC), National Iranian Oil Refining and Distribution Company (NIORDC), National Petrochemical Company (NPC), the Association of Oil Industry Equipment Manufacturers, Iranian Industrial Equipment Manufacturers Association, Electrical Industry Syndicate and Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA).

According to the organizers, the



exhibition is aimed to introduce the country's capacities and capabilities in various energy-related sectors and provide a platform for domestic producers to get acquainted with the needs of the country's energy sectors including oil, gas, electricity and petrochemical industries.

Following the re-imposition of U.S.

sanctions and the problems caused by high volatility and rising exchange rates in the country's currency market, Iran has been faced with some problems regarding the supply of necessary equipment in various industrial sectors, so the government has been applying new strategies to focus more on domestic production.

OPEC, IEA or EIA completely wrong in 2020 oil market analysis

By Julian Lee

Somebody big has got their analysis of the 2020 oil market flat wrong.

That's the bottom line from a comparison of supply-and-demand forecasts provided by OPEC, the International Energy Agency (IEA) in Paris, and the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA). The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) agreed in December to deepen output curbs until the end of March.

OPEC's own research team sees that pact continuing to drain global stockpiles throughout 2020. By contrast, the IEA and EIA see inventory levels rising -- even if the deal gets implemented in full. And even if were to be extended for the entirety of 2020.

The OPEC+ group agreed in December to lower their combined output target by a further 500,000 barrels a day, plus a voluntary additional reduction of 400,000 barrels a day from Saudi Arabia, which depends on everybody else meeting their targets.

OPEC's latest forecast shows global oil inventories falling at an average rate of almost 100,000 barrels a day over the course of this year assuming the December deal is implemented as agreed and runs through March. That rate of draining could hit 300,000 a day if the measure were to last throughout 2020. Even if the group fails to implement the deal in full, with output remaining at its December level, OPEC's numbers show there would still be a small decline in global inventories this year.

The IEA and the EIA both have very different, and less-bullish, outlooks. Both see stockpiles continuing to build, even if the agreed output cuts were to be implemented fully and extended for the whole year.

■ The OPEC+ output cuts

The same differences are apparent in the views of the three agencies on the effectiveness of the OPEC+ output cuts since they were introduced at the start of 2017.

OPEC's supply-demand balances show that global oil stockpiles have fallen by 653 million barrels since the output cuts were introduced at the start of 2017, with draws in both 2017 and 2019 offsetting a small build in 2018.

Once again, though, data from the IEA and the EIA both imply that the output restrictions have done no more than limit the size of global stock builds since the start of 2017.

After initial draws in 2017, stockpiles



were replenished the following year and then remained essentially flat in 2019. The net result, according to the IEA, is an increase in global oil inventories of 100 million barrels between the start of 2017 and the end of 2019, while the IEA data show them rising by 142 million barrels.

So where is all this oil? Well, each agency will have slightly different things that it counts, different methods for counting and then, of course, their assessments can differ.

■ Draining excess stockpiles

Divergences aside, OPEC and its allies remain resolved to press on with output cuts aimed at draining excess stockpiles, Saudi Arabia Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman said in a Jan. 13 interview on Bloomberg television.

"Our endeavor in OPEC+ is to try to bring inventories to a certain level, where it is within the contours" of recent years, he said. That range should be around the average of the last five years and the period from 2010 to 2014, he said. That suggests that the group doesn't have a precise target.

OPEC's latest monthly report pegs OECD commercial oil stocks at 2.92 billion barrels at the end of November, a little higher than the 2.91 billion reported by the IEA. That puts inventories at between 8.9 million barrels (IEA) and 17.5 million (OPEC) above the average level for the last five years.

But there is one thing on which the IEA and OPEC do agree.

OECD commercial stockpiles are sufficient to cover 60.6 days of forward demand, 0.6 days below their latest five-year average. This is a much more useful measure of stockpiles than simple volume. And it would suggest that there's agreement that OPEC has got inventory levels back to at least one of its measures of success.

Now all it has to do is keep them there over the next two years as the high inventory levels of 2015 and 2016 drop out of the rolling five-year average.

(Source: rigzone.com)

Mission Impossible: China can't meet its commitments on U.S. crude, LNG, coal

By Clyde Russell

The more you delve into the details of China's commitment to buy an additional \$52.4 billion in U.S. energy over the next two years, the more it becomes apparent the goal is unachievable, even with the best will in the world.

As part of the "Phase 1" trade truce between Beijing and Washington, China undertook to buy energy over and above a \$9.1 billion baseline of U.S. imports in 2017, with a split of an extra \$18.5 billion in 2020 and \$33.9 billion in 2021.

In practical terms this means China's imports from the United States this year would have to be more than double past record monthly imports of U.S.-sourced crude oil, liquefied natural gas (LNG) and coal.

If that already seems difficult, it would take a tripling of the best-ever months to meet the 2021 target.

Before even thinking about the logistics and disruptions to global trade flows that such a massive shift would entail, there is one major factor that would need to change before China even starts to ramp up purchases of U.S. energy.

As part of the earlier tit-for-tat tariffs, China imposed a 5% import tax on U.S. crude, 25% on LNG and 25% on coal.

These tariffs alone make any imports of U.S. energy uncompetitive, and therefore unlikely unless Beijing is prepared to use its muscle to force state-owned oil refineries, natural gas utilities and steelmakers to pay higher than market rates for U.S. cargoes.

There is so far no sign that Beijing is about to remove the tariffs, or issue waivers, and without this the expected ramp-up in purchases of U.S. energy is a non-starter.

■ The crude oil imports

Even assuming Beijing does lower the tariffs or issue waivers, then comes the problems of logistics and refinery configurations that have to be dealt with before crude oil imports can be ramped up.

If China boosted imports of U.S. crude to more than 1 million barrels per day (bpd) - worth around \$21.4 billion at the current price of West Texas Intermediate futures - it would present a challenge in physically moving that amount of oil from the U.S. Gulf coast to China.

Given that a very large crude carrier (VLCC) holds about 2 million barrels, it would mean 15 of these vessels making the trip every month.

While U.S. export terminals may be able to handle this volume, there remain questions over the availability of these vessels and the potential costs of sailing them back empty to the United States to pick up more cargoes. VLCCs are also too big to transit the

Panama Canal, likely meaning a longer sea voyage around the bottom of Africa, adding to costs.

The economics of shipping crude on smaller vessels that can transit the Panama Canal are also challenging, given such ships can hold only around 600,000 barrels and would have to pay the relatively high canal fees.

Then there is the question of whether China's refineries can use the volumes of U.S. crude that would be required to meet the terms of the deal.

Many Chinese refineries are optimized to process heavy, sour grades of crude, such as those from the Middle East, rather than the lighter, sweet oil typically exported by the United States.

China does import light crude, taking some 270,000 bpd from the United Kingdom last year, 235,000 bpd from Malaysia, 152,000 bpd from Libya and 44,000 bpd from Nigeria, according to Refinitiv data.

■ An exhaustive list

That isn't an exhaustive list of the light crude bought by China, but it does show that light grades are a relatively small percentage of the 10.2 million bpd China imported in 2019.

If China were to buy more than 1 million bpd of U.S. crude, it would have to stop buying most of the light crude it now gets from other countries.

Not only would this disrupt global trade flows and relationships, it also raises the question as to whether Chinese refiners, and U.S. crude exporters, would want to become so reliant on each other, rather than having a diverse range of trading partners.

The logistics around LNG and coal are more feasible, with the United States having plenty of LNG available for export, although there may be some restrictions on coal capacity.

However, doubling, or even tripling, the flow of U.S. LNG and coal to China presents problems from a disruption perspective, and it's unlikely that countries that compete - such as Australia for coal and LNG, and Qatar for LNG - will simply surrender market share for the convenience of U.S. President Donald Trump.

The main question for the energy component of the Phase 1 trade agreement should be what happens when the targets inevitably fall well short of the stated commitment?

Perhaps Trump has lost the November election by then and his successor takes a different path in relations with China, or perhaps Trump wins and then decides to cancel the already fairly limited deal, or perhaps everybody just ignores the issue.

(Source: reuters.com)

Oil and gas sector 'could do much more for renewables'

By Craig Richard

Oil and gas majors' unwillingness to invest effort and money in renewables may prevent technologies such as offshore wind from growing at the scale needed to fight climate change, according to a new International Energy Agency (IEA) report.

Fossil-fuel companies should leverage their huge financial resources, and large-scale engineering and project management capabilities to help renewable energy grow at scale, the agency concluded in its report, Oil and Gas Industry in Energy Transitions.

Since 2015, the average annual investment by oil and gas companies in non-core areas -- such as renewables and other low-carbon technologies -- has been limited to around 1% of total capital spending, with the largest outlays going to solar PV and wind.

Some oil and gas majors have acquired non-core businesses -- for example, in electricity distribution, electric vehicle charging, and batteries -- and stepped up research and development activity in these areas, the IEA noted.

But with such companies' combined annual spending in non-core areas only topping \$2 billion for the first time in 2019 (above), the IEA believes there are few signs of the large-scale change in capital allocation needed to put the world on a more sustainable path.

■ The oil and gas companies

IEA executive director, Fatih Birol, said oil and gas companies can use their "extensive know-how and deep pockets" to play a "crucial role" in the deployment of key renewables like offshore wind while also supporting the development of new technologies.

"Without the industry's input these technologies may simply not achieve the scale needed for them to move the dial on emissions," Birol said.



The IEA suggested oil and gas companies could be helpful for "large unit-size technologies that require associated infrastructure and a higher degree of investment risk" -- such as carbon capture utilization and storage, hydrogen, advanced bio-refineries and offshore wind. It added, however, that offshore wind deployment is "already bringing down costs and investment risks".

Previous IEA research suggested there are a number of synergies between offshore wind and oil and gas.

It estimates 40% of the full lifetime costs of a standard offshore wind project overlap with those of an offshore oil and gas project.

Birol suggested companies should first focus on reducing the environmental footprint of their own operations, noting 15% of global energy-related greenhouse gas emissions come from getting oil and gas out of the ground.

■ The LNG developments

He added this could be reduced "easily", especially by cutting methane leaks, but also by eliminating routine flaring and electrifying new upstream and liquefied natural gas (LNG) developments with renewables or low-carbon technologies.

The IEA cited Equinor's 88MW Hywind Tampen project -- an 11-turbine floating wind farm in the Danish North Sea due to power five oil and gas platforms -- as an example of renewables being used to decarbonize fossil-fuel production.

The IEA does not recommend ending investments in oil and gas, and argues if spending was stopped, the resulting decline in output -- an estimated 8% per year -- would be "larger than any plausible fall in global demand".

However, the agency warned the oil and gas industry needs to balance fossil-fuel-driven short-term returns with its long-term social license to operate.

Shifting from a narrow focus purely on 'oil and gas' to a wider consideration of 'energy' will take companies out of their comfort zone, the IEA conceded.

But it will also provide a way to reduce transition risks as the agency forecasts consumer spending on electricity to overtake that of oil and "relieve social pressures."

Investors will pay close attention to the industry's ability to balance diversification with expected returns and dividends, it added.

(Source: windpowermonthly.com)

Qatar to build new solar power plant

"Today is the commencement of the project itself and we expected by the first quarter of 2021 to have half of the (plant's) capacity up and running," Energy Minister Saad al-Kaabi told a news briefing on Sunday.

"It will generate about eight times the size of the solar energy Qatar had pledged to build, helping the organization of a carbon-neutral event," al-Kaabi continued, referring to the 2022 tournament.

Qatar's Siraj Energy, a joint venture owned by Qatar Petroleum (QP) and Qatar Electricity and Water Company (QEWCo), will hold a 60 percent stake in the solar plant. The remaining 40 percent will be owned by both Marubeni and Total.

Marubeni will take 51 percent of the minority stake, while Total will have 49 percent.

