



**Assassination of Iranian hero activates end of U.S. presence in region** **2**



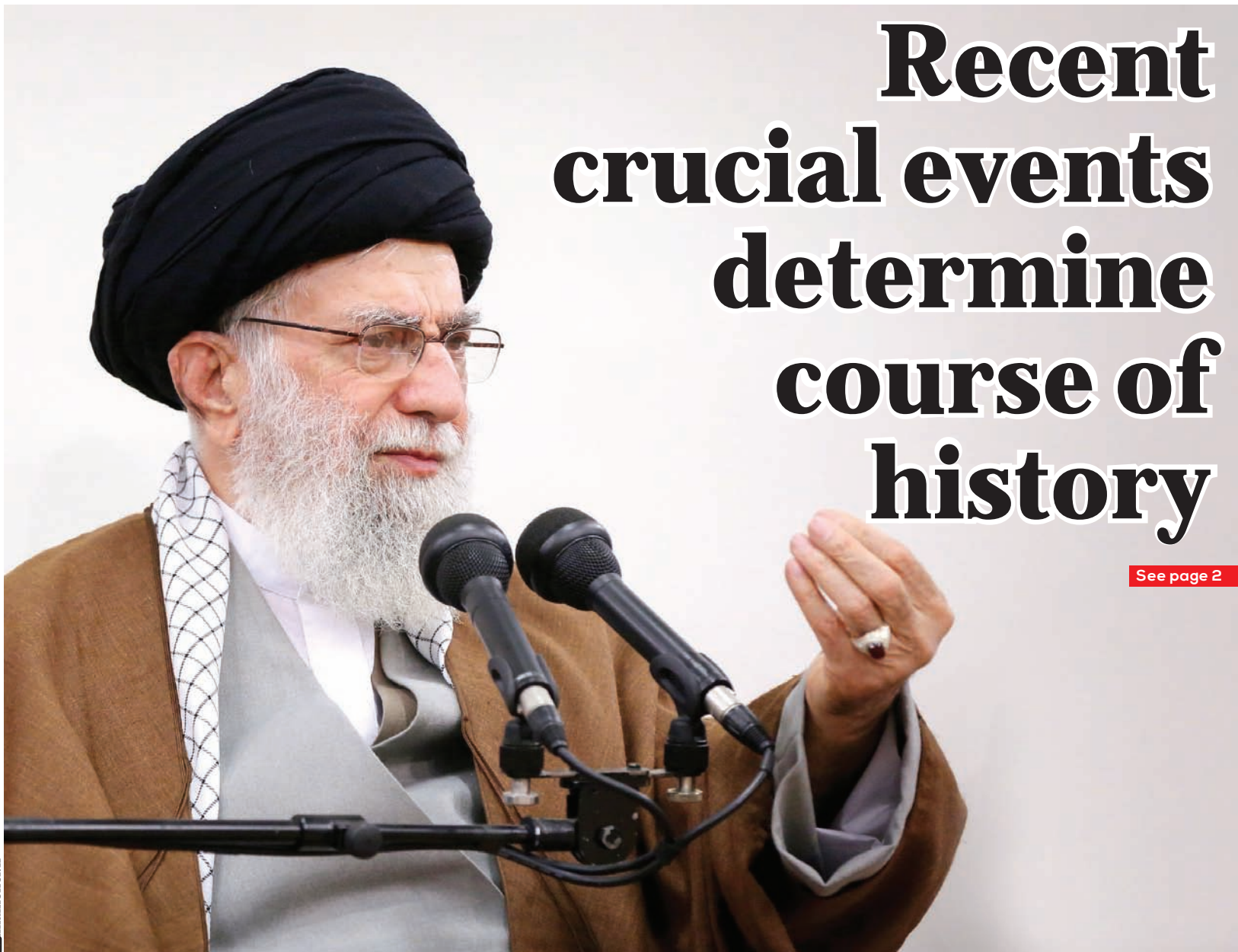
**Iran urges Iraq to sue U.S. for recent airstrike killings** **2**



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## Recent crucial events determine course of history

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### ‘Country-size guesthouse of Iran wholeheartedly ready to receive tourists’

**TEHRAN** – Iran’s tourism minister on Saturday issued a statement, inviting all travelers and holidaymakers to visit the ancient land, saying that the country-size guesthouse is wholeheartedly ready to receive tourists from around the world.

Ali-Asghar Mounesan emphasized that the Iranian government is trying its best to host incoming tourists by improving tourism infrastructure,

offering attractive and pocket-friendly packages, as well as incentives such as visa waivers or 90-day visas on arrival.

Mounesan’s statement comes weeks after the country’s tourism suffered losses in the wake of recent tensions in the region by mistakenly downing of a Ukrainian airliner, with 176 people aboard, by the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) air defense system in Tehran airspace. **→8**

### Fresh information released about U.S. casualties in Iran’s missile strike

**TEHRAN** – Aerial footages have proved that a few hours after Iran’s missile attack on the U.S. Ein Al Assad airbase in western Iraq on January 8, a military plane managed to transfer a number of wounded service members from Baghdad’s international airport to Germany and later to the U.S., Nour News reported.

In early hours of January 8, the Aerospace Force of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) fired several mis-

siles at Ein al-Assad airbase. The missile attacks were in retaliation to the U.S. assassination of IRGC Quds Force chief Lt. Gen. Qassem Soleimani on January 3 near Baghdad’s international airport.

Ein al-Assad airbase was a strategic site for the U.S. which was used to support drone attacks.

The sources said on January 3 that as many as 20 critical points in the base were hit by 15 missiles and a significant number of UAVs and helicopters were destroyed. **→2**

### Pope backs Iraqi call for its sovereignty to be respected

Pope Francis met Iraq’s president on Saturday and the two agreed that the country’s sovereignty must be respected.

President Barham Salih held private talks for about 30 minutes with the pope and then met the Vatican’s two top diplomats, Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin and Archbishop Paul Gallagher, its foreign minister, Reuters reported.

The talks “focused on the challenges

the country currently faces and on the importance of promoting stability and the reconstruction process, encouraging the path of dialogue and the search for suitable solutions in favor of citizens and with respect for national sovereignty,” a Vatican statement said.

The Iraqi parliament has passed a resolution ordering the 5,000 U.S. troops stationed in Iraq to leave the country. **→10**



### EDITORIAL

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### “Joker” riots or “Jadriya” rage: Which occupies the streets of the Middle East?

The millions-strong protest in Baghdad on Friday was a continuation of the “hard revenge” process over the assassination of senior commanders of the resistance movement.

This is while that over the past three weeks and after the approval of a resolution calling for the expulsion of U.S. troops by Iraq’s parliament, the Western media outlets had been claiming that the resolution is not backed by people.

The Iraqi people, in a historic rally reminiscent of the pullout of British troops from the country in 1920, positively responded to the referendum on the expulsion of American terrorists. They also showed that hatred for the Americans had nothing to do with the views of other countries, including Iran.

The anti-U.S. demonstration, which also received full support from Iraq’s religious authority, was reflected widely in various media outlets around the world.

The clear message of the Iraqi people in the Friday demonstration in support of the parliamentary resolution and explicit opposition to the presence of American terrorists in their country were in fact a response to two weeks of hostile U.S. efforts to undermine the resolution. The protest was of great importance because the U.S. officials had claimed that Iraqis have no objection to the U.S. military presence in their country, but their objection is to the presence of others.

This is a significant message as over the past four months the hegemonic system has used all its potential by launching a plan based on hybrid warfare model as one of the most modern fourth-generation warfare to properly carry out the project of “regional partition”.

In this model, violent protests using symbols effective at inciting the youth to riot like the Joker, full media-intelligence support, and even using some ISIS elements are among the intended operations aimed at creating power vacuum and disrupting order in the countries classified as the axis of resistance. **→3**

### Trump has recklessly dragged the Persian Gulf to the brink of war

By Seyed Hossein Mousavian

Millions of Iraqi citizens recently gathered together to participate in a “million-strong” march, the biggest demonstration during the history of Iraq in the capital Baghdad to demand the withdrawal of all U.S. forces. Al-Sadr, whose party holds the most number of seats in Parliament, seized on the public anger over the drone strike that killed Maj. Gen. Qassem Soleimani to call “a million-strong, peaceful, unified demonstration to condemn the American presence and its violations.”

On January 6, 2020, I attended the funeral of Soleimani, commander of the Quds Force of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps, and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the Commander of the Iraqi Popular Mobilization Forces, in Tehran. No well-orchestrated photographers or drone shots from above can do justice to the ocean of

humanity present in their funeral processions. And Tehran was only one among many other cities that witnessed the funeral processions of Soleimani and his companion Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis. Millions of people mourned his assassination in Baghdad, Karbala, Najaf in Iraq, and in Ahwaz, Mashhad, Tehran, Qom, and finally his hometown, Kerman.

I have no doubt in my mind that his assassination will have an impact, not only on the future of U.S.-Iran relations but in the region and beyond. Here are twelve consequences I can point to in the aftermath:

First, the presence of roughly seven million people out of Tehran’s total twelve million population across twenty miles in the funeral procession of Soleimani shook the world. I, first-hand, witnessed the outrage and anger expressed

by ordinary people chanting: “revenge, revenge. In his 2019 memo, David Wurmser, consultant to the U.S. National Security Council, suggested to the White House that many Iranians would welcome a strike on a senior commander such as Soleimani. This is clear evidence that illusions and delusions have prevented President Donald Trump from acknowledging reality and objective truths, which consequently have resulted in further delusions, and ultimately could result in actual tragedies.

Secondly, the Trump administration and the United States’ regional allies have insisted on mislabeling Soleimani and al-Muhandis as “terrorists.” Even they could see the millions of people who participated in their funerals, marking the world’s largest memorial processions for any military figures. **→2**

### Iraq million-man demonstrated outright rejection of U.S. occupation: Hezbollah

The Lebanese resistance movement Hezbollah has lauded Friday’s million-strong march in Iraq against the presence of U.S. troops in the Arab country, stating that the demonstration well exhibited Iraqis’ total rejection of American occupation.

“The Iraqi people confirmed today their outright rejection of U.S. occupation of their country once again. These blessed and loyal masses displayed the unity of the Iraqi nation in the face of American occupation and hegemony,” Hezbollah said in a statement released on Friday.

It added that the mass protest in Baghdad against U.S. troop presence in Iraq was a “true representation of the status quo in Arab and

Muslim societies, where people are fed up with U.S. occupation and its dominion over their resources.”

Hezbollah expressed hope that the anti-U.S. demonstration in Iraq would spell the beginning of huge protest rallies across the Muslim world that would eventually result in the expulsion of U.S. forces and their proxies from the entire West Asia.

“The great Iraqi nation, including all political parties and diverse inclinations, will be faithful to this great march, its principles, goals as well as mottos,” the Lebanese resistance movement pointed out, hoping for a “free, unified and independent Iraq free from foreign occupation

forces and their interference.”

### ■ Sadr thanks Iraqi nation for high turnout

Meanwhile, influential Shia cleric Muqtada al-Sadr has praised the Iraqi nation for heeding to his call and gathering on the streets of Baghdad on Friday to protest the United States military presence, describing the huge turnout as a matter for pride.

“Oh Iraqis, you melted our hearts. You brought us glory and raised our hopes. You angered our enemy. So, God recorded a good deed for you all. May God reward you with the best reward for Iraq and its nation,” Sadr wrote in a post published on his official Twitter page. **→10**



### Abuzar Media Festival honors winners

**TEHRAN** — Winners of the 5th edition of the Abuzar Media Festival were honored during a special ceremony at the Suresh Hall of the Art Bureau in Tehran on Saturday.

“Bright Medium, Powerful Society” was the motto of this year’s festival, which is organized every year by the bureau to promote revolutionary media and journalists.



### ARTICLE

**Mohammadreza Frahzaadi**  
Journalist

### A president’s childish wishes and the lies that damage the American people’s psyche

“No American or Iraqi lives were lost because of the precautions taken, the dispersal of forces and an early warning system that worked very well,” said Donald Trump in response to Iran’s strong slap by launching missile attack on Ain al-Assad airbase. Regarding the leaked statistics on the casualties of U.S. troops from various sources, Trump has made contradictory remarks.

In his statement on the missile attacks carried out by Islamic Republic of Iran on January 8, Trump claimed that no American troops had been harmed or killed, and one factor that averted casualties was U.S. warning satellites.

Following the president’s comments on Jan. 8, a defense official said in a statement: “U.S. early warning systems detected the incoming ballistic missiles well in advance, providing U.S. and coalition forces adequate time to take appropriate force protection measures.”

The secrecy and lies by Trump and other members of his cabinet have been criticized as U.S. Defense Secretary Mark Esper said that he does not have any information when he was asked about the number of casualties in a press conference on January 23. The issue led Elizabeth Warren, a presidential candidate, use the word “casualties” about the Ain al-Assad incident, following Senator Chris Murphy’s sarcastic remark saying, “You do not get send to Germany for headaches.”

The warning system that Trump mentioned in his statement is SBIRS satellites equipped with infrared sensors, which are made by Lockheed Martin Corp. and the payloads by Northrop Grumman Corp.

The U.S. Air Force launched four SBIRS satellites in 2011, 2013, 2017 and 2018. Two more are scheduled to be deployed in 2020 and 2021. Each satellite is estimated to cost \$ 1.7 billion. The data from the satellites goes to a mission control station operated by the 460th Space Wing located at Buckley Air Force Base, Colorado. The wing is now part of the U.S. Space Force. **→10**



## Leader: Recent crucial events determine course of history

The young faithful scientists can make history, Ayatollah Khamenei notes

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei sent a message on Saturday to the 54th session of the Union of Islamic Student Association in Europe (UISAE).

The session kicked off in Vienna, Austria, on Saturday. The Leader's message was read out at the gathering.

The message of the Leader came after the U.S. assassination of IRGC Quds Force chief Qassem Soleimani, people's unbelievably huge rallies in the funeral procession for the martyred general and also Iran's military response to the U.S. which shattered Washington's image in the world.

The Leader said the session is being held amid crucial developments which will determine the course of history.

"Your meeting this year has been held amid important events which each of them in a way shows the glory and creditability of the Islamic Iran and its revolutionary nation," Ayatollah Khamenei said in his message.

"Martyrdoms, military displays of power, unparalleled presence of the people, the strong spirit and determination of the youth, alongside thousands of associations active in the field of science and technology, as well as a religious and spiritual approach prevailing among a large portion of the youth across the country, all herald the emergence of a unique phenomenon in the world — a phenomenon that can have profound and decisive effects on the future of history," Ayatollah Khamenei said, according to Press TV.

The Leader further said that the Islamic revolution's "Second Step" should be capable of making the mentioned glory prefect with help of the almighty God.

Ayatollah Khamenei underscored that the country's young faithful scientists are capable to make history in this trend.

"All hopes are pinned on knowledgeable, erudite and faithful youths in this crucial movement, and you can be one of those history-making chosen ones."

## Iran to host Russian Duma team on Monday

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — A high-ranking delegation of Russian lawmakers is to arrive in Tehran on Monday to participate in the second session of the parliamentary cooperation committee of Iran and Russia.

Chairman of the Russian State Duma Vyacheslav Viktorovich Volodin will head the delegation.



Volodin is scheduled to hold a meeting with Iranian Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani.

The State Duma is the lower house of the Federal Assembly of Russia.

The first meeting of the parliamentary cooperation committee was held in Russia's southwestern city of Volgograd in September 2018.

Initiated by the heads of the Iranian and Russian parliaments, the committee has been formed to promote the parliamentary relations between Tehran and Moscow.

Back in June, a delegation of Iranian lawmakers travelled to Russia to take part in the Second International Forum on Development of Parliamentarism.

The Iranian delegation, consisting of members of the Parliament National Security and Foreign Policy Committee as well as Iran-Russia parliamentary friendship group, visited Moscow at the invitation of Volodin. The parliamentary team was led by vice speaker of the Parliament Massoud Pezeshkian.

## Iran urges Iraq to sue U.S. for recent airstrike killings

**TEHRAN (MNA)** — Iran's Judiciary Chief Ebrahim Raisi in a Saturday phone conversation with the head of the Supreme Judicial Council in Iraq Faig Zaidan urged the country to sue the U.S. for its crimes including assassination of the IRGC Commander Lt. Gen. Qassem Soleimani and his comrades.

Calling the simultaneous Martyrdom of Lt. Gen. Soleimani and his companions including PMU's Chief Abu Mahdi al-Mohandis a disastrous incident, Raisi said "this is a crime in against with all the international treaties and regulations and Iranian and Iraqi nations demand punishment of those who committed it."

Referring to the Friday rallies in Iraq, the Iranian official added, "this act of the U.S. is with no doubt a violation to the international laws and American officials' justifications for assassination of the two commanders are not even accepted by the American society."

He reiterated that it is a must for Iranian and Iraqi Judiciary systems to sue the U.S. legally at international courts.

The Iraqi official, for his part, referred to the anti-terrorism and anti-ISIL role of Martyr Soleimani and his comrade al-Muhandis, saying "Lt. Gen. Soleimani was Iraq's guest at the time of his assassination, and all you said is agreed upon by the Iraqi government."

"I assure you that from the moment of the incident, Iraq has started the required investigations and is continuing its non-stop efforts," he added.

He also voiced Iraq' readiness for taking mutual measures with Iran to reach desired goals in international courts.