Patrick Pouyanné, Total's chief executive, said the solar plant, once complete, will be the largest ever built by the French conglomerate. The Persian Gulf states, heavily dependent on oil and gas, have invested tens of billions of dollars in clean energy projects, mainly in solar and nuclear.

But critics say many such projects are slow to get off the drawing board.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) said last week its first nuclear power plant would start operating within months after repeated delays to meet safety and regulatory conditions.

The UAE will have the first operational nuclear reactor in the Arab world.

Saudi Arabia, the world's top crude oil exporter, has said it plans to build up to 16 nuclear reactors, but the projects have yet to materialize.

Critics say the addiction to oil is hard to kick, particularly when supplies remain abundant and the high costs of investment in infrastructure needed to switch to renewables.

(Source: aljazeera.com)

Oil prices slide as supply concerns fade

Oil prices fell nearly 1% on Tuesday as investors expected Libya's oil production to eventually resume following a force majeure declared by the oil exporter on two major oilfields amid a military blockade.

Brent crude LCOc1 was down 56 cents, or nearly 0.9%, at \$64.64 per barrel by 0748 GMT, after rising to its highest in more than a week on Monday. U.S. West Texas Intermediate crude CLc1 was down 35 cents, or 0.6%, at \$58.19 a barrel.

The "situation in Libya provided oil prices an early boost but the rally fizzled out as expectations remain that Libya's oil production will eventually return to normal levels," said Edward Moya, a market analyst with OANDA.

Two major oilfields in southwest Libya began shutting down on Sunday after a pipeline was closed off, potentially reducing national output to a fraction of its normal level, the country's National Oil Corp (NOC) said.

A document sent to oil traders and seen by Reuters on Monday said the NOC had declared force majeure - a waiver on contractual obligations - on crude loadings from El Sharara and El Feel oilfields in Libya's southwest.

If Libyan exports are halted for any sustained period, storage tanks will fill within days and production will slow



to 72,000 barrels per day (bpd), an NOC spokesman said. Libya has been producing around 1.2 million bpd recently.

Anti-government unrest in Iraq, another major oil producer, also had initially supported oil prices, but officials later said production in southern oilfields has not been affected by the unrest.

"Every time we get a big geopolitical event, the market

spikes up but everybody looks at that as a chance of a selling opportunity," said Tony Nunan, oil risk manager at Mitsubishi Corp (8058.T) in Tokyo.

Any supply disruptions could be offset by increased output from the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), which could limit the impact on global oil markets, the head of Japan's petroleum industry body said.

"We are caught in this (\$65 per barrel) trading range," Nunan said. "Anything below and OPEC is going to have a tough time balancing their budgets ... and anything above, shale (output) will rebound."

Another factor reassuring the market is OPEC spare capacity, which stands in excess of 3 million bpd, of which the bulk sits in Saudi Arabia, analysts from ING Economics said in a note.

Adding to supply, Guyana exported its first-ever shipment of crude on Monday, marking the tiny South American nation's debut as an oil exporter.

"For oil to get its mojo back, energy markets need to see an extended disruption or a major shock to OPEC output," Moya said.

(Source: reuters.com)

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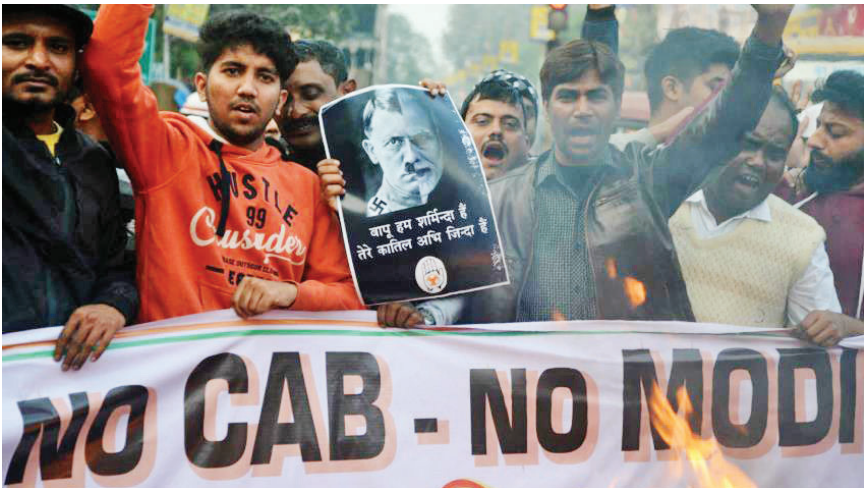
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India’s secularism under attack

At the end of December 2019, India’s government introduced a controversial new law that grants a fast track to Indian citizenship for migrants fleeing religious persecution from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan – as long as they are not Muslim. In a country built on the secular principle of granting equal rights to members of all faiths, many see the new law as a threat. As thousands took to the streets in protest, the police began cracking down on dissent. In less than two weeks, over 30 people were killed. Is India poised on a dangerous precipice? Our team reports.

Even before India’s citizenship law cleared both houses of parliament in early December, violent protests broke out in Assam, a north-eastern state on the border with Bangladesh. Six protesters were killed as the police fired live rounds to control the crowd, and soon afterwards the authorities switched off the internet in the state capital – a move that they would replicate many times over as the protest movement grew. Foreign journalists were prohibited from travelling to Assam without a special permit, which was nearly impossible to obtain.

For several years the government had been conducting a controversial exercise in the state, called the National Register of Citizenship, to identify who is an Indian citizen and who is an illegal migrant. Some 1.9 million people were on the verge of statelessness, including many Hindus,



Protesters demonstrate against PM Narendra Modi and the Citizenship Amendment Bill [Getty]

because they had failed to produce the required identity documents. When the citizenship law was announced, it was clear that Hindus, Christians, Sikhs, Parsis and Buddhists amongst the 1.9 million would be saved from an uncertain future. But what about the Muslims among them?

Even as we were working out the logistics of getting to Assam, something shocking happened on the evening of December 15. Armed police stormed into a historically Muslim university campus in New Delhi and attacked students, who were demonstrating peace-

fully, with sticks and tear gas shells. At least two students were hospitalized with bullet injuries. By the next morning, the protests had spread nationwide, and we soon lost track of how many cities and states were reporting large-scale rallies. Something in the national psyche reacted to the images on social media of students being beaten brutally by the police, and for many Indians that was the breaking point.

As the protests grew, and the authorities shut down the internet in many states, including briefly in Central Delhi, the heart

of the nation, it became clear to us that we needed to get to Uttar Pradesh as soon as possible. Some 24 protesters and bystanders had lost their lives there, although the police has claimed only one of those deaths so far. The state’s Hindu hardline leader, Yogi Adityanath, vowed “revenge” against the protesters who were being portrayed as violent. When we got to Uttar Pradesh, it was clear that several Muslim neighborhoods had been targeted by the authorities, where reports suggested that the police had come in at night, looted houses and broken property. Eventually, we managed to get to Assam, thanks to the fact that one of our reporters is an Indian citizen, and could bypass the government’s special permit for foreign reporters. There, we learned that over 1,000 people whose citizenship had been declared doubtful were in six detention camps and the government was building a brand new one, which we were able to film.

Weaving together stories of students protesting in New Delhi, those targeted by the authorities in Uttar Pradesh, and those facing an uncertain future in Assam, our report attempts to provide a glimpse of how the new citizenship law has led to a determined resistance against Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s Hindu nationalist government.

Authors: Mandakini Gahlot/Alban Alvarez/Clément Laborde/Suyash Shrivastava/Suhel Khan

(Source: France24)

World’s billionaires have more wealth than 4.6b people, report ahead of Davos

By Lauren Chadwick

The world’s billionaires have more wealth than 4.6 billion people and the world’s richest one percent own more than double the wealth of 6.9 billion people.

Those are the latest figures on global inequality from a report released on Monday ahead of an annual meeting of global elites in the mountain resort of Davos-Klosters, Switzerland.

As at least some of the world’s 2,153 billionaires rub noses at the World Economic Forum this week, others will be working to communicate another message: the complicity of the global elite in wealth inequality.

The report by the international aid organization Oxfam states that the number of billionaires has doubled in the last decade.

“Our broken economies are lining the pockets of billionaires and big business at the expense of ordinary men and women. No wonder people are starting to question whether billionaires should even exist,” said Amitabh Behar, the CEO of Oxfam India who will be present at Davos.

“[Inequality is at the] heart of fractures and social conflicts all over the world, and no one is fooled,” said Pauline Leclère, Oxfam France’s senior campaigner for tax justice and



inequalities.

“Inequality is not someone’s fate. It is the result of social and fiscal policy that reduces the participation of the wealthy [through taxes] and weakens funding for public services.” Leclère said this is the message that Oxfam will be trying to deliver at Davos.

The non-profit organization has released an annual report ahead of the famous economic meeting to address mounting inequality since 2014.

Gender divide

This year, Oxfam examined the gender divide as well, highlighting that men worldwide own 50 percent more wealth than women due to a “sexist and unfair economic system”.

The 22 richest men in the world have more wealth than all the women in Africa, the report said.

Women often work in sectors that are more insecure and less valued economically, the Oxfam report states.

They do more than 75 percent of unpaid care work and make up two-thirds of the “care workforce” in nursery and domestic jobs.

“Women and girls are among those who benefit least from today’s economic system,” said Behar.

Few changes in inequality

But overall, their conclusions on inequality remain unchanged.

“Unfortunately, the organization’s conclusion is the same. Inequality continues to rise in extreme proportions,” Leclère told Euronews, adding that inequality is bad for economies.

Indeed, the director of the International Monetary Fund said at a conference in Washington DC last week that although inequality between countries was decreasing, inside many high-income countries, inequality is growing.

“The gap between rich and poor can’t be resolved without deliberate inequality-busting policies, and too few governments are committed to these,” said Behar.

Though members of civil society say they’re looking to receive concrete results from Davos, they know it’s an uphill battle.

Leclère says NGO members aren’t “fooled” by the events’ big, lofty political speeches. “We’re waiting for them to follow up with action.”

(Source: Euronews)

How technology saved China’s economy

To outsiders, China may seem like a surveillance state. But tech has fueled growth and helped stave off recession.

By Ruchir Sharma

Landing in Shanghai recently, I found myself in the middle of a tech revolution remarkable in its sweep. The passport scanner automatically addresses visitors in their native tongues. Digital payment apps have replaced cash. Outsiders trying to use paper money get blank stares from store clerks.

Nearby in the city of Hangzhou a prototype hotel called Fly-Zoouses facial recognition to open doors, no keys required. Robots mix cocktails and provide room service. Farther south in Shenzhen, we flew the same drones that are already making e-commerce deliveries in rural China. Downtown traffic flowed smoothly, guided by synced stoplights and restrained by police cameras.

Outside China, these technologies are seen as harbingers of an “automated authoritarianism,” using video cameras and facial recognition systems to thwart lawbreakers and a “citizen score” to rank citizens for political reliability. An advanced version has been deployed to counter unrest among Muslim Uighurs in the inland region of Xinjiang. But in China as a whole, surveys show that trust in technology is high, concern about privacy low. If people fear Big Brother, they keep it to themselves. In our travels along the coast, many expressed pride in China’s sudden rise as a tech power.

China initiated its economic miracle by opening to the outside world, but now it is nurturing domestic tech giants by barring outside competition. Foreign visitors cannot open Google or Facebook, a weirdly isolating experience, and the trade deal announced Wednesday by President Trump defers discussion of those barriers.

But unlike the Soviet Union, which failed in a similar strategy, China is effectively creating a new consumer culture behind protectionist walls as a tool of political control and an engine of economic growth.