The U.S. assassinated the top Iranian anti-terror commander Lieutenant General Soleimani and Iraqi commander Abu Mahdi al-Muhandes on January 3.

On January 5, the Iraqi parliament voted overwhelmingly in favor of a resolution calling for the expulsion of all foreign forces after the U.S. assassination of Iran's senior Iranian and Iraqi commanders.

On January 8, Iran's IRGC targeted the U.S. airbase of Ain al-Assad in Anbar province in western Iraq as retaliation.

# Fresh information released about U.S. casualties in Iran's missile strike

American soldiers wounded in Iran's missile strike sent to Germany, U.S.

**1 →** Nour News report said, "The military plane C-17 codenamed BANDGE (which is used for carrying casualties) left Germany and landed in the Baghdad international airport at 11:20 a.m. (Iraqi time) on January 8.

The military plane left the Baghdad airport an hour later for Germany, the source added.

A few hours later, the C-17 plane landed in an airport in Germany and then left Germany for the Springs Military Camp in Maryland State.

Shortly after Iran's missile attack, the U.S. military officials claimed that the attack had left no casualties, but nine days later they said that a sum of 11 soldiers were sent to Germany for treatment.

Later, the Pentagon acknowledged that the total number of the wounded soldiers had reached 34 that 8 of them were sent to the U.S. due to critical health condition.

According to New York Times, the U.S. Defense Department said on Friday that 34 service members had traumatic brain injuries from Iranian airstrikes, contradicting President Trump's dismissal of injuries among American troops last week.

A Pentagon spokesman, Jonathan Hoffman, told a news conference that eight of the affected service members have returned to the United States from an American military hospital in Germany.

On Wednesday, Mr. Trump dismissed concussion symptoms felt by the troops as "not very serious," even as the Pentagon acknowledged that a number of American service members were being studied for possible traumatic brain injury caused by the attack.

"I heard they had headaches," Trump said at a news conference in Davos, Switzerland. "I don't consider them very serious injuries relative to other injuries I have seen."



Senator Jack Reed, Democrat of Rhode Island and his party's ranking member on the Armed Services Committee, called on Trump to apologize for belittling the injuries suffered by the troops.

"It's plain wrong for President Trump to diminish their wounds," Mr. Reed, who served as an officer in the 82nd Airborne Division, said in a statement Friday. "He may not have meant to disrespect them, but President Trump's

comments were an insult to our troops. He owes them an apology."

The New York Times quoted the military officials as saying that of the 34 service members who were told they have traumatic brain injuries, 17 were flown by medical evacuation aircraft to Germany. Nine remain in the military hospital there, while the others were flown to the United States.

One person was taken by medevac to Ku-

**Senator Jack Reed, Democrat of Rhode Island and his party's ranking member on the Armed Services Committee, called on Trump to apologize for belittling the injuries suffered by the troops.**

## Assassination of Iranian hero activates end of U.S. presence in region: Araghchi

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** —The Iranian deputy foreign minister on Saturday reacted to the U.S. assassination threat against an Iranian military commander, noting that the assassination of General Qassem Soleimani, the commander of IRGC Quds Force, has activated the end of the U.S. military presence in the region.

"Assassination of our heroes by the U.S. state terrorism began termination of the U.S. presence in the region," Abbas Araghchi wrote on his official Twitter account.

According to the BBC, huge crowds took to the streets of Iraq's capital, Baghdad, to demand that U.S. forces leave Iraq.

Many carried Iraq's national flags as well as placards denouncing the U.S. military presence in Iraq.

"Death to America!" demonstrators chanted, and some carried a cardboard cut-out of U.S. President Donald Trump.

On January 5, the Iraqi parliament adopted a resolution asking the government to demand the pullout of U.S. troops from Iraq.

The parliamentary approval and huge demonstrations followed the assassination of General Soleimani and Iraq's PMU deputy leader Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis in a U.S. air raid near Baghdad's airport on January 3.

"Now, the unexperienced people in the U.S. State Department are so blind that they can't see widespread rallies and they are threatening another (Iranian) General," Araghchi added.

Following the assassination of Soleimani, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei appointed

Brigadier General Esmail Ghaani as the new commander of the IRGC Quds Force.

Ghaani had been deputy commander of the Quds Force since 1997.

In reaction to the U.S. threat of assassinating the new commander of the Quds Force, Araghchi added, "The maximum pressure is definitely a great failure (for the White House), but the extremists who rule over the White House do not know anything about Iran and insist on continuation of their path."

U.S. Special Representative for Iran Brian Hook, in an interview with the Saudi-owned Asharq al-Awsat newspaper on Thursday, made assassination threats against General Ghaani.

"If (Ghaani) follows a similar path of killing Americans, he will meet the same fate, because the President (Trump) has made clear for years that any attacks against the American personnel or interests in the region will be met with a decisive response, and the President demonstrated that on January 2nd. So this is not a new threat," Hook said.

On Thursday, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said the United States officially unveiled "targeted and state terrorism" by threatening to assassinate the new commander of the IRGC Quds Force.

Mousavi said, "Now, after the Zionist regime, the United States is the second regime which has officially announced using its government possibilities and armed forces to take terrorist action."

The U.S. resort to terrorist actions shows Washington's



"weakness and frustration" and also "confusion" among its officials, the ministry spokesman said.

He also urged the international community to condemn state terrorism, because "the continuation of this trend would sooner or later befall everyone."

On Thursday, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova also condemned the U.S. threats to assassinate Gha'ani as "unacceptable."

"I state once again that such statements are unacceptable for us. Such remarks have been made beyond rights and law, and representatives of world states are not entitled to utter them," the Arabic service of Russia's Sputnik news agency quoted Zakharova as saying at a news briefing in the capital Moscow.

## Trump has recklessly dragged the Persian Gulf to the brink of war

### The 12 consequences of Soleimani's assassination

**1 →** The phenomenal participation of ordinary people in those processions is the most telling evidence of their popularity and, incidentally, the pervasive anti-United States sentiments expressed. It simply shows that the Iranian Quds and the Iraqi Popular Mobilization Forces enjoy massive social support while U.S. forces in the region do not. Very soon after the U.S. military strike against Soleimani, Iraq's populist Shia leader Muqtada al-Sadr has called for a "million-man march" against the presence of U.S. troops in Iraq, also right after the country's parliament voted to expel foreign troops from Iraq. This vote came after U.S. airstrikes killed the two generals.

Third, not only state officials, but also the people of Iraq and Iran view the Quds and al-Hashd al-Sha'bi forces, along with Gen. Maj Soleimani and Al-Muhandis, on the forefront of combating terrorist groups such as ISIS, Al-Nusra, and Al Qaeda. This fact was not hidden to the staunchest anti-Iran politicians—including Trump. For instance, in his remarks on January 9, he admitted that ISIS was an enemy of Iran. ISIS actually welcomed the assassination of Soleimani. The United States did what ISIS had failed to do for many years: assassinating two great military commanders who most successfully fought them. From this day forward, the majority of Iranians and Iraqis will not believe U.S. claims of fighting ISIS, but may, in fact, view Washington as a hidden or unwitting ally of ISIS. Let's not forget that that before his ordering the assassination of Soleimani, Trump also had once said that the United States was re-

sponsible for having founded ISIS.

Fourth, Soleimani was a high-ranking Iranian official who had arrived in Baghdad upon the invitation of the Iraqi State. Interim Iraqi Prime Minister, Adel Abdul-Mahdi, made it clear that Soleimani arrived in Baghdad not to plan attacks on American targets, but to coordinate de-escalation with Saudi Arabia, and thus debunking Trump's claim of "imminent attacks." "I was supposed to meet Soleimani at the morning the day he was killed; he came to deliver me a message from Iran responding to the message we delivered from Saudi to Iran," Abdul-Mahdi said. However, it is the first time in U.S.-Iranian relations that the U.S. government publicly assumed responsibility for the assassination of a senior Iranian military commander. In response, Iran attacked two major U.S. military bases. No country has been able to successfully attack a U.S. military base since the Second World War. This is certainly an unprecedented event in the history of U.S.-Iranian relations, as Washington and Tehran have now apparently entered a military confrontation.

Fifth, it has been a year-and-a-half that the Trump administration has waged a vicious economic, security and political war against Iran, which in the wake of the recent military offenses, effectively morphed into a military confrontation. Once Iran militarily responded to the assassination of Soleimani, Trump said that Iran and the United States "should embrace peace" and that they can "work together" to fight ISIS. White House National Security Advisor Robert O'Brien said that he

is convinced that Iran is more likely to return to the negotiating table since the United States killed Quds force's leader. This is an illusion and a miscalculation: the assassination of Soleimani has made diplomacy much more difficult, and a viable deal with Iran far less likely.

Sixth, for a long time, U.S. officials accused Iran of having the blood of American soldiers on its hands. Let's not forget that Iranians also believe the United States has Iranian blood on its hands, by unconditionally supporting Saddam Hussein's war of aggression against their country and more recently by enforcing their inhumane sanctions. But by assassinating a top-ranked Iranian military commander, the United States simply created an undeniable proof of responsibility for shedding Iranian blood.

Seventh, the Trump administration has miserated ordinary Iranians by causing unprecedented economic hardships through adopting a policy of "maximum pressure" on Iran. This has resulted in unrest in many cities in Iran, with tens of people killed or wounded. Domestic discontent with the economic climate of the country is casting doubts about the people's participation in the 2020 parliamentary and 2021 presidential elections. By assassinating Iran's most popular commander, Soleimani, Iranians came to the streets expressing the utmost sympathy and solidarity. As Ayatollah Ali Khamenei remarked, there has been a renewal of social unity and solidarity among the Iranian people, which ought to be preserved.

Eighth, the U.S. military invasion of Af-

wait. Sixteen service members were treated for traumatic brain injury in Iraq and have returned to duty, officials said.

**■ U.S. presidential candidates slam Trump's remarks over American forces injuries**

Two U.S. Democratic presidential candidates have blasted Trump for downplaying the injuries.

Former U.S. Vice President Joe Biden offered his harsh criticism of Trump while speaking on Friday at an election campaign event in the state of New Hampshire, Fars reported.

"Just this week, he brushed off the injuries sustained by those brave troops who were on the other side of the Iranian bombardment and missile attack in Iraq from Iran," Biden said.

Biden noted there are "300,000 estimated people coming home from these wars suffering from post-traumatic stress as a consequence of being exposed to the traumatic brain injuries".

Also, Sen. Elizabeth Warren slammed Trump's approach on Tehran, and warned that the American leader has provoked a conflict with Iran, and then hid the casualties the U.S. military has been suffering in Iran's missile attacks.

"Trump provoked a conflict with Iran, then concealed and diminished the injuries our troops suffered as a result. It's appalling. I worked in the Senate to improve treatment of traumatic brain injuries—and as president I'll end the wars that cause them," Warren wrote on Twitter on Saturday.

Democrats have also slammed Trump's decision for assassinating General Soleimani, with many saying he needed congressional authority to order the killing and branded the assassination as "an act of war".

ghanistan, Iraq and Libya, its support for Saddam Hussein's war of aggression against Iran, its alliance with Saudi Arabian in the war on Yemen and last, but not least, its support for the Israeli occupation of Palestine have led to the solidification of the "resistance forces" in the Middle East. Palestinian Hamas, the Iranian Basij, the Yemeni Houthies and the Iraqi Hashd Al-Sha'abi are few among many others resisting U.S. and Israeli hegemony. Soleimani and al-Muhandis were the highest-ranking Iranian and Iraqi commanders of the resistance forces, and their martyrdom has created scars on the people's hearts, thus institutionalizing a permanent grudge against the United States, whose actions and ensuing catastrophic consequences will continue to damage the region for decades to come. While it is true that the U.S. military is the most powerful in the world, it also has never won a guerrilla or asymmetric war, whether in an occupied country or otherwise. And it never will.

Ninth, Europe and NATO had already made major mistakes by either indirect support or direct participation in wars and military occupations in the Middle East. Their support of such an egregious assassination of the two high-ranking commanders of the resistance front will practically expose them to new major threats. Conversely, the Eastern powers, especially Russia and China and India, have seized this opportunity to gain favor by condemning the assassination and sympathizing with the nations of Iran and Iraq.

(See full text at [tehrantimes.com](http://tehrantimes.com))



# Zarif says Iran was not after causing human casualties with strike on U.S. base

“It’s a disaster for Europe to be so subservient to the U.S.,” chief diplomat says

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Foreign desk Minister Mohammad Zarif has said Iran’s missile strike against the U.S. military base in Iraq, from which the U.S. conducted the operation to assassinate General Soleimani, was Iran’s formal military response.

“There was no intention of causing any casualties with the missile attack – we were executing our right to self-defense in a proportionate manner,” Zarif said in an interview with Der Spiegel published on Friday.

The following is an excerpt of the interview: ■ Mr. Zarif, Iran and the United States have been enemies for the past 40 years and you have held senior posts in Iranian foreign policy for at least 20 of them. Has there ever been a situation as dangerous as the one we are currently facing?

A: First of all, I have to correct you. I have been in important posts for 30 years. And it has always been difficult. We were at the brink of war several times in the past 40 years. This time, it is particularly grave because the U.S. government undertook a terrorist operation against an official of the Iranian government. That has never happened before.

■ Is further escalation imminent?

A: The attack was based on a misperception. The U.S. believed that by assassinating General Qassem Soleimani, it would improve its position in the region. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo tweeted that people were dancing in the streets of Iraq. But there were huge funeral processions. It has created a very difficult moment in this region. The United States will certainly not benefit from this.

■ The Iranian leadership has sworn that it would take revenge for Soleimani’s killing. There has already been a missile strike against a base in Iraq used by the U.S. military. Is there any reason to fear that you will do even more?

A: The strike against the military base in Iraq, from which the U.S. conducted its operation, was Iran’s formal military response. There was no intention of causing any casualties with the missile attack – we were executing our right to self-defense in a proportionate manner. But the real response will come from the people of the region, who are showing that they are absolutely disgusted with the U.S. behavior. The Americans will see that Soleimani as a martyr will be much more effective than a General Soleimani.

■ Is it possible that hardliners in the U.S. might view the mild reaction from Iran as a sign of weakness?

A: The damage we have done to the U.S. is extensive, because with all its military might, it could not prevent the missiles from hitting its base. It shows how vulnerable the U.S. is. But the Americans have inflicted the real damage themselves through the hatred the U.S. created in the people of the region. Soleimani’s murder is the beginning of the end of the U.S. presence – certainly in Iraq, but elsewhere in the region, too. It may not be tomorrow, but we have millennia of history, so we are not in a hurry.

■ At the height of the tensions, you communicated with Washington through Switzerland, which represents U.S. interests in Iran. What was it about?

A: The communication was initiated by the U.S. in a very improper form.

■ Can you explain?

A: Secretary of State Pompeo is not a very good diplomat. His message was provocative, insulting and threatening to us. I would not read it as de-escalation at all. We sent a very proper response through the Swiss after our counterstrike, without engaging in any sloganeering and chest-thumping. We told them that the action has ended and that we will not take any more action if they don’t take any more action – and that we are not responsible for the actions of others.

■ What does Soleimani’s death mean for Iran and its policies in the region?

A: General Soleimani was extremely important. His death is an irreparable loss for Iran and for me personally. I’ve lost a good friend. But this will not have an impact on Iranian policy in the region.

■ Soleimani was the architect of Iran’s strategy of exerting its influence throughout



the region by providing military support for its allies. The U.S. blames Soleimani for the death of hundreds of soldiers in Iraq.

A: The U.S., Europe and the entire international community is indebted to General Soleimani for the victory over the Islamic State. The realities in the region are incomprehensible to the United States. They always talk about proxies, but Iran doesn’t have any proxies. Proxies don’t bring millions out into the streets to mourn the death of a general.

■ But Iran isn’t popular with its influence. It’s not just Washington, but also Iran that is experiencing increasing difficulty in the region. There have been anti-Iranian slogans in protests in Iraq, and there have been protests in Lebanon against Hezbollah, Tehran’s close ally.

A: There are protests in Iraq and in Lebanon against corruption and deficiencies people see in the government and there have also been anti-Iranian slogans. But the outpouring of emotion following Soleimani’s assassination has shown the real relationship. There are supporters and opponents for every policy.

■ That also applies to Iran. The moment of national unity after Soleimani’s death was brief. Now people are protesting again after the Revolutionary Guards accidentally shot down a Ukrainian passenger plane.

A: First of all, the people had a very legitimate grievance. They were shaken by the death of so many bright young people in the plane crash. Many students lost someone they knew. It was an emotional situation.

■ Why did it take three days for your government to admit that its own armed forces had shot the plane down?

A: This was a complicated situation in a complicated time. Others needed much more time. Almost 32 years ago, the U.S. shot down an Iranian passenger plane. As of today, they still haven’t issued an official apology. The American officer who was responsible for shooting it down even received a medal. Meanwhile, the Iranian man who shot down the Ukrainian plane is now in prison.

■ That still doesn’t explain why the Iranian government needed three days to admit the mistake.

A: People were right to complain about the fact that information was withheld from them. But the government wasn’t responsible for this.

■ When did you personally learn of the mistake?

A: On Friday afternoon, more than two days after it happened. That was the point at which the higher ups in the military reached the final conclusion that this was done by somebody by mistake. As soon as it was reported to the revolutionary leader, he demanded that the public be informed. That happened on Saturday morning. They were very painful weeks.