It comes at a crucial moment. Flash back to 2015, when China appeared to be on the verge of the first recession since it began reforming the economy, four decades ago. China’s average income had reached the middle-class phase when developing economies often stagnate. Its working-age population had just started to shrink. Runaway lending, unleashed by Beijing to fight off the global recession of 2008, had pushed private debts to 230 percent of gross domestic product, up from 150 percent.

This was the largest borrowing spree ever in the emerging world, and binges that size had always led to major downturns. But while China’s growth has slowed, according to official numbers, from double digits in 2010 to barely 6 percent, it has yet to suffer its first recession.

What changed was the unexpectedly rapid rise of a new



A driverless delivery robot crossing the road in Tianjin, China, in November. (China Network/Reuters)

digital economy, now estimated at more than \$3 trillion, or a third of national output. Anchored by internet giants such as Alibaba and Tencent, the tech sector was not only counterbalancing the decline in older industries such as steel and aluminum but was also largely debt free. So the bigger the digital economy, the greater China’s capacity to manage mounting debts in the old economy and keep growth alive.

By 2017, tech already accounted for as large a share of output in China as in Germany. A Tufts University survey ranked China the most rapidly evolving digital economy in the world. And the chief executive of Visa quoted a Beijing regulator saying that some 18 months earlier, the nation’s tech giants “were way too small to worry about, and now they’re way too big to do anything about.”

The available studies rely on data at least two years old and probably understate how rapidly China is leapfrogging into the developed world as a tech power. It has more than tripled research and development over the past decade to \$440 billion a year, more than in all of Europe. Today nine of the 20 largest internet companies in the world are Chinese (alongside 10 from the United States and one from Canada).

Explosive growth in online banking is helping to fuel 20 percent annual growth in consumer lending and an overdue shift from export manufacturing to domestic consumption as the main driver of economic growth. Set up in 2015, Alibaba’s MYbank has extended loans to 16 million customers, including “3-1-0” microloans that require three minutes to apply, one second to approve and zero humans involved.

Automation is killing off jobs. At Hema grocery stores, owned by Alibaba, little white robots work the lunch counter

in place of waiters. Gym patrons follow the steps on a giant video screen embedded in the floor, no trainer required. Shenzhen residents say criminals have been driven off the streets by the surveillance cameras.

Yet on balance, tech is probably creating more professions than it destroys. A recent International Monetary Fund paper estimates that after subtracting the jobs it eliminates, digitalization accounts for up to half of all job growth. Alibaba platforms alone host millions of small companies, which over the past decade have added 30 million jobs — more than China has lost in heavy industry.

China’s tech revolution was made possible by two of the forces that were expected to slow the economy. The population may be aging, but it still provides a vast market in which tech start-ups can blossom. And though growth normally slows when countries attain a middle-class income, in China the new middle class provides the main customers for new mobile internet services.

No other country has this combination. India has the population, not the income. Brazil has the income, not the population. And these democratic societies are also far more suspicious of government surveillance than China is. Witness the widespread controversy over the rollout of biometric IDs in India.

In China, at least outside Xinjiang, the relatively mild concern about personal data has helped fuel the boom in digital payments and e-commerce. China is the world’s largest e-commerce market by far, and fleets of motorbikes painted in the colors of online delivery companies park five to six rows deep outside malls and office towers.

To offset the shrinking of its work force, China needed to increase the productivity of the workers who remain. And as the tech boom took off around 2015, productivity growth began to recover after flatlining for nearly a decade. The I.M.F. paper argues that the economy is bound to slow in coming years, but will slow much more sharply if digitalization stalls than if it continues at the current rapid pace.

No economy can rise in an unbroken line forever, and mounting debts and a declining labor force still weigh on China. By making online loans so readily available to Chinese households, tech may compound the risk of financial crisis.

But for now, it looks as though the tech revolution came along just in time to put off the day of reckoning and rescue the Chinese economy from a deeper downturn.

Ruchir Sharma, author of “The Rise and Fall of Nations: Forces of Change in the Post-Crisis World,” is the chief global strategist at Morgan Stanley Investment Management and a contributing opinion writer. This essay reflects his opinions alone.

(Source: New York Times)

UK ditches democratic sensitivities for cash

Putschist general who is now Egypt’s president signs multimillion-dollar contracts with UK government

LONDON — Britain’s reserved approach towards Egypt following a bloody coup by General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi in 2013 has certainly changed since the putschists took over the North African country’s governance, but as a new decade just started weeks ago, the U.K. has now sealed its endorsement for the coup government with numerous multimillion-dollar deals signed on Monday.



Desperate to make new global connections to minimize the great financial loss that is inevitable when Brexit takes full effect, the U.K. is trying very hard to make new trade deals across the globe at the expense of sensitivities towards basic values, including democracy and human rights.

The Tory government’s hysterical constant search for trade income for the post-Brexit future is somewhat reminiscent of the frenzied hunt by the 15th-century shippers for an alternative route to the riches of the Orient and beyond.

Having an obvious and now-certain financial setback after leaving the world’s most lucrative economic bloc, the U.K. has made many attempts to expand its economic efficiency across the globe.

A massive trade deal with the U.S., which has been discussed, debated and scrutinized by all political parties since prospects for it emerged shortly after the EU referendum in 2016, remains the greatest deal the U.K. is eyeing.

The latest example for the new motto “we would do anything for a strong U.K.” finds life in lucrative deals signed with Egypt under Sisi.

The now very powerful Tory government of Prime Minister Boris Johnson has published a series of new deals signed with Egypt during the U.K.-Africa Investment Summit held Monday in London.

The summit invited the Egyptian president alongside leaders from 20 other African countries to serve Britain’s desire to expand its economic power.

Johnson’s International Trade Secretary Liz Truss made British intentions obvious in a statement.

“Africa represents a huge opportunity for U.K. businesses, so it’s brilliant to see so many British firms paving the way in trading and investing in the region today to drive growth, create jobs and boost vital infrastructure.”

However, the biggest deals were agreed, of course, with Egypt, as Bombardier (U.K.’s biggest train makers) signed a £3.18 billion (\$4.94 billion) contract for constructing and operating two monorail lines in Cairo, and Rolls Royce sold £50 million worth of aircraft engines. Fashion and homeware retailer Matalan and pharmaceutical company GlaxoSmithKline also signed investment deals with Egypt.

Egypt has raised \$22 billion for government bonds on the London Stock Exchange, and the U.K. is one of the biggest investors in Egypt, with \$48 billion invested across all sectors including oil and gas, telecommunications, pharmaceuticals and fast-moving consumer goods according to a statement released by both countries.

Thousands of people in London are protesting against Sisi’s visit to Britain, as he is the architect of one of the bloodiest coups in the last decade.

Egypt’s first democratically elected president, Mohamed Morsi, and hundreds of other members of the Muslim Brotherhood -- the ruling party before the military took over in the 2013 coup -- have been sentenced to death. Morsi collapsed and died in a soundproof cage designed to silence him in an Egyptian courtroom. The 67-year-old leader was lying “slumped on the floor” for more than 20 minutes and was left there by prison guards despite calls for help by other inmates.

Last weekend, an international justice chambers filed a request with British police for Sisi’s arrest during his visit to Britain over torture and death allegations against him.

Guernica 37 asked London’s Metropolitan Police Service Counter Terrorism Command to “commence an investigation into credible allegations of torture made against the Egyptian government and its state organs.”

The group said this is a matter that has been taken to UN Special Rapporteur Agnes Callamard for the opening of an inquiry into the death of the late president and his son, Abdullah Morsi.

But the request will probably fall on deaf ears as the crimes had not been committed on U.K. soil and there has not been a UN-led probe into them or any kind of Interpol arrest warrant against Sisi.

William Hague, foreign secretary under British Prime Minister David Cameron, had said following the 2013 coup that the U.K. did “not support military interventions as a way to resolve disputes.”

“We always condemn military intervention in democratic systems. What we want and what we support is a democratic future for Egypt,” he added.

Boris Johnson is now prepared to give the red carpet treatment to Sisi a day after the summit with African leaders to further improve Britain’s relations with him and his country.

He will not have in mind the bloody coup, allegations of human rights abuses, thousands of people still kept in prisons, or any other allegations pointed at Sisi but the mouth-watering deals in cozy No. 10 Downing Street.

The 15th-century European explorers found the Cape of Good Hope to reach the riches of the Orient, but the U.K.’s endorsement of an anti-democratic power grab in Egypt will certainly give no hope to those who promote democracy across the world.

(Source: Anadolu Agency)

Iranian airline launches Kish-Sulaymaniyah route

TOURISM **TEHRAN** — Iran's Mahan Air has d e s k launched direct flights between the Persian Gulf island of Kish and Iraq's Sulaymaniyah as its maiden flight touched down on the southern Iranian island on Sunday.



The round service is scheduled twice a week on Sundays and Wednesdays, Mehr reported on Monday. The flight is aimed to boost passenger and cargo shipment between the two neighboring countries. Over the past couple of decades, Kish has become a beach resort where visitors can swim, shop and sample a laid-back and relatively liberated local lifestyle. It is home to free-trade-zone status, with ever growing hotels, shopping centers, apartment blocks and retail complexes.

Lonely Planet launches carbon-neutral tours

In a bid to meet demand for sustainable travel, the guide-book publisher has teamed up with adventure operator Intrepid to offer responsible small-group tours After almost 40 years of inspiring travelers to visit destinations all over the world, Lonely Planet has launched its own collection of carbon-neutral tours. In collaboration with adventure travel company Intrepid, the new small-group tours will be led by local leaders and support local businesses and communities. The intention of Lonely Planet Experiences is to have minimal impact on the environment, and include carbon-offsetting contributions in the price. The move is a response to a shift towards travelling more responsibly. In a recent Lonely Planet survey of more than 7,500 members of its online community, 68% said they now care more about sustainable travel than they used to. More than 35% said they had actively factored in environmental sustainability when planning trips.

The new experiences include 200 day tours, operated by Intrepid's day-tour company Urban Adventures, and more than 130 multi-day trips in 65 countries. Featured are food and drink experiences, walking, cycling, festivals, family and marine adventures, ranging from two-hour excursions to 22-day adventures. The Intrepid tours have been developed by Lonely Planet destination experts, along with data on booking patterns. Each tour includes six months' free access to Lonely Planet's Guides App. Day trips include a walking tour of bohemian Saint-Germain in Paris, a vintage Las Vegas arts trail and a food tour of Tokyo. Longer tours include an 11-day tour of northern India, from Varanasi to Delhi by sleeper train, rickshaw and bus, and an eight-day tour of Italy by train. "We have a brand that really means something to people. We must be brave and bold to push ourselves into new areas and connect in a meaningful way with our audience," said Lonely Planet's CEO, Luis Cabrera.

(Source: The Guardian)



ROUND THE GLOBE

Antique town of Tyre

Located on the southern coast of Lebanon, 83 km south of Beirut, the antique town of Tyre was the great Phoenician city that reigned over the seas and founded prosperous colonies such as Cadiz and Carthage and according to legend, was the place of the discovery of purple pigment. From the 5th century BC, when Herodotus of Halicarnassus visited Tyre, it was built for the most part on an island reportedly impregnable, considered one of the oldest metropolises of the world, and according to tradition founded in 2750 BC. Tyre succumbed to the attack of Alexander of Macedonia who had blocked the straits by a dike. First a Greek city, and then a Roman city were constructed on this site, which is now a promontory.



Tyre was directly associated with several stages in the history of humanity, including the production of purple pigment reserved for royalty and nobility, the construction in Jerusalem of the Temple of Solomon, thanks to the material and architect sent by the King Hiram of Tyre; and the exploration of the seas by hardy navigators who founded prosperous trading centers as far away as the western Mediterranean, that ultimately assured a quasi-monopoly of the important maritime commerce for the Phoenician city. The historic role of Tyre declined at the end of the period of the Crusades. The site of the town comprises important archaeological vestiges such as baths, a residential quarter and a cathedral. (Source: UNESCO)

Excavations shed new light on millennia-old hill in western Iran

HERITAGE **TEHRAN** — A team of Iranian d e s k archaeologists has recently finished an archaeological season on Tepe Ghala, an ancient hill in western Iran with vestiges dating back to 800 BC. The archaeological hill is situated in the modern town of Gilan-e Gharb in Kermanshah province, which is significantly rich in both the history of Iranian plateau and the mankind. "The first archaeological season on Tepe Ghala has come to an end in order to make an archaeological chronology for the ancient hill," Sirous Adib, Gilan-e Gharb tourism chief, said on Saturday, IRNA reported.

The excavations were carried out by experts from the Research Institute of Cultural Heritage & Tourism in the span of three months, the official noted. "According to [results of the] excavations and theories proposed by archaeological experts, vestiges from the Parthian era (247 BC–224 CE) and Median epoch (678 –549 BC) have been found through a stratigraphy on the hill," Adib explained. He added that evidence suggests existence of a [ruined] citadel in the site, which was once served as a grain storage in the Sassanid period (224 CE–651).

A cradle of civilization, Kermanshah embraces variety of awe-inspiring historical sites such as the UNESCO-registered Bisotun and Taq-e Bostan. Inscribed into the base of a towering cliff, Taq-e Bostan comprises extraordinary Sassanian bas-reliefs of ancient victorious kings divide opinions. Late afternoon is the best time to visit, as the cliff turns a brilliant orange in the setting sun, which then dies poetically on the far side of the duck pond. UNESCO has it that Bisotun bears an outstanding testimony to the important interchange of human values on the development of monumental art and writing, reflecting ancient traditions in monumental bas-reliefs. Bisotun is a patchwork of immense yet impressive life-size carvings depicting the king Darius I and several other figures. It was the first cuneiform writing that was deciphered in



A view of Tepe Ghala, an ancient hill in Gilan-e Gharb, western Iran.

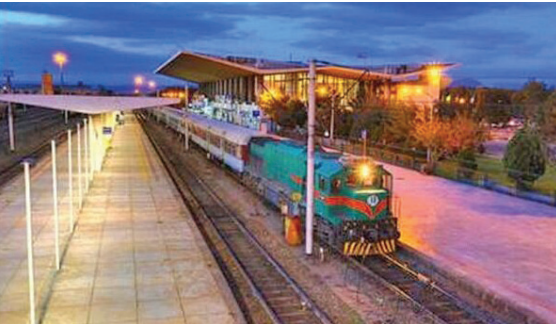
the 19th century. Measuring about 15 meters high and 25 meters wide, the inscription was created on the order of

King Darius I in 521 BC. It bears three different cuneiform script languages: Old Persian, Elamite, and Babylonian.

Free-of-charge Tabriz-Jolfa passenger train launched

TOURISM **TEHRAN** — The Islamic Republic of d e s k Iran Railways on Tuesday launched a new rail service between Tabriz and Jolfa in a month-long pilot scheme to promote traveling between the two northwestern cities. A five-car train with the capacity of 400 passengers is scheduled to daily depart from Tabriz at 7:30 a.m. local time and return from Jolfa at 7:00 p.m. on the same day during the month of Bahman (January 21-February 19), Mehr reported on Monday.

Organized by the Aras Free Zone, the plan aims to help promote tourism across the region which neighbors Armenia, Azerbaijan and the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic. Last November, Iran completed an all-inclusive dossier for Aras Geopark hoping it to be registered on the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization's Global Geoparks list. Situated in East Azarbaijan province, Aras Geopark covers an area of about 1670 square kilometers, sprawling across the whole Jolfa county.



A glance at a lavishly decorated house in central Iran



TOURISM **TEHRAN** — Photos depict scenes of d e s k the extravagantly decorated Mollabashi (Motamedi) house in Isfahan, central Iran, on January

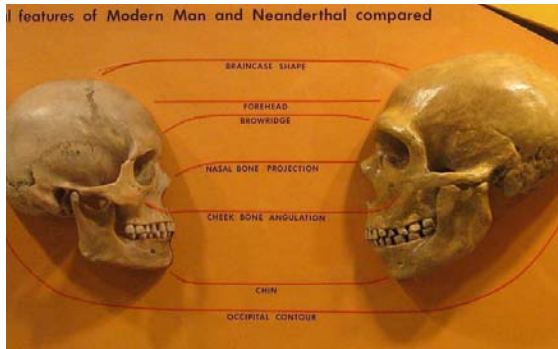
20, 2020. The centuries-old house has been recently brought back to its former glory after months of restoration work. It is a superb example of traditional Iranian architecture in terms of lavish interior design as it features richly colored tiles, stucco decoration, mirrored walls, extravagantly embellished ceilings and stained glass windows throughout. Visitors to the house recommend others to tour it in the middle of the day if interested to witness the dancing colors of the light. Mollabashi house, which has been inscribed on the National Cultural Heritage list, according to its owner, has passed three historical periods of Safavids, Zand and Qajar dynasties. The house is divided into two parts: the living spaces and service spaces. In living spaces, you may be faced with warm and intimate, high energy and high lighting, and in the service spaces, there are rooms for rest and business, in which space is more closed, more serious and less decorated. The gorgeous interior design of entrance with mogharnas tiles, a polygonal room with a water pond in the middle for use in the summer, a rectangular big room with a mirrored and fresco walls designed to host, celebrate & reception of special guests are only a few of the unique attractions of this beautiful historic house. When you step in the exterior courtyard, which is, in fact, a cozy little garden with well-manicured trees, there is also a staircase leading you to the upper floor where the porch is located. A beautiful room is located at the end of the courtyard, with windows facing the street, which is beautifully decorated, it gives you the first picture from



Mollabashi's house. In this room, all the objects and tools will smell the past, and if you look at it in the evening, sunlight shines through the glass on the entire room.

Neanderthals had the teeth to eat hard plants

Neanderthals were capable of chomping on hard plants, like nuts and seeds, according to a new study. Several recent studies have highlighted the resourcefulness of Neanderthals, capable of diving for clams and starting their own fires. But to take advantage of nuts, tough plants and other hardy food resources, Neanderthals would have needed resilient teeth. To see what our early relatives might have been capable of consuming, scientists tested primate teeth in the lab. Researchers studied how impacts with different food particles impacted enamel's microscopic structures. The findings, published this week in the journal Scientific Reports, suggests Neanderthal teeth were perfect capable of chomping on hard plants. "We found that hard plant tissues such as the shells of nuts and seeds barely influence microwear textures on teeth," lead study author Adam van Casteren, lecturer in biological anthropology at Washington University in St. Louis, said in a news release. "If teeth don't demonstrate elaborate pits and scars, this doesn't necessarily rule out the consumption of hard food items." While chemical analysis of ancient teeth has suggested Neanderthals ate mostly meat, analysis of the jaw structures



New research suggests Neanderthals could have chewed up large amounts of nuts and seeds without harming their enamel. (Photo by hairy-museum-matt / Cleveland Museum of Natural History / Wikimedia Commons) of early human relatives suggests hominins had the unique means to eat a variety of foods. "All these morphological attributes seem to indicate they had the ability to produce large bite forces, and therefore

likely chomped down on a diet of hard or bulky food items such as nuts, seeds or underground resources like tubers," van Casteren said. Scientists have previously measured the damage caused by quartz abrasions on primate teeth, but never actual hard food particles. In the lab, scientists affixed pieces of a seed shell to a probe and dragged it across the enamel from an orangutan tooth. The dragging action replicated the forces of chewing. Researchers attached different types of food particles to the probe. The tests produced no significant pits, scratches or fractures -- no dental microwear. The new findings, combined with previous analysis of the jaw structures of Neanderthals, suggests the early human relatives could have chewed large amounts of nuts and seeds without harming the structural integrity of their molars. "When consuming many very small hard seeds, large bite forces are likely to be required to mill all the grains," van Casteren said. "In the light of our new findings, it is plausible that small, hard objects like grass seeds or sedge nutlets were a dietary resource for early hominins." (Source: UPI)

Iran capable of manufacturing any medicine in two years

SOCIETY

TEHRAN — Iranian pharmaceutical industry and scientists are capable of producing any kind of medicine over a two-year period, Mohammad Reza Shanehsaz, head of Food and Drug Administration, has said.

Some medicines are not currently manufactured domestically as their production is not economically justifiable because of low consumption, he added, IRNA reported.

In some cases, medicines are new pharmaceutical molecules that have recently been produced worldwide, he noted.

“The U.S. has sanctioned medicine as far as possible, but we have been able to provide patients with the required medicine, and currently there is no shortages,” he explained.

Although food and medicine are claimed to be exempted from the U.S. sanctions, financial and banking sanctions have limited the life-saving medicine trade which harshly targeted the patients suffering from rare diseases.

Exemptions for humanitarian trade (such as food, medicine, and medical equipment) have not been effective in protecting Iranian patients from access



to imported medicine, such as the bandages used for patients suffering Epidermolysis Bullosa (EB), a rare genetic disease that

causes painful blistering of the skin.

With the return of sanctions, over a year (May 2018-May 2019), 15 patients covered by

EB Health House lost their lives, including Ava, a two-year-old girl in Ahvaz city, who died of infection and lack of skincare.

Companies exclusively producing medicine for Mucopolysaccharidosis (MPS) patients, such as BioMarin Pharmaceutical Inc. of the U.S. and a South Korean company, have refused to export these drugs to Iran, threatening the lives of 335 patients in Iran.

Moreover, medicine needed for patients with spinal muscular atrophy (SMA) and certain rare diseases that are only made by American pharmaceutical companies, are not imported to the country.

On November 17, 2019, Iranian Health Minister Saeed Namaki in separate letters to UN Secretary-General António Guterres, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Executive Director Henrietta H. Fore, and WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom, urged the international community to break the silence on inhumane sanctions imposed by the United States against the country.

But so far no action has been taken by the international community and it has remained silent on this cruel act of the U.S.

Precipitation increases by 44% within a month

ENVIRONMENT

TEHRAN — The latest statistics released by the Ministry of Energy shows that the country received 77.6 billion cubic meters in precipitations over the Iranian calendar month of Azar (November 22-December 21, 2019), which is 44 percent more than a month before.

Since the beginning of the current water year (September 23, 2019) till the end of Azar, the country's rainfall reached up to 144.4 billion cubic meters.

However, the total rainfall was reported to be 87.6 millimeters during autumn, while it was recorded at 92.1 mm in the same period last year.

Moreover, the long term average rainfall was estimated at 62.3 mm.

Following above-normal precipitations in the country speculations have gone rife linking increased precipitations of the current year with the start of a 30-year or even a century-long wet spell. However, the claims have been scientifically rejected by meteorologists and climatologists.

Eminent meteorology professor Hossein Ardakani said in May 2019 that a wet spell is defined as a period of consecutive rainy years, and that experiencing one year of above normal precipitations followed by years of lower-than-normal



precipitations does not mean a wet spell.

Receiving higher precipitations in the country depend on various factors such as teleconnection patterns, he added.

According to the U.S. climate Prediction Centre the term “teleconnection pattern” refers to a recurring and persistent, large-scale pattern of pressure and circulation anomalies that spans vast geographical areas. Teleconnection patterns are also referred to as preferred modes of low-frequency (or

long time scale) variability.

Although these patterns typically last for several weeks to several months, they can sometimes be prominent for several consecutive years, thus reflecting an important part of both the interannual and interdecadal variability of the atmospheric circulation.

Many of the teleconnection patterns are also planetary-scale in nature, and span entire ocean basins and continents. For example, some patterns span the entire North Pacific basin, while others extend from eastern North America to central Europe. Still others cover nearly all of Eurasia.

Teleconnection patterns reflect large-scale changes in the atmospheric wave and jet stream patterns, and influence temperature, rainfall, storm tracks, and jet stream location/intensity over vast areas. Thus, they are often the culprit responsible for abnormal weather patterns occurring simultaneously over seemingly vast distances.