■ You blamed “U.S. adventurism” for the shooting down of the plane. But wasn’t it rather irresponsible of the Iranian authorities not to close the country’s airspace on the night of the attack?

A: That was a technical decision as well as a political decision. Tehran was not in the

area of hostilities. And we engaged in war against Iraq for eight years without closing our airspace.

■ Will there be an international investigation?

A: We have invited the Ukrainians, the owner of the plane, and Boeing to participate. We are open to the participation of others. We are carrying out a proper investigation based on international requirements.

■ There were mass protests in Iran in November and now students are demonstrating. How strong is their resistance to your government?

A: I recognize peoples’ anger and frustration, their mourning for the victims. The students who died deserve great attention and I’m not trying to belittle the legitimate concerns of the mourners. But if you want to consider this as a barometer of opposition to the government, then you have to balance it properly against the funeral processions for Soleimani. We should not disregard the voices of discontent, the voices of opposition, the voices of those whose lives have been ruined by U.S. economic terrorism. There are, however, other people who go out into the streets to show respect and admiration for a man who fought terrorism and defended his country. We are not a monolithic country. We have different voices. And the people have a right to demonstrate and to express their protest.

■ When Iranians exercised that right in November against the increase in gasoline prices, many were shot. There have been reports that more than 1,000 people were killed.

A: These events were some of the worst times in our lives. But these numbers are wrong – it was less than a third of that. And there is an investigation. You have to differentiate between those who are exercising their right to free speech and those who are looting shops and burning down gas stations. The security forces also have a responsibility for maintaining public order.

■ You think the crackdown was necessary?

A: No, I never say that. I don’t want to justify excessive measures. Anybody who used excessive force has to be brought to justice.

■ In May 2018, Trump announced the U.S. would withdraw from the nuclear deal with Iran and he slapped the country with tough sanctions. Because Iran is now being less and less compliant with the agreement, the European Union recently initiated a process that could lead to the reapplication of the United Nations sanctions.

A: Unfortunately, the Europeans don’t view Iran as a partner. We triggered the dispute resolution back in 2018. As a result of that process, the Europeans, Russia, China and Iran issued a statement in June 2018. Among other things, it was stated that it is essential that Iran benefit economically from the nuclear agreement (the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, JCPOA). But the Europeans didn’t do anything. They have not fulfilled their obligations. The Europeans have to come down from their high horse.

■ The Europeans are merely responding to the fact that Iran has begun to violate the agreement.

A: We are not violating the agreement; we are acting in accordance with JCPOA. Let me make it very clear to the Europeans: If they want to implement their obligations, we will be prepared to go back to full compliance immediately. But implementing their obligations is not just about making announcements that they are committed to JCPOA. I could also make the same announcement: We are committed to the agreement, we love the agreement, we want it to stay alive forever. Words are cheap. Europe should show us one single action. But what have they done?

■ They established the Instrument Support of Trade Exchanges (INSTEX), a special purpose vehicle to enable companies to do business with Iran despite the U.S. sanctions.

A: INSTEX is basically an accounting company. More than a year and a half after the U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA, the Europeans haven’t succeeded in carrying out a single transaction.

■ Is the nuclear deal dead?

A: No. Inspections and transparency about Iran’s activities are an important part of the agreement, and they are still happening. The EU has not fulfilled parts of the agreement and Iran has not fulfilled parts, but that doesn’t mean it is dead.

■ If Iran fails to reach an agreement with the Europeans within 30 days, the matter will go to the UN Security Council and UN sanctions will be imposed against Iran again. That would spell the end of the agreement.

A: The Europeans have no legitimate grounds for resorting to this mechanism. They can’t just refer something to the Security Council because they are Europeans and they have blue eyes. And it’s not only us who think this, but also the Russians and the Chinese. The Europeans will be up against a major battle.

■ What do you expect from the EU?

A: It’s a disaster for Europe to be so subservient to the U.S. Anybody who accepts unilateralism is helping it. The Europeans call us and say: We’re sorry, we cannot do anything. The Europeans can’t buckle to Trump and then try to act like the strong man against Iran.

■ How would Iran react to the reinstatement of UN sanctions?

A: President Hassan Rouhani clarified the actions we will take in a letter to the treaty partners.

■ Iran has threatened to withdraw from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) if that happens.

A: It’s mentioned in the letter.

■ Does that mean that Iran would head in the direction of building a bomb?

A: No. Our decision not to build a bomb does not derive from NPT. It derives from our own moral and strategic convictions.

■ Did the killing of Soleimani change these strategic considerations?

A: No. Moral convictions do not hinge on the illegal behavior of others.

■ There’s a faction inside the Iranian leadership that believes that nuclear weapons are the only way for Iran to defend itself against the U.S. They may well have an additional argument for that case now.

A: As I told you, Iran is not a monolith – you will not find unanimity in Iran on most issues. But the revolutionary leader has issued a fatwa (Ed’s note: a religious legal opinion) prohibiting weapons of mass destruction.

■ Do you rule out the possibility of negotiations with the U.S. following Soleimani’s murder?

A: No, I never rule out the possibility that people will change their approach and recognize the realities. For us, it doesn’t matter who is sitting in the White House. What matters is how they behave. The Trump administration can correct its past, lift the sanctions and come back to the negotiating table. We’re still at the negotiating table. They’re the ones who left. The U.S. has inflicted great harm on the Iranian people. The day will come when they will have to compensate for that. We have a lot of patience.

## Tehran censures U.S. interrogation of Iranian-born travelers illegal and inhumane

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi has condemned the United States’ Customs and Border Protection for its “illegal” and “inhumane” treatment of Iranian nationals as a brazen violation of human rights.

In a statement on Saturday, Mousavi said a complaint could be lodged against such conduct at human rights courts, the Foreign Ministry website reported.

“Such absolutely discriminatory measures that are taken only because of the race, nationality or maybe the faith of people are totally rejected in terms of the international human rights laws and principles, and would result in accountability for the U.S. government,” he added.

“Since those (Iranian) individuals have been questioned by the U.S. border guards and security forces about their political and theological beliefs and their accounts in the virtual space have been also investigated coercively, such measure amounts to an example of inquisition and a blatant violation of human rights,” the spokesman deplored.

Mousavi further condemned the U.S. Customs and Border Protection’s harassment of the Iranian citizens, saying, “Such measures against the Iranians are part of the U.S. regime’s hostile and vindictive policy towards Iran and its identity and existence that transpires once in the shape of the decision to ban Iranians from entering the U.S., once in the (form of) threat of attack on Iran’s cultural and civilizational centers, another time in the cowardly assassination of the mythic hero of the fight against terrorism, and most recently in another form in the harassment of Iranians at the borders of the U.S.”

“Such behavior from the U.S. government could be definitely brought to and sued by the human rights tribunals,” the spokesman concluded.

U.S. border officers working at Canadian border crossings were directed to stop travelers of Iranian descent for questioning following the U.S. assassination of top Iranian General Qassem Soleimani, CNN reported on Friday, citing an unnamed Customs and Border Protection officer.

More than 60 people were held for additional questioning in Washington State, the New York Times reported earlier this month, citing advocacy groups and accounts from travelers.

It came in the days following the assassination of Soleimani on January 3, after which Iran threatened to retaliate against the United States.

The U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) press secretary Matt Leas said in a January 5 statement “social media posts that CBP is detaining Iranian-Americans and refusing their entry into the U.S. because of their country of origin are false. Reports that DHS/CBP has issued a related directive are also false.”

An email sent to immigration attorney Leonard Saunders by a Washington state CBP officer tells a different story. The officer claimed that there was indeed such a directive which was only lifted, “as soon as it hit the national news.”

“This thing that happened was Seattle Field Office wide,” the officer wrote. “Multiple Americans of Persian birth were held and interrogated at length.”

The officer said he was involved in the questioning of Iranian-born travelers.

“We asked them standard counter terrorism inspection questions. Was there an Immigration reason for detaining them? No. Was there a Customs reason for detaining them? No. Was the sole reason we detained and questioned them due to their national origin? Yes. Was it the right thing to do? No. Where (sic) their constitutional rights violated? Probably.”

## Iran sympathizes with Turkey over devastating quake

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — The Foreign Ministry spokesman, in a message on Saturday, voiced Iran’s “deep” condolences to the bereaved families of the victims, the Turkish government and people over the Friday quake in the eastern part of Turkey that left at least 22 people dead and tens more wounded.

The magnitude 6.8 earthquake jolted Elazig province, about 550 km (340 miles) east of the capital Ankara. It was followed by dozens of aftershocks.

According to relevant bodies, after the incident the Iranian emergency medical services (EMS) were put on alert to provide relief and rescue services to the quake-hit areas if needed.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif also telephoned his Turkish counterpart Mevlut Cavusoglu to express condolences to the bereaved families.

The Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) announced it is ready to provide help to Turkey.

The announcement was made in a phone conversation between IRCS Secretary General Mahmoudreza Peyravi and President of Turkey’s Red Crescent Kerem Kinik, MNA reported.

Turkey’s Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD) said early on Saturday that 16 people were killed in Elazig and four more in the neighboring province of Malatya.

It further said that 920 people injured in the strong quake have been admitted to the nearest hospitals in the region.

Interior Minister Suleyman Soyulu said emergency workers were searching for 30 people under the rubble.

State broadcaster TRT showed footage of dozens of workers in the dawn light using shovels to dig out a partly collapsed building in Elazig. Windows were smashed and balconies from at least four stories had crashed to the ground.

Teams worked through the night with their hands, drills and mechanical diggers to remove bricks and plaster from the ruins in the city where the overnight temperature dipped to -8 degrees Celsius.

## “Joker” riots or “Jadriya” rage: Which occupies the streets of the Middle East?

**1→** The presence of millions of Iraqis in the Friday demonstration, which was staged in Baghdad’s Jadriya neighborhood, clearly showed that the U.S. hybrid warfare is failed in this phase.

In other words, the Iraqi people’s anti-U.S. move showed that U.S.-led coalitions have not been able to achieve their goals even with the support of intelligence agencies aligned with the CIA and Mossad, the widespread psychological operations by the London-based TV channels, and Saudi Arabia’s Etidal.

## Fars news goes offline ‘due to U.S. sanctions’

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — The website of the Fars news agency has gone offline worldwide due to U.S. sanctions, the agency announced on Friday night.

In a post on its Twitter account, Fars said access to its .com domain had been blocked upon the U.S. Treasury’s order.

Internet users trying to access farsnews.com also found only a blank screen, along with a message stating “farsnews.com’s server IP address could not be found.”

The news agency said it had received an email from its server company, which “explicitly said that the blockage is due to an order by the Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) and its inclusion in the list of Specially Designated Nationals (SDN).”

However, Fars can still be accessed through its .ir domain. Previously, Google, YouTube, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter targeted Iranian accounts, including those belonging to broadcasters.

In December 2019, Google blocked access to Press TV



This site can’t be reached

www.farsnews.com’s server IP address could not be found.

Try running Windows Network Diagnostics.

DNS\_PROBE\_FINISHED\_NXDOMAIN

Reload

and Hispan TV’s official YouTube accounts without any prior notice.

Ever since Donald Trump become the president of the United States in 2017, Washington has ramped up anti-Iran measures. Trump adopted a “maximum pressure” policy against Iran later on, after withdrawing from the historic 2015 Iran nuclear deal in May 2018.

The U.S. government has since targeted Iranian officials and organizations with vicious sanctions.

Back in April 2019, the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) was blacklisted by the U.S. as a “foreign terrorist organization”. In retaliation, the Iranian Supreme National Security Council named the United States Central Command (CENTCOM) a terrorist organization.

In June 2019, Trump announced new sanctions against Iran, targeting office of Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and top commanders of the IRGC.

In July 2019, the U.S. Treasury Department said it was imposing sanctions on Zarif for acting on behalf of Ayatollah Khamenei.



STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	417001.9
IFX	5351.08

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	46,310 rials
GBP	54,929 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$59.89/b
WTI	\$54.19/b
OPEC Basket	\$63.26/b
Gold	\$1,573.30/oz
Silver	\$18.17/oz
Platinum	\$1,010.40/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

IRAN LIFTEX 2020 running in Tehran

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds is hosting the 8th International Exhibition of Elevators, Escalators, Elevating Conveyors and Accessories.



The inauguration ceremony of the four-day exhibit was participated by Bahman Hosseinzadeh, the managing director of Iran International Exhibitions Company, on Thursday, the company's public relations and international affairs department reported.

As reported, a number of other officials including Masha'allah Azimi, a board member of Iran's Chamber of Cooperatives, were also present in the opening ceremony of the international event.

Eurozone economy remains weak but green shoots emerging, survey says

Eurozone business activity remained lackluster at the start of the year, a survey showed a day after the European Central Bank (ECB) said the manufacturing sector remained a drag on the economy, but there were some glimmers of hope for policymakers.

ECB rate-setters did not make any policy change on Thursday, standing by their pledge to keep buying bonds and, if needed, cut interest rates until price growth in the eurzone heads back to their goal.

Still, the slowdown in eurozone economic activity has probably bottomed out, according to a Reuters poll last week, which showed while the outlook for growth and inflation remained lukewarm the chances of a recession have faded.

That outlook was somewhat supported by IHS Markit's eurozone Composite Flash Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI), seen as a good gauge of economic health, which held at 50.9 in January but missed the median prediction in a Reuters poll for 51.2. Anything above 50 indicates growth.

The "unchanged reading for the eurozone's Composite PMI in January leaves it still consistent with fairly slow GDP growth," said Jack Allen-Reynolds at Capital Economics.

Following Friday's PMI, the euro continued to languish near a seven-week low after the ECB's more dovish tone at Thursday's meeting than some had expected.

An earlier PMI from Germany, Europe's largest economy, showed the private sector gained momentum as growth in services activity picked up and the pullback in manufacturing eased.

French activity expanded at a weaker pace as nationwide strikes weighed and IHS Markit cautioned growth outside of Germany and France slowed to a six-and-a-half year low.

Britain's performance bettered the eurozone's for the first time since December 2018, a separate PMI showed, the strongest evidence yet of a post-election boost to the economy that could deter the Bank of England from cutting interest rates next week.

A break-even mark

The eurozone's headline index was bogged down by a still struggling factory industry. The manufacturing PMI marked the 12th month below the break-even mark, registering 47.8 — albeit an improvement on December's 46.3 and well above the Reuters poll's 46.8.

An index measuring output, which feeds into the composite PMI, rose to 47.5 from 46.1, its highest since August.

While most forward-looking indicators in the manufacturing PMI remained in negative territory, they were moving in the right direction. The new orders, employment, backlogs of work and quantity of purchases indexes were all still sub-50 but did rise.

"With manufacturing showing early signs of recovery and the service sector continuing to grow, chances of a recession are receding further," said Bert Colijn at ING.

However, the PMI for the bloc's dominant services industry weakened to 52.2 from 52.8, confounding expectations for no change.

And possibly of concern to policymakers, demand weakened suggesting there won't be a significant turnaround anytime soon. The services new business index fell to 51.5 from 52.1.

(Source: breccorder.com)

TPO to hold conference on sustainable supply of basic commodities

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) is planning to hold a conference on the stable supply of basic and strategic commodities on March 3, the organization's Public Relations Department reported.

The conference will be participated by a number of trade sector's officials, Farhad Nouri, the acting director of TPO department of commodities and services export development, announced and said the conference is aimed at materializing the general policies of "Resistance Economy" in terms of economic self-reliance.

Nouri, who is the secretary of the conference, further said that the gathering is tried to find the practical approaches for the sustainable supply of basic and strategic commodities through gathering importers of these commodities, suppliers of funds and banking facilities, insurers, transportation and customs representatives, and some wholesalers together.

Last month, Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Reza Rahmani said the basic goods that the country needs in the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 19, 2020) and also in the next year have been reserved.

The minister said the government and private sector's warehouses are already filled



up with the basic commodities and there is no concern in this due.

Also, the deputy finance and economic affairs minister has announced that the government has provisioned \$14 billion of official-rate foreign currency in the next Iranian calendar year (March 2020-March 2021)'s budget bill for imports of basic goods.

Housing prices rise 3% in Tehran City in a month



**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — The housing prices in Iran's capital city, Tehran, went up three percent during the past Iranian calendar month of Dey (December 22, 2019-January 20, 2020), Tasnim news agency reported on Saturday, citing the data released by Ministry of Transport and Urban Development.

The ministry's data also indicate that the number of real estate deals has risen 13.2 percent in Tehran in the past month.

Last month, Deputy Transport and Urban Development Minister for Housing and Construction Affairs Mahmoud Mahmoudzadeh said that the government was planning on launching a national real estate and housing system, aimed at controlling the country's housing and real estate market by the end of the current Iranian

calendar year (March 19, 2020).

"In order to control and regulate the real estate market, the Ministry of Transport and Urban Development is following four major programs which include taxing vacant houses, completing Mehr housing units, constructing and supplying new housing units through the National Housing Plan and finally setting up a professional real estate and housing system," the official explained.

According to Mahmoudzadeh, one of the main goals of establishing this system is to identify vacant and unused houses in order to receive tax from the owners.

"The system will be able to bring back 2.6 million vacant housing units into the real estate market, and consequently affect the rent prices significantly," he said.

Over 500,000 tons of commodities traded at IME in a week



**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — During the past Iranian calendar week (ended on Friday), Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) witnessed the trade of 555,000 tons of commodities valued at \$738 million, the Public Relations and International Affairs Department of IME reported.