Ardakani said that over the past two decades the number of years with lower-than-normal precipitations were high and now it appears that teleconnection patterns can positively affect the number of years with increased precipitations in the next 10 to 20 years in Iran.

Migratory birds wing their way to southern coasts of Iran



ENVIRONMENT

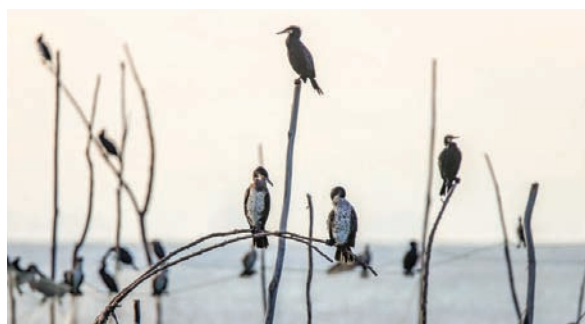
TEHRAN — About 90 species of aquatic birds annually migrate to southern Hormozgan province, which is one of the important wintering grounds for migratory birds.

With temperature rises across their habitat, the birds tend to fly from Siberia and Central Asian wetlands to Hormozgan province and spend the winter until spring.

The area is home to different species of migratory birds, including, heron, plover, large white-headed gulls, cormorant and Sternidae. Climate change, unsustainable development, habitat degradation, oil spills and seepage, vegetable fuel production and development of agricultural lands, wind turbines, telecommunication towers, tall buildings and windows, light pollution, waste and plastics are threatening factors that affect the life and migration of birds.

Hormozgan province, with more than 2,000 kilometers of coastline and 14 islands in addition to 4 international wetlands, is the most important migratory bird habitats in winter.

The migration of migratory birds to the Hormozgan habitats continues until late March.



ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → ع

Plans on agenda to address sand and dust storms in 4 provinces

Studies to combat sand and dust storms are almost completed and next year (starting on March 21) plans will be implemented in four provinces of Khuzestan, Sistan-Baluchestan, Kerman and Hormozgan, director of the national headquarters for combatting sand and dust storms has said.

Ali Mohammad Tahmasbi-Birgani explained that the national document to fight sand and dust storms will be hammered out next week and will be implemented once it is approved.

The five-year plan will set strategies and guidelines for developing early warning systems for sand and dust storms and restoration plans for wetlands and also task responsible bodies to tackle the environmental issue, ISNA quoted Tahmasbi-Birgani as saying on Friday.

۴ استان جنوبی در اولویت مقابله با گرد و غبار

مدیر ملی ستاد مقابله با پدیده گرد و غبار از تهیه سند ملی مقابله با گرد و غبار و نهایی شدن مطالعات طوفان ماسه و گرد و غبار خبر داد و اظهار کرد: سال بعد استان‌های خوزستان، سیستان و بلوچستان، کرمان و هرمزگان در اولویت مقابله با گرد و غبار قرار می‌گیرند.

علی محمد طهماسبی بیرگانی با اشاره به تهیه سند ملی مقابله با پدیده گرد و غبار اعلام کرد: این سند هفته آینده بررسی خواهد شد و بعد از تصویب اعمال شود.

به گزارش روز جمعه خبرگزاری ایسنا وی ادامه داد: برنامه پنج ساله مقابله با گرد و غبار برنامه‌ها و رهنمودهای کلی را در حوزه سیستم‌های پیش‌بینی هشدار گرد و غبار، عملیات اصلاحی و روش‌های احیایی را شامل می‌شود و وظایف همه دستگاه‌های اجرایی را مشخص می‌کند.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“agro-, agri-, agr-”

■ **Meaning:** soil or field

■ **For example:** The workshop presents information on sustainable **agricultural** systems.

PHRASAL VERB

Hand something down

■ **Meaning:** to give or leave something to people who will live after you

■ **For example:** The ring was handed down to her from her grandmother.

IDIOM

Broad strokes

■ **Explanation:** if something is described or defined with/in broad strokes, it is outlined in a very general way, without any details

■ **For example:** “In a few broad strokes he summed up the situation.”

More than 100 threatened species hit hard by Australian bushfires, pushing many towards extinction

Nearly 50 nationally threatened animal and plant species are believed to have had at least 80% of the area in which they live affected by bushfire, a federal environment department analysis has found.

Another 65 have had more than half their area in the fire zone. Scientists have warned some affected species could be pushed to extinction.

The worst affected mammal is believed to be the Kangaroo Island dunnart, an endangered mouse-like marsupial endemic to the 160km long South Australian island.

It is one of 49 species, including 47 plants and one spider, that have had at least 80% of their likely and known range within fire-hit areas. Seven of the plant species, including the nightcap oak and three types of leek orchid, are critically endangered.

Species believed to have had at least half and up to 80% of their living area affected include the endangered long-footed potoroo in New South Wales and Victoria, the glossy black-cockatoo in South Australia, the Blue Mountains water skink, the rufous scrub-bird and three critically endangered turtles.

They are among 331 threatened and migratory species that are believed to have had more than 10% of where they live in burned areas across all six states. The list includes 272 species of plant, 16 mammals, 14 frogs, nine birds, seven reptiles, four insects, four fish and one spider.

John Woinarski, professor of conservation biology at Charles Darwin University, said: “This gives us grave concern about the conservation of many threatened species in Australia.”

He said it was too early to call extinctions, but that many species had almost all the entire area of their population burned.

“It is all the more reason that we need urgent and sustained action to recover these species,” Woinarski said. “The emergency board is full and over-flowing.”

The analysis includes a special note on the koala, which has been the focus of local and international concern about the impact of the fires on wildlife.

About 12% of koala range in NSW, Queensland and the Australian Capital Territory – the three jurisdictions in which it is listed as vulnerable – is believed to have been affected by fires. Koalas also live in South Australia and Victoria, but are not listed in those states.

The threatened species commissioner, Sally Box, said the results were just the first step in understanding the damage wrought by the bushfire crisis, and that the list would be refined.

She said some species on the list were likely to have been worse affected than others, giving the example of the critically endangered Wollemi pine, or “dinosaur tree”. The last known natural stand of Wollemi pine is in the fire zone and it appears on the list, but the NSW government last week announced it had been saved by firefighters.

“Some species are more vulnerable to fire than others and some areas were more severely burned than others, so further analysis will be needed before we can fully assess the impact of the fires on the ground,” Box said. “Already we are seeing positive examples of threatened species having survived the fires.”

The desktop analysis compared maps of areas burned between August and 13 January with distribution maps of species listed under national environment laws. Box said it would help decide where \$50m in initial federal wildlife recovery funding was spent.

The department said some species included in the list might live near, but not in, the areas affected by the fires. Others might have had a larger proportion of the range burned than the preliminary analysis suggested. The analysis gave the example of the western ground parrot as a species that might be worse affected than first thought.

It warned that some species not currently listed as threatened would have had their range affected by fire and might now qualify as threatened. The department would be “considering assessments of these species in the near future”.

(Source: The Guardian)

WORDS IN THE NEWS

Russia and China joint declaration

(December 02, 2002)

Russia and China have signed a joint declaration covering a huge swathe of international affairs, from North Korea to Iraq to the war against terror. The declaration lays out their common position on how such contentious issues should be handled. But is the rest of the world, particularly America, going to take any notice? This report from Rupert Wingfield-Hayes:

China and Russia are fond of their **joint declarations**. First there was President Yeltsin's strategic partnership. Then came President Putin's treaty of friendship and good neighborliness. And now this joint Sino-Russian declaration on a **host of** international issues from North Korea to Iraq to the war on terror. By **combining their weight**, China and Russia are **making it clear** they mean to be **taken seriously** as a powerful **alternative voice** in the world - a voice of equal importance to the United States. Certainly on North Korea their **joint call** for the Stalinist state to give up its nuclear weapons program will be welcomed. But how much real influence either Beijing or Moscow has in North Korea is hard to tell. China is reported to have been **completely in the dark** about North Korea's resumption of its nuclear weapons program. On Iraq, China and Russia are both strongly opposed to American military intervention there, but ultimately neither is in a position to stop it. The power of either Russia or China to act independently from the United States is **constrained** by their economic dependence on the US.

In contrast, economic relations between the two of them are tiny. Last year total Sino-Russian trade amounted to just ten-billion US dollars. That's a **mere fraction** of the one-hundred billion US dollars in trade China does each year with the United States.

Words

joint declarations: official statements made by two countries
a host of: here, a lot of
combining their weight: joining their power and influence together
making it clear: showing in a way that's easy to understand
taken seriously: if you take someone or something seriously, you believe they are important and worthy of attention
alternative voice: having a right to express different opinions
call: a demand or desire for something to be done
completely in the dark: if you are in the dark about something you do not know anything about it
constrained: forced to behave in a particular way
a mere fraction: a very small proportion

(Source: BBC)

U.S. resorts to every ploy to stay in the region

➔1 Since four months ago, the U.S. has put the tactic of “creating a power vacuum based on social protest” on its agenda to weaken those leaders whose policies are in line with Iran and make them to leave power. Washington has sought to undermine the Iranian-Iraqi strategic unity through anti-Iran biased slogans and prepare the ground for its troops to remain in Iraq.

Meanwhile, Trump’s gambling over the assassination of senior commanders of the resistance movement, Major General Qassem Soleimani and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, was the same blunder that the theorists of the partition project were afraid of, since they considered it as the loss of all American possessions in the region.

However, such horrible incident happened, and in the first step of hard revenge the resistance front, the Iraqi nation agreed upon the expulsion of U.S. troops from the country. The incident was the beginning of the new White House game in Iraq, so that, over the past two weeks, Americans made every effort to disrupt the implementation of the resolution.

In a false allegation, Americans first described the resolution as illegal and then claimed that the parliament did not have a quorum at the time of voting. The false claim was stated that under the Iraqi constitution, parliamentary sessions will take legal form if more than half of the members plus one person attend the session. This is exactly what happened during the voting.

When they failed to prove their allegation, U.S. officials resorted to bypassing the resolution by bringing up again the old disputes between the Kurdish leaders and Baghdad.

The U.S. is also trying to convince the UN Security Council of the necessity of continuing its presence in Iraq to fight terrorism, by transferring a number of ISIS leaders (trained at U.S. bases, especially in Syria’s Al-Tanaf and Al-Hasakah) to Iraq.

In fact, several terrorist operations recently carried out by ISIS elements in Iraq is an example of the American hostility.

On the other hand, a new wave of violent protests have been staged in the past few days, which are being directly led by the U.S. embassy in Baghdad. Washington is seeking to seize the opportunity and stabilize its presence in Iraq by disrupting the process of appointing a new prime minister.

It seems that Iraq will witness some unrest due to enmity of the U.S. and its regional and European allies, including Britain, the UAE and Saudi Arabia. Such situation requires the solidarity of all political groups and people under the leadership of the religious authority.

Berlin conference on Libya, a breakthrough or the rivals’ saber-rattling

➔1 The mentioned agreement, in turn, caused the other beneficiary nations in the eastern Mediterranean region, including Egypt and Greece to react. The agreement was also criticized by Russia and the U.S.

On the other hand, Egypt, Israel and recently Saudi Arabia have agreed on investment on the Republic of Cyprus’ gas resources in the Mediterranean Sea, which in turn caused Turkey to embark on resumption of drilling operation in the Turkish-populated Cyprus (in the Northern part of the Republic of Cyprus).

Accordingly, even prior to the Berlin conference, it was obvious that the meeting will not bring about a sensible outcome in line with de-escalation of tensions in Libya; instead, the conference was assumed to be a bedrock for the rivals’ intention to take more power-share to materialize their own interests.

Even the Libyans have called the conference a part of a plot against their country.

Baghdad to send delegates to Russia, China, Ukraine to buy latest air defense systems: Iraqi MP

➔1 He asserted that the U.S. punitive measures over Russian S-400 missile systems would be simply formal sanctions, which would not actually materialize and would fall short of their objectives.

“According to the Constitution, Iraq is free to arm itself, acquire necessary military hardware and purchase any system it deems appropriate under the circumstances. The import of S-400 missile systems requires Russian supervision, and its training of Iraqi military personnel,” Ghanmi pointed out.

The United States has already warned Iraq of the consequences of extending military cooperation with Russia, and striking deals to purchase advanced weaponry, particularly S-400 missile systems.

Former U.S. State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert said on February 22, 2018 that Washington has contacted many countries, including Iraq, to explain the significance of the Countering America’s Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA), and possible consequences that would arise in the wake of defense agreements with Moscow.

On August 2, 2017, U.S. President Donald Trump signed into law the CAATSA that imposed sanctions on Iran, North Korea, and Russia.

(Source: agencies)

Tunisia’s Saied tasks former finance minister to form new gov’t

Tunisia’s President Kais Saied has given Elyes Fakhfakh, a former tourism and finance minister, the difficult task of assembling the country’s next government.

Fakhfakh, a member of the centre-left Ettakatol party, has a 30-day period to form a coalition government. Failure to win parliamentary approval would force Saied to dissolve the House and call for a fresh election. The nomination came after the Tunisian Parliament earlier in January rejected a government proposed by Habib Jemli, the previous prime minister-designate who had been nominated for the job by Ennahdha, a moderate Islamist party.

Though the most powerful force in the 217-strong parliament, Ennahdha’s 52 seats meant that it alone could not guarantee Jemli’s inauguration.Following the voting down of Jemli’s proposed cabinet on January 10, Saied had 10 days to designate a new prime minister, as per Tunisia’s constitution.

The former constitutional law professor, whose mandate as president is limited to foreign affairs and national security, subsequently reached out to a number of political parties to request their recommendations for the premiership.

(Source: AP)

Trump made 16,241 false or misleading claims in his first three years

Three years after taking the oath of office, President Trump has made more than 16,200 false or misleading claims — a milestone that would have been unthinkable when we first created the Fact Checker’s database that analyzes, categorizes and tracks every suspect statement he has uttered, Washington Post reported on Tuesday.

We started this project as part of our coverage of the president’s first 100 days, largely because we could not possibly keep up with the pace and volume of the president’s misstatements. We recorded 492 claims — an average of just under five a day — and readers demanded that we keep it going for the rest of Trump’s presidency.

Little did we know what that would mean?

In 2017, Trump made 1,999 false or misleading claims. In 2018, he added 5,689 more, for a total of 7,688. And in 2019, he made 8,155 suspect claims.

In other words, in a single year, the president said more than the total number of false or misleading claims he had made in the previous two years. Put another way: He averaged six such claims a day in 2017, nearly 16 a day in 2018 and more than 22 a day in 2019.

As of Jan. 19, his 1,095th day in office, Trump had made 16,241 false or misleading claims. Only 366 days to go — at least in this term.

The president added to his total on Sunday evening with more than 20 Trumpian claims — many old favorites — during a triumphant speech at the annual conference of the American Farm Bureau Federation. He incorrectly described trade agreements — suggesting Canadian dairy tariffs were eliminated and an agreement with Japan to reduce tariffs on \$7 billion of farm products was “a \$40 billion deal” — and also falsely asserted that “tough” farmers and ranchers were crying as he signed a repeal of Obama-era regulations. A video of the event shows no one crying.

In 2018 and 2019, October and November ranked as the months in which Trump made the most false or misleading claims: October 2018: 1,205; October 2019: 1,159; November 2019: 903; and November 2018: 867.

In 2018, Trump barnstormed the country in an effort to thwart a Democratic takeover of the House. The two biggest false-claim days were before the election: Nov. 5: 139, and Nov. 3: 128.

The key reasons for last year’s surge in October and November was the uproar over a phone call on July 25 in which Trump urged Ukraine’s president to announce an investigation of former vice president Joe Biden, a potential 2020 election rival — and



the ensuing House impeachment inquiry. Almost 1,000 of the false and misleading claims made by the president deal with the Ukraine investigation, even though it only became a category four months ago.

The president apparently believes he can weather an impeachment trial through sheer repetition of easily disproved falsehoods.

For instance, nearly 70 times he has claimed that a whistleblower complaint about the call was inaccurate. The report accurately captured the content of Trump’s call and many other details have been confirmed. Nearly 100 times, Trump has claimed his phone call with the Ukrainian president was “perfect,” even though it so alarmed other White House officials that several immediately raised private objections.

Three claims about the Ukraine investigation have now made it onto our list of Bottomless Pinocchios. (It takes 20 repeats of a Three- or Four-Pinocchio claim to merit a Bottomless Pinocchio, and there are now 32 entries.) Besides the claim about the whistleblower, the two other claims on the Bottomless Pinocchio list are that Biden forced the resignation of a Ukrainian prosecutor because he was investigating his son Hunter Biden and that Hunter Biden scored \$1.5 billion in China after hitching a ride on Air Force Two with his father.

Trump crossed the 10,000 mark on April 26. From the start of his presidency, he has averaged nearly 15 such claims a day.

About one in five of these claims are about the economy or jobs.

As Trump approaches a tough reelection campaign, his most repeated claim — 257 times — is that the U.S. economy today is the

best in history. He began making this claim in June 2018, and it quickly became one of his favorites. The president can certainly brag about the state of the economy, but he runs into trouble when he repeatedly makes a play for the history books. By just about any important measure, the economy today is not doing as well as it did under Presidents Dwight D. Eisenhower, Lyndon B. Johnson or Bill Clinton — or Ulysses S. Grant. Moreover, the economy is beginning to hit the head winds caused by Trump’s trade wars, with the manufacturing sector in an apparent recession.

About one in six of Trump’s claims are about immigration, his signature issue — a percentage that increased in early 2019 when the government was partly shut down over funding for his promised wall along the U.S.-Mexico border. In fact, his second-most-repeated claim — 242 times — is that his border wall is being built. Congress balked at funding the concrete barrier he envisioned, so he has tried to pitch bollard fencing and mostly repairs of existing barriers as “a wall.” (Almost all of the 100 miles that have been completed replaced previous barriers.) The Washington Post has reported that the bollard fencing is easily breached, with smugglers sawing through it, despite Trump’s claims that it is impossible to get past.

Trump has falsely said 184 times that he passed the biggest tax cut in history. Even before his tax cut was crafted, he promised that it would be the biggest in U.S. history — bigger than Ronald Reagan’s in 1981. Reagan’s tax cut amounted to 2.9 percent of the gross domestic product, and none of the proposals under consideration came close

to that level. Yet Trump persisted in this fiction even when the tax cut was eventually crafted to be the equivalent of 0.9 percent of gross domestic product, making it the eighth-largest tax cut in 100 years. This continues to be an all-purpose applause line at the president’s rallies.

On 176 occasions, Trump has claimed the United States has “lost” money on trade deficits. This reflects a basic misunderstanding of economics. Countries do not “lose” money on trade deficits. A trade deficit simply means people in one country are buying more goods from another country than people in the second country are buying from the first country. Trade deficits are also affected by macroeconomic factors, such as currencies, economic growth, and savings and investment rates.

The president’s constant Twitter barrage also adds to his totals. Nearly 20 percent of the false and misleading statements stemmed from his itchy Twitter finger.

Trump’s penchant for repeating false claims is demonstrated by the fact that the Fact Checker database has recorded more than 400 instances in which he has repeated a variation of the same claim at least three times.

The award-winning database website, created by graphics reporter Leslie Shapiro, has an extremely fast search engine that will quickly locate suspect statements the president has made. We encourage readers to explore it in detail. We recently added a new feature that provides a URL for every claim that is fact-checked, allowing readers to post the link on social media.

■ **Trump misled Americans about Iran’s attack on U.S. airbase**

Trump also misled the Americans in particular and the world in general about Iran’s retaliatory strike on a U.S. airbase in Iraq for the assassination of General Qassem Soleimani in Baghdad on January 3.

After Iran fired dozens of missiles on the U.S. airbase on January 8, Trump appeared before reporters claiming that no American military personnel has been hurt. However, U.S. Central Command officials announced on January 11 that eleven service members were injured after Iran launched ballistic missiles targeting the airbase.

The Kuwaiti newspaper al-Qabas also reported on Tuesday that U.S. troops, who have been seriously injured or suffered burns due to the Iranian attack, are receiving treatment at a hospital in Kuwait. The Arabic language daily put the number of the injured soldiers at 16.

Some media outlets had previously reported that those suffering less injuries are being treated in Iraq.

Erdogan says Somalia invited Turkey to explore for oil offshore



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has said that Somalia invited Turkey to explore for oil in its waters, private national broadcaster NTV reported.

Turkey has been a significant source of aid to Somalia following a famine in 2011. Turkish engineers have helped to build infrastructure in Somalia, businesses have invested in the country and Turkish officers have trained Somali soldiers as part of efforts to build up the country’s army.

Speaking to reporters on Monday, on his flight back from a Libya summit in Berlin, Erdogan said Turkey would take steps in line with the Somali invitation, but did not elaborate further.

«There is an offer from Somalia. They are saying: <There is oil in our seas. You are carrying out these operations with Libya, but you can also do them here.> This is very important for us,» Erdogan was cited as saying by NTV.

«Therefore, there will be steps that we will take in our operations there.»

In late December, a group of Turkish engineers was among those hit in a blast at a checkpoint in Mogadishu that killed at least 90 people. Last weekend, a car bombing wounded some 15 people, including Turkish contractors, in Afgoye.

■ **Libya deal**

In November, Turkey signed a maritime delimitation deal with Libya’s internationally recognized Government of

Asia steps up defenses as China confirms sixth coronavirus death



Asian countries have ramped up measures to block the spread of a new virus as the death toll in China rose to six and the number of cases jumped to almost 300, raising concerns in the middle of a major holiday travel rush.

From Australia to Thailand and as far as Nepal, nations stepped up fever checks of passengers at airports to detect the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)-like coronavirus, which first emerged in the central Chinese city of Wuhan.

Zhou Xianwang, mayor of Wuhan, told state broadcaster CCTV on Tuesday that the death toll had risen from four to six.

Fears of a bigger outbreak increased after a prominent expert from China’s National Health Commission confirmed late on Monday that the virus can be passed between people.

Zhong Nanshan, head of the National Health Commission, said there was no danger of a repeat of 2002’s SARS epidemic that killed nearly 800 people across the world, as long as precautions were taken.

“It took only two weeks to identify the novel coronavirus,” state news agency Xinhua quoted Zhong as saying late on Monday.

Earlier, Zhong acknowledged patients may have contracted the new virus without having visited the central

city of Wuhan where the infection is thought to have originated in a seafood market.

“Currently, it can be said it is affirmative that there is the phenomenon of human-to-human transmission,” he said in an interview with state broadcaster CCTV.

China said it would attend a special World Health Organization (WHO) meeting on Wednesday which will determine whether to declare a rare global public health emergency over the disease, which was detected in Thailand, Japan and South Korea among four people who had visited Wuhan.

Almost 80 new cases have been confirmed, bringing the total number of people hit by the virus in China to 291, with the vast majority in Hubei, the province where Wuhan lies, and others in Beijing, Shanghai and Guangdong, according to the National Health Commission.

State media said one case was found in Zhejiang province.

Australia on Tuesday said it would screen passengers on flights from Wuhan amid rising concerns that the virus will spread globally as Chinese travelers take flights abroad for the Lunar New Year holiday that starts this week.