Trades at the IME's metal and mineral trading floor experienced a growth of 72 percent in the past week, the same report confirmed.

Last week, on the domestic and export metal and mineral trading floor of IME, 270,630 tons of various products worth close to \$419 million were traded.

On this trading floor, 244,548 tons of steel, 4,820 tons of copper, 7,080 tons of aluminum, 160 tons of molybdenum concentrates, 12 tons of precious metal concentrates, 10 tons of lead ingot and 14,000 tons of zinc dust as well as 9 kg of gold bullion were traded by customers.

The report declares that on domestic and export oil and petrochemical trading floors of IME, 284,010 tons of different commodities with the total value of \$327 million were traded.

On this trading floor, 86,641 tons of bitumen, 64,000 tons of VB feed stock,

68,501 tons of polymer products, 21,000 tons of lube cut oil, 34,706 tons of chemical products, 2,070 tons of base oil, 20 tons of argon, 2,700 tons of insulation, as well as 4,740 tons of sulfur were traded.

Furthermore, 368 tons of commodities were traded on the side market of IME.

As reported by Tasnim news agency on Friday, over 2.851 million tons of commodities worth 133 trillion rials (about \$3.1 billion) were traded at IME during the past Iranian calendar month of Dey (December 22, 2019-January 20, 2020).

Over 1.868 million tons of commodities valued at 71.858 trillion rials (about \$1.7 billion) were traded at the oil and petrochemical products floor of IME in the past month.

The IME's floor of industrial products and minerals witnessed trading of 974,477 tons of commodities worth 60.823 trillion rials (about \$1.4 billion) in the last month, the same report confirmed.

IME is one of the four major stock markets of Iran, the other three markets are Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), Iran's over-the-counter (OTC) market known also as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB), and Iran Energy Exchange (IRENEX).

'OMO to control, not to lower liquidity growth'



**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Ali Eslami Bidgoli, a member of Iran's Securities and Exchange High Council, says that Open Market Operation (OMO) system, recently launched by the Central Bank of Iran (CBI), should not be expected to reduce the inflow of liquidity into the market, while it is to control it.

Speaking to ILNA, Bidgoli explained, "What we have defined as an OMO system in Iran is somehow different from the global definition; so, we should moderate our demand from such system in our domestic market."

On January 17, the Central Bank of Iran officially launched an open market operation system as part of its monetary policy to curb inflation as well as control interest rates in the interbank market and manage liquidity.

low in the market, so \$14 billion of currency with official rate will be provided to the importers of these commodities next year," Dehnavi said.

Meanwhile, in a new directive earlier this month, Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) obliged the customs departments throughout the country to take necessary measures (mentioned in the new instruction) for facilitation of the clearance of basic goods.

As the sanctions may make the country face shortage of basic goods, the government and IRICA have taken various measures to avoid such condition.

One major action is facilitating condition for the importers of the basic commodities, for example providing them with required foreign currency through NIMA (Iran's Forex Management Integrated System).

In August, 2019, Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Farhad Dejjasand, in a directive addressing the IRICA head, obliged the customs administration to take measures for facilitating customs processes.

Meanwhile, following a previous directive by President Hassan Rouhani, IRICA has been providing new facilities for importers of basic goods which makes them able to clear their commodities in less than an hour.

Stock market advances on Saturday



**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Iran's stock market started this Iranian calendar week with growth on Saturday, IRNA reported.

As reported, TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE) rose 5,790 points to 417,001 as 6.035 billion securities worth 40.051 trillion rials (about \$953.5 million) were traded at this market on Saturday.

The first market's index climbed 4,224 points and the second market's index rose 11,706 points on the first day of the week.

The value of trades at Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE) rose 30 percent in the past Iranian calendar week (ended on Friday), according to a report published on the official website of TSE.

The report also said that TEDPIX climbed 11,766 points to 411,211 in the past week.

As reported, 33.75 billion securities worth 195.821 trillion rials (about \$4.6 billion) were traded through 3.496 million deals at this market, experiencing growth of 21 percent in the number of securities and 62 percent in the number of trades.

The first market's index rose 7,667 points, or 2.6 percent, to 294,639 and the second market's index climbed 27,892 points, or

3.3 percent, to 855,270 in the previous week, the same report confirmed.

As previously reported, TSE witnessed the highest ever weekly rise of its main index in the Iranian calendar week ended on January 17, which was the last week of Iran's tenth calendar month of Dey.

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

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

Meanwhile, on Saturday, Iran's over-the-counter (OTC) market known as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB) witnessed some growth, as its main index, IFX, rose 63 points to 5,351.

Some 2.329 billion securities valued at 68.408 trillion rials (about \$1.628 billion) were traded at IFB on Saturday.

TSE and IFB are two of the four stock markets of Iran. The other two markets are Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) and Iran Energy Exchange (IRENEX).



# Iran gas situation: Are power plants facing feedstock shortage?

By Ebrahim Fallahi

**TEHRAN** — Following the new wave of cold weather blanketing Iran in recent weeks, natural gas consumption by the Iranian households has hit new record highs, ringing warning bells about possible problems regarding fuel supply to the country's power plants and industry sector which mainly consume natural gas.

Considering the remarks made by senior officials at the energy and oil ministries, the amount of daily gas consumption by the domestic sector is touching the total amount of the gas supplied by the oil ministry, and they believe that people should manage their consumption of both gas and electricity to pass through the current condition.

The Tehran Times conducted an interview with the Energy Ministry's spokesman for the power department Mostafa Najafi Mashahadi, to follow up on the issue. What follows is the gist of what we learned.

■ **Supply vs consumption**

Earlier this week, Iranian Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian said daily gas consumption by Iranian households has recently reached about 700 million cubic meters (mcm) which is almost equal to the total amount of the country's gas supplied by the oil ministry (which is in charge of the production and distribution of the natural gas in Iran). This remarks raised the question about the feedstock of the country's power plants.

The oil ministry supplies about 700 million cubic meters of gas per day, 520 mcm of which is used in the domestic sector,



90 mcm by the country's power plants, 50 mcm for exports and another 40 mcm is consumed by the industry sector, according to Ardakanian.

This means that the gas supplied by the oil ministry is only enough to meet the needs of the domestic sector at the moment and the power plants, exports and the industry are left with no supply.

In this regard, Najafi said the oil and energy ministries are in close communication with each other and are taking all necessary measures to manage the situation.

"The oil ministry and its subsidiary com-

panies have increased their supply for the power plants in the past few days," he said.

Rejecting the idea of the daily consumption surpassing 700 mcm, the official put the country's current daily gas consumption at about 600 mcm.

However, considering a nearly 600 mcm daily consumption, exports, industry and power plants would, again, have nearly 100 mcm to manage.

■ **Exports and industry sector**

With the households' daily consumption at record high of 600 mcm, and the country's power plants needing nearly 50 mcm of gas

to meet the electricity demand, it appears that the industry and exports would face serious shortages.

Regarding the industry sector, the official explained that to offset some of the power plants' feedstock demand the energy ministry is also using alternative fuels like fuel oil and gas oil in order to alleviate the situation and manage the probable supply shortages.

So in critical situations like the current one the gas consumption by the power plants is not necessarily 50 mcm per day and could be much less.

Regarding the exports to the neighboring countries, mainly Iraq, with which Iran has agreed to supply a daily amount of 50 mcm, reports indicate that due to the harsh situation inside the country, Iran has decreased its exports significantly to meet its domestic needs.

According to sources close to the Iraq energy ministry, Iran which used to export 25 mcm (approximately 883 million cubic feet) of natural gas to Iraq on a daily basis, has decreased it exports to four million cubic meters in recent months.

So, it seems that with the oil and energy ministries' arrangements, as long as the consumption doesn't exceed 600 mcm, there will be no problem regarding the gas supply to both the power plants and the industry sector.

However, like many other officials, Rajabi also called on people to manage and optimize their gas and electricity consumption and help the government in passing through this situation with no serious problems.

## NIDC digs 96 oil, gas wells in 10 months

**E N E R G Y TEHRAN** — National Iranian Drilling Company (NIDC) dug and completed digging operation of 96 oil and gas wells during the first ten months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2019-January 20, 2020), Shana reported.



According to Mohammad Al-e Khamis, NIDC's deputy head for drilling operation, the drilled wells consisted of two exploration wells and 35 development/appraisal wells as well as 59 workover ones.

As reported, over 132,000 meters of digging has been conducted for the mentioned onshore and offshore wells.

Al-e Khamis further said that the company has managed to complete digging of nine out of the 96 mentioned wells some 89 days sooner than the schedule.

NIDC, a subsidiary of National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC), undertakes most drilling operations across the country and has drilled 4,489 onshore and offshore oil and gas wells in the past four decades after the victory of the Islamic Revolution.