(Source: al Jazeera)

(Source: al Jazeera)

Female sprinter Fasihi dreams of reaching Olympics

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Female sprinter Farzaneh Fasihi, dubbed the Wind Girl, comes close to fulfilling her dream of reaching the Olympic Games. Fasihi has recently secured her place at the 2020 World Athletics Indoor Championships, running 7.29 second time in the 60 meters event.

She has become the first Iranian woman to participate at the World Athletics Indoor Championships. The 18th World Athletics Indoor Championships will be held from 13 to 15 March 2020 in Nanjing, China at the newly-built Nanjing's Cube gymnasium at the Nanjing Youth Olympic Sports Park.

Now, Fasihi, who is a member of Atletski Klub Partizan, wants to win a berth in the 2020 Olympic Games. "I'm experiencing the new situations in Serbia and I hope I can keep going it. I wanted to break Iran's record and I accomplished that. I also wanted to book a place at the 2020 World Athletics Indoor Championships and I am proud of what I've done," Fasihi said.

"It's every athlete's dream to compete at an Olympics. I had concentrated on securing a place at Olympics so far and step by step I've been improving. To secure quota place for the 100 meters at the 2020 Olympics is very difficult but I think competing in the prestigious tournament will be good for the Iranian women," she added.

"I don't want to rely on luck to reach the Olympics and I will train hard in Belgrade



to improve more. I need support to make history, not only financially support, but also moral support," Fasihi stated. Hassan Taftian from Iran has already secured his place in the men's 100 meters at the 2020 Olympic Games.

Jahanbakhsh confident of strong end to the season

Iranian midfielder Alireza Jahanbakhsh is hoping for a strong end in Brighton.

"We feel we are playing well but everyone in the squad knows how important every point is at this stage of the season. I think the important thing is that we are still creating chances. If we can start taking and keep a few more clean sheets we will be fine," Jahanbakhsh said.

"I think the good thing for the coach is every day everybody trains extremely well. I think everyone in the squad is improving which makes it easier for the manager when he decides on the strategy and team for

each game. He knows that whoever he picks is ready to do well and perform for the team."

"In football the most important game is always the next game. In terms of the season we're quite relaxed at the moment but we know we need to get more points when we have our better performances," he added.

Jahanbakhsh scored his first Premier League goal in last month's win over the Cherries and followed it up three days later with a goal of the season contender against Chelsea. He started in Albion's last away game at Everton 10 days ago and is hoping to get more minutes

under his belt.

"Obviously everyone knows that I had a difficult time last season when I didn't play much.

"This season I have always worked hard in training and I thought I deserved my opportunity and the support I got here and back home in Iran when I scored those two goals was a fantastic feeling.

"It took a lot of pressure off me and I know if I get more chances in the team now I will hopefully take them and do well for the team."

(Source: brightonandhovealbion.com)

Mehdi Taremi linked to Aston Villa



Aston Villa are keen on Rio Ave's Mehdi Taremi as they look to sign a second striker in the January window after completing a deal for Mbwana Samatta.

The Iran international has scored six goals in 13 Portuguese top-flight games since a summer move from Al Gharafa, and he is said to be on Villa's list of considerations.

Villa signed Samatta from Genk on a four-and-a-half-year contract on Monday evening and before the deal was completed, manager Dean Smith said the club was hoping to add one more.

"It's something we're talking about all the time," Smith said. "Suso [Villa sporting director Jesus Garcia Pitarch] believes the same as well, so it's something we're looking for and looking to press on with as well."

Villa are also interested in signing Leices-

ter striker Islam Slimani, who is currently on a season-long loan with Monaco, but a deal would be difficult to conclude.

Smith was speaking as Villa also confirmed striker Jonathan Kodjia's departure to Taremi's former club in Qatar Al Gharafa, who are managed by ex-Watford and Fulham boss Slavisa Jokanovic.

The Villa boss said: "Jimmy has had a tough season. He came back from AFCON very tired after playing a summer series, got injured in the first game against Tottenham, struggled for fitness since, and struggled for game time.

"With his contract up at the end of the season, we hadn't offered him a new contract, so he wanted to look at new avenues. We've allowed that to happen."

(Source: Sky Sports)

UWW lauds Iranian wrestler Mohammadian



Mohammadhossein Mohammadian had a magical run to the 97kg title at the Matteo Pellicone.

Mohammadian's five victories included a fall over an Olympic champion, and wins over a U23 world champion, a world bronze medalist, a world fifth-place finisher and a European runner-up

Mohammadian kickstarted his day by crushing Alisher YERGALI (KAZ), a fifth-place finish in Nur-Sultan. The Iranian downed the man who qualified Kazakhstan for the 2020 Olympic Games, 11-0. He followed up that hot start with a second technical superiority victory. This time, he thumped reigning U23 world champion Bo NICKAL

(USA), 10-0.

In the quarterfinals, Mohammadian picked up arguably the biggest win of his career when he flattened Olympian champion, Kyle Snyder while commanding an 8-0 lead. An 11-0 showing against 2018 world bronze-medal finisher Abraham de Jesus CONYEDO RUANO (ITA) inserted the Iranian into the finals, where he met Aliaksandr HUSHTYN (BLR) for the 97kg title. He capped off his dominant run to a Matteo Pellicone gold medal, where he outscored his five opponents 41-0, with a 9-0 blanking of Hushtyn and brought home his first career Rankings Series title.

(Source: UWW)

nounced that they will only participate in the tournament if the Asian Football Confederation officially declares that they can host their rivals in the territory of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Some experts evaluate AFC's new suggestion as a trap. They say the AFC can later repeat claims about Iran's security and issue the same ruling which will then result in heavier fines and consequences for Iran's football. They believe the Iranian teams should obtain an official guarantee for hosting rivals in the home or withdraw from the tournament as soon as possible.

"Any Participating Club that withdraws less than thirty (30) days before its first Match shall be fined at least USD 20,000," reads the ACL regulations. "The AFC Disciplinary and Ethics Committee may impose further sanctions in its discretion."

This is while withdrawal from the event after the commencement of the group stage will lead to at least USD 50,000 of fine plus two years ban on participating in the event and some other probable sanctions by the Executive committee.

Iran beaten by Qatar at Asian Handball Championship

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Qatar came from first half defeat to beat Iran at the 2020 Asian Men's Handball Championship on Tuesday.

Team Melli beat the Asian star-studded team 13-11 but lost 31-25 at the end of the match.

Qatar have become a dominating force in the continental event, winning the last three editions of the biennial event. Iran, who had defeated hosts Kuwait 28-24 in Group 2 Monday night, will face Korea Republic on Thursday.

Group 1 includes Bahrain, Japan, Saudi Arabia and the UAE. The 2020 Asian Men's Handball Championship is the 19th edition of the championship held under the aegis of Asian Handball Federation at Kuwait City, Kuwait from Jan. 16 to 27.

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

Iranian clubs' General Managers to meet AFC officials

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — The general managers of the four Iranian clubs representing Iran in 2020 AFC Champions League - Persepolis, Esteghlal, Sepahan, and Shahr Khodro – will meet senior officials of the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) on Thursday.

Amir Mahdi Alavi, the spokesman for the Football Federation, says that the goal of the meeting is to negotiate about the hosting right of the Iranian teams in AFC Champions League matches.

Mohammad Hasan Ansarifard, General Manager of Persepolis, suggested the idea of meeting with the AFC top officials and it was welcomed by Masoud Soltanifar, Iran's Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports.

Football Federation of Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI) sent the request to AFC and it was approved by the confederation.

Alavi added: "Ibrahim Shakouri, Acting Secretary-General of FFIRI, along with General Managers of the four clubs - Persepolis, Sepahan, Esteghlal, and Shahr Khodro - will leave Tehran on Wednesday night for Kuala Lumpur. The meeting will be held on Thursday at the AFC headquarters to discuss the issues with the Secretary General of the Asian Football Confederation."

AFC's Competitions Committee has announced that Iranian teams in the 2020 ACL must host their rivals in a neutral venue because of security concerns.

The decision has angered the Iranian fans and officials in Iran.

Responding to the decision, the four Iranian teams signed and sent a letter to the AFC President Sheikh Salman bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa on Saturday, insisting that Iran is "safe" enough to host the international matches.

Iran to participate at Paralympics under name of Gen. Qassem Soleimani

TASNIM — Iran's Paralympic delegation will take part at the 2020 Tokyo under the name of Lt. Gen. Qassem Soleimani, nicknamed as "Commander of Hearts".

Revered General Soleimani, Commander of IRGC Quds Brigade, and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the second-in-command of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), were martyred in US airstrikes in the Iraqi capital Baghdad on January 3.

Iran had named its Rio Paralympic team "Mina" in honor of the pilgrims who were killed in the fatal stampede at Mina in Saudi Arabia.

The 2020 Paralympic Games will be held in Tokyo from August 25 to September 6.

Ali Daei rejects Iran national team link

PLDC — Ali Daei says that the Football Federation Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI) has not negotiated with him over Team Melli hot seat.

Multiple media reports suggested that Daei will be the new head coach of Iran national football team, but the ex-forward has rejected the rumors linking him with Team Melli.

In an interview with the reporters, Daei said the federation has not negotiated with him.

After the federation 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 also was a candidate but he was appointed as Persepolis coach last week.

Dragan Skocic shortlisted for Iran job: report

TASNIM — Croatian coach Dragan Skocic is reportedly among the nominees to coach Iran national football team.

The 51-year-old coach, who currently leads Sanat Naft, has been coaching Iranian teams since 2013.

He took charge of Malavan in 2013 and has also coached Foolad, Khooneh be Khooneh and Sanat Naft.

Ali Daei and Amir Ghalenoei are also among the nominees. With less than three months remaining until the restart of the 2022 FIFA World Cup qualification, the Iranian football federation has not introduced the new head coach yet.

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

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

MNA — The four Iranian participating clubs in AFC Champions League will lodge a complaint with Court of Arbitration for Sport against the Asian Football Confederation over its decision to ban Iranian teams from hosting their Asian rivals in Iran.

Mahdi Alinejadi, deputy Sports Minister, said that the Iranian clubs will prepare a complaint and follow it up through the channel of Iranian Football Federation in the Court of Arbitration for Sport against the AFC.

He said that officials will try to obtain a temporary order to remove the ban, adding that international talks and lobbies are simultaneously underway to solve the problem.

AFC's Competitions Committee has announced that Iranian teams in the 2020 ACL should host their rivals in a neutral venue, citing security concerns as a reason behind the decision. The measure sparked harsh criticism from fans and officials in Iran who believe it to be mainly political.

Following strong protests, the AFC took a step back and announced that the ACL Preliminary Stage matches



would be held in neutral venues and the body will later reconsider the hosting capabilities of Iran in the group stage. Esteghlal and Shahr Khodro should play rivals in the Preliminary State while Sepahan and Persepolis have already secured places in the group stage.

In a letter to AFC published on Monday, the clubs an-

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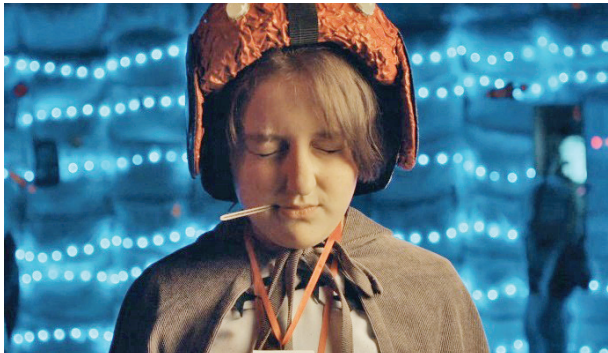
GUIDE TO
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Sense of honor is impiety in a woman and is faith in a man.

Imam Ali (AS)

“Better than Neil Armstrong” director best at Pune film festival

A R T TEHRAN — Iranian filmmaker Alireza Qasemi has won the Best Live Action Short Film Director’s Award at the 18th Pune International Film Festival for his sci-fi “Better than Neil Armstrong”.



“Better than Neil Armstrong” by director Alireza Qasemi.

He received the award “For a very touching story that unravels with assured command over the medium in many respects,” the jury said in their statement during the closing ceremony of the festival in Pune, India on January 16.

The film is about four kids who start their journey to the Moon with the mission of finding a mysterious place called “Redland”, but the gates of the place are being guarded by a mischievous snake.

Over 20 other movies were screened in the Live Action Students Short Film competition. The Best Live Action Short Film award was presented to “A Piece of Hope” directed by Syahreza Fahlevi from Indonesia.

Iranian actress Vishka Asayesh was a member of the jury of the festival, which also featured several other movies from Iran, including “Kömür” by Esmaeil Monsef, “Diapason” by Hamed Tehrani and “Just 6.5” by Saeid Rustai.

Tunisian director Mehdi M. Barsaoui’s drama “A Son” produced by Marc Irmer and Habib Attia was selected as best film in the World Cinema Competition.

Bartosz Kruhlik from Poland was named best director in the category for “Supernova”.

The special jury award went to the screenwriter Michael Idov for “The Humorist”, a co-production of Russia, Latvia, and Czech.

DocPoint festival to hold documentarian Mehrdad Oskui retrospective

A R T TEHRAN — DocPoint – Helsinki Documentary Film Festival will hold a retrospective of Iranian documentarian Mehrdad Oskui, the organizers have announced.

Oskui’s award-winning documentaries “My Mother’s Home, Lagoon”, “Nose, Iranian Style”, “Sunless Shadows” and “The Other Side of Burkha” will be reviewed during the festival, which will open in the Finnish capital on January 27.

Oskui, who has won several awards for his films at Iranian and international festivals, will also hold a master class about his working methods and filmmaking philosophy during the festival on January 30.

Moreover, “Family Relations” by Iranian filmmaker Nasser Zamiri will be screened at the official section of the festival.

The documentary depicts a tragicomic family saga, in which all the members of a large Iranian family are against their father, Haji Baba.

The DocPoint – Helsinki Documentary Film Festival will be running until February 2.

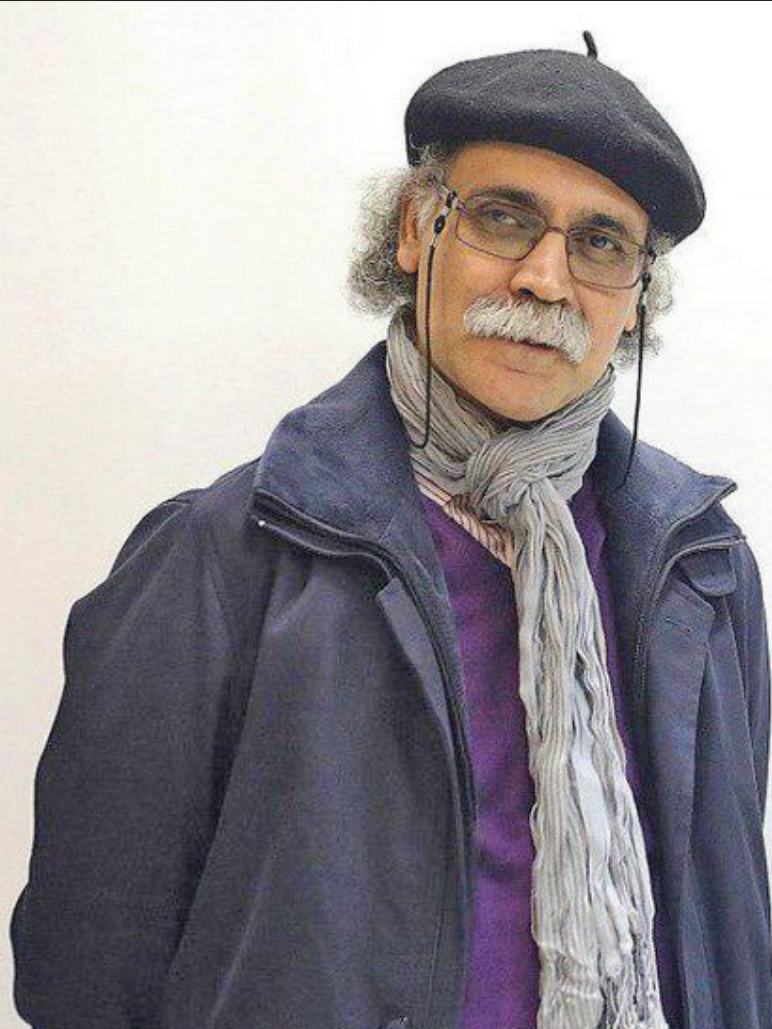
Scholar Yaqub Ajand compiles encyclopedia of Iranian dramatists

CULTURE TEHRAN — Iranian scholar Yaqub Ajand has completed compiling an encyclopedia of Iranian playwrights from the Qajar period (1789–1925) to the 2000s.

“This book is a part of my research for my other book ‘Theater in Iran’, the writing of which is still in progress,” Ajand told the Persian service of Honaronline on Tuesday.

“I plan to publish this part separately to introduce Iranian playwrights more appropriately,” he added.

Entitled “Encyclopedia of Iranian Playwrights”, the book will be released by Gostareh Publications in the near future.



Iranian children’s writer Farhad Hassanzadeh in an undated photo.

“The Alien” to go on screen in Berlinale 2020 Forum



A scene from “The Alien” by Iranian director Nader Saeivar.

A R T TEHRAN — “The Alien” (“Namo”) by Nader Saeivar from Iran will have its world premiere at the Forum section of the 70th Berlin International Film Festival, which will be held from February 20 to March 1, the organizers have announced.

The film is about a teacher who is dispatched along with his family to a remote area.

The 2020 Forum lineup includes 35 films, 28 of which are world premieres. Most of the movies in this section are characterized by how they look for ways to mediate between past and present.

This year’s Forum will open with “The Tango of the Widower and Its Distorting Mirror” by late Chilean director Raúl Ruiz and his widow Valeria Sarmiento.

Ruiz, a four-time Palme d’Or nominee who won Berlin’s Silver Bear in 1997 with “Genealogies of a Crime” shot the footage in Chile in 1967, but was unable to complete the film before going into exile in 1973. Sarmiento has now finished the feature.

Other highlights include “Uppercase Print” by Radu Jude from Romania who won Berlin’s Silver Bear for best director with “Aferim!” in 2015.

Iran’s Farhad Hassanzadeh shortlisted for Hans Christian Andersen Award

CULTURE TEHRAN — Iranian writer Farhad Hassanzadeh has received a nomination for the 2020 Hans Christian Andersen Award.

He will be competing for world’s most prestigious award for the creators of children’s and youth literature with Maria Cristina Ramos from Argentina, Bart Moeyaert from Belgium, Marie-Aude Murail from France, Peter Svetina from Slovenia and Jacqueline Woodson from the U.S., the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) announced on Monday.

Illustrators Isabelle Arsenault from Canada, Seizo Tashima from Japan, Sylvia Weve from the Netherlands, Iwona Chmielewska from Poland, Elena Odriozola from Spain and Albertine from Switzerland were also shortlisted for the award.

Iranian illustrator Farshid Shafiei was nominated for the award by the Children’s Book Council of Iran, but he did not make the shortlist.

Hassanzadeh has authored over 80 books, including “The Backyard”, “The 7th Bench by the Lake”, “Bambak’s Scorpions”, “Watermelon with Love” and “Call Me Ziba”.

He has been nominated and awarded in several Iranian and international events and his books have been rendered into different languages.

IBBY presents the Andersen award to a living author and illustrator whose complete works have made a lasting contribution to children’s literature.

The IBBY will announce one winner for each category during a press conference at the Bologna International Children’s Book Fair on March 30.

The medals and diplomas will be presented to the winners during the 37th IBBY Congress in Moscow, Russia on September 6.

Director Hadi Marzban to return to stage with political romance “Dr. N.”



Stage director Hadi Marzban in an undated photo.

A R T TEHRAN — Director Hadi Marzban plans to return to the stage with a political romance named “Dr. N. Likes His Wife More Than Mossadeq” over one year after staging playwright Akbar Radi’s “Slowly with Red Rose”, a public relations team announced on Tuesday.

The play is an adaptation of a novel by Iranian writer Shahrām Rahimian. It is about Dr. Esfandiar N., an ardent supporter of Mohammad Mosaddeq. Iran’s former prime minister, who made great efforts to nationalize the oil industry in 1951 that were nullified by the CIA coup d’état against

the national icon in August 1953.

After the coup, Esfandiar was detained after refusing a call from the SAVAK intelligence services to criticize Mosaddeq in an interview. SAVAK agents know about Esfandiar’s love of his wife, Malektaj, therefore they shift the focus on Malektaj to bring Esfandiar to his knees. Now, he is faced with the dilemma of choosing between his family and political commitments.

The play will be performed at Tehran’s Vahdat Hall late February. Reza Kianian will star as Esfandiar in the play. He will also collaborate as a set designer on this project.

Jazz composer and saxophone player Jimmy Heath dies at 93



(Ebet Roberts/Redferns Jimmy Heath)

NEW YORK (AP) — Jimmy Heath, a Grammy-nominated jazz saxophonist and composer who performed with such greats as Miles Davis and John Coltrane before forming the popular family group the Heath Brothers in middle age, has died. He was 93.

Heath’s grandson Fa Mtume told The New York Times that he died Sunday at his home in Loganville, Georgia. The cause of death was not immediately given.

Heath, a native of Philadelphia, had been playing jazz since the 1940s, in the early days of bebop. He was mentored by Dizzy Gillespie, idolized Charlie Parker, whose nickname was “Bird,” and would become known as “Little Bird” for how well he emulated Parker’s fluid style.

Heath overcame his battles with heroin addiction, which landed him in prison in the

mid-1950s, and had a long and productive career.

In the 1970s, he helped found the Heath Brothers, which also featured brothers Percy Heath on bass and Albert “Tootie” Heath on drums. Their albums included “Marchin’ On” and the Grammy-nominated “Live at the Public Theater.” In 1993, he received a Grammy nomination for his own “Little Man, Big Band” album (Heath stood just 5 feet, 3 inches) and played in a jazz concert at the White House, when President Bill Clinton himself borrowed his saxophone for one number.

In 2003, he was named a Jazz Master by the National Endowment for the Arts, which noted that “By combining his versatile style of performing and his outstanding writing and arranging abilities, he has set a high standard of accomplishment in the jazz field.”

Italy confirms long-lost Klimt painting hidden in wall is authentic



ROME (Reuters) — Authorities in the Italian town of Piacenza on Friday confirmed a painting found hidden in a wall of the local art gallery was by the Austrian master Gustav Klimt, ending doubts over its authenticity.

Workers discovered the painting in December in a plastic bag concealed inside the wall of the Ricci Oddi Gallery from which it was stolen in 1997. They came across a little door which revealed the masterpiece, while clearing the ivy off the outside wall.

The mayor of Piacenza, Patrizia Barbieri, and the head of culture, Jonathan Papamarengi, hailed the “historic” news and vowed to make the 1917 portrait of a young woman a centerpiece of the city’s heritage.

“After the joy of the find ... the conflicting rumors of these days have fueled even more

suspense over a story that has mysterious aspects,” the two local officials wrote in a statement.

When the painting vanished 23 years ago police said they believed thieves had used a fishing line to hook it off the wall and haul it up through an open skylight to the gallery roof where the frame was discarded.

A skilled forgery of the painting, wrapped up and posted to a disgraced politician, was seized by authorities a month later, adding to the mystery.

When the workers found the real painting, Papamarengi said he was impressed by its excellent condition after decades lying in a wall.

He said it was second on the list of the most valuable artworks missing in Italy, behind a work by Caravaggio stolen from a church in Sicily in 1969.