Holding 70 onshore and offshore drilling rigs as well as equipment and facilities for offering integrated technical and engineering services, the company accounts for a major part of drilling exploration as well as appraisal/development wells in the country.

## Public and private sectors unite on need for more renewables

Current energy systems are falling short of supporting the transition to a renewables-based system, participants of the third Public-Private Dialogue, organized by the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) Coalition for Action, agreed. The policy makers, legislators, private sector and civil society representatives present, called for greater system flexibility, more active participation of market actors, and a redesign of today's power system setup to accommodate higher shares of renewables.

"We should be seeing explosive renewable energy growth, yet this is not the case everywhere in the world. Creating encouraging market designs will be key," emphasized Ben Backwell, CEO of the Global Wind Energy Council and co-Chair of the Coalition's 'Business and Investors Group'. This sentiment set the tone for discussions focused on how to achieve a 100% renewables-based power system.

Over the past decade, many countries have witnessed tremendous advancements in renewables according to the latest findings of the Coalition for Action in its white paper on utilities in transition to 100% renewables.

Rainer Hinrichs-Rahlwes, Vice-President of the European Renewable Energies Federation and co-Chair of the Coalition's 'Towards 100% renewable energy' working group, pointed out that: "More and more countries, regions, cities and utilities around the world recognize the benefits of shifting to very high shares of renewables, not only in the power but in all end-use sectors too."



Scaling-up investment is critical to advancing renewable energy, particularly in regions with high renewable energy potential, such as Africa. Participants of the dialogue demonstrated significant interest in investing in Africa, however the presence of real and perceived risks limits the flow of bankable renewable energy projects — both small and large.

■ **Integrated planning strategies**

While each country presents unique investment landscapes, a number of common solutions were identified to manage and mitigate risk including the creation of long-term and stable policy frameworks; improving market design (with a focus on de-risking investments); and adopting renewable-focused integrated planning strategies.

Participants also agreed that early involvement of local communities, continued collaboration among all stakeholders, and inclusive decision-making processes are key to ensuring that renewable energy projects lead to an inclusive development. In this context, Francesco La Camera, Director-General of IRENA highlighted the importance of platforms for public-private exchange and knowledge sharing.

The "Public-Private Dialogue has become an important platform for IRENA to engage a variety of stakeholders in the discussion on how we can better work together to scale up deployment of renewables and maximize socio-economic benefits," he stated.

Throughout the meeting participants expressed concern that renewable energy targets in general, and in Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) in particular, fall short of what is needed to achieve global climate objectives, especially in wealthy and high-carbon emitting nations.

When reporting back from the meeting at the opening of the IRENA Assembly, Bruce Douglas, Deputy CEO of Solar Power Europe, on behalf of the Coalition for Action, called on all governments to urgently enhance their NDCs this year and reminded countries that, "significantly more ambitious renewable energy targets and domestic frameworks are required to achieve the Paris Agreement goals."

The dialogue was organized by IRENA's Coalition for Action on the side-lines of the IRENA Tenth Assembly on January 10. The meeting sought to foster a common understanding of the steps necessary to urgently increase the share of renewable energy and accelerate investments.

(Source: modernndiplomacy.eu)

## Oil bears are back as demand fears go viral

WTI fell below \$55 per barrel in early trading on Friday, and Brent was testing the \$60-per-barrel threshold. Pessimism is back, and there is a danger of prices sliding further.

Saudi Arabia says "all options are open" at March meeting. Saudi energy minister said that all options are on the table for the March meeting, hinting at further production cuts to head off another market meltdown.

The latest EIA Drilling Productivity Report estimates oil production growth of just 22,000 bpd in February, a much slower pace than usual. Production gains of 45,000 bpd in the Permian are to be offset by declines of 16,000 bpd in the Anadarko, along with smaller declines in the Eagle Ford and Niobrara.

Gas output is set to grow slightly, with Permian gains offset by larger declines in Appalachia, Anadarko and Niobrara.

Earlier this week, Goldman Sachs estimated that the coronavirus in China could shave off \$3 from the price of oil. But the impact appears to be growing. China has quarantined Wuhan, a city of 11 million people.

The travel restrictions were expanded on Friday, now affecting at least 35 million people. The virus helped drag down crude oil prices this week.

U.S. natural gas production may sink for first time. Aside from a hiatus during the 2016 market downturn, U.S. natural gas output has been growing for a decade. That may be coming to an end as prices plunge below \$2/MMBtu. BloombergNEF data shows that gas well completions have fallen to their lowest level since the second



quarter.

■ **Another surplus is building up**

LNG prices are on track to hit an all-time low in Asia later this summer. Gas is also at its weakest seasonally in the U.S. and Europe since the late 1990s. "There's a surplus already in the U.S. and Europe. And the mild winter in Asia means another surplus is building up there," Marco Dunand, chief executive officer of trading house Mercuria Energy Group Ltd., told Bloomberg. Torbjorn Tornqvist, chief executive officer of Gunvor Group Ltd., said U.S. LNG exporters are 50 cents away from shutdowns.

The North American oil and gas sector has seen more than 200 bankruptcies since 2015, a figure that could continue to climb this year.

Roughly \$40 billion in debt matures this year, posing a problem for companies struggling under high debt and having trouble

finding access to fresh capital.

Radioactive brine a growing problem. Several new investigations this week highlight the problem of radioactivity in the brine that comes out of oil and gas wells. An expansive piece in Rolling Stone illustrates how pervasive the issue is and how little the public knows about it.

■ **A different set of rules**

Another in Grist looks at how the industry faces a different set of rules on handling wastewater between the eastern and western United States. The Trump administration is trying to loosen rules in the east. Another in DeSmog looks at the history — that the industry has known about the problem for about 40 years.

LNG export terminals have CO2 impact rivaling coal. LNG is often depicted as innocuous, with gas helping to wean the world off coal. But new data suggests that LNG

## Old energy, new boom

By Mark P. Mills

Once upon a time, tech companies were upstarts, striving to change the world order. Not anymore. With financial potentes gathering in Davos this week for the 2020 World Economic Forum, tech giants reign in the global economy, both creating and ameliorating challenges from job destruction and wealth disparities to security, health care, and — of course — climate change.

Digital companies now "weaponize" their reputations for technological wizardry to shape our energy future. It's ironic, then, but no coincidence, that digital infrastructure has become the fastest-growing source of energy use. Despite their best public relations efforts, these giants in fact meet increasing demand by using the same old hydrocarbon sources that power everything else in the economy.

Tech companies confront an inconvenient fact: the global cloud uses more energy than is produced by all the planet's wind and solar farms combined. One-click shopping and streaming video, and everything else digital, rely on an ecosystem of energy-intensive hardware to mine rare-earth elements, manufacture silicon engines, and light up countless cell towers and warehouse-scale data centers. This hardware is deeply and deliberately intertwined in global systems overwhelmingly fueled by hydrocarbons — the old-fashioned stuff that provides 85 percent of all energy, with just 3 percent coming from wind and solar.

Just ahead of the Davos meeting, Microsoft raised the bar for its fellow tech titans by announcing an initiative to help change how the world gets energy. Nearly every tech firm has "taken the pledge" to transition to using renewable energy exclusively. They're investing billions of dollars and deploying lobbyists to get more wind and solar projects going worldwide.



■ **Europe's green tech**

U.S. companies fund about half of Europe's green tech, and these firms make sure to publicize these as "offsets" for domestic operations—in effect, purchased indulgences. None of it changes the reality that data machines physically connect to conventional, local grids and pipes.

These same tech companies, meantime, are preparing for the brave new world of artificial intelligence (AI) by building out an even bigger cloud infrastructure.

Global digital-energy consumption, projected to rise at an unprecedented rate, is on track to outstrip the growth in output from all wind and solar installations planned over the next decade.

The AI revolution, which fundamentally changes what we do with data, is the most power-intensive use of silicon since the dawn of computers.

■ **The pattern-learning phase**

The pattern-learning phase alone for one AI application can consume more electricity than the entire Empire State building does in a day. No wonder, then, that Facebook

has already flagged AI as a "major culprit" in the annual doubling of its datacenter power use. And the applications for AI are as varied and numerous as, well, all the activities in a society.

Add to this the rollout of 5G, a quantum leap in wireless speed that enables real-time access to AI in the cloud. Thirty years ago, nobody envisioned what cellular networks would unleash, any more than they can imagine today what 5G will stimulate entrepreneurs to create. But physics dictates energy costs for speed.

Global networks already use as much electricity as Italy. Forecasts see 5G at least doubling that usage. This is a good thing, though, because it's really true that "data is the new oil."

A period of epic economic expansion is almost guaranteed to come from this next digital boom. The democratization of personal mobility propelled the early twentieth century economy; today's democratization of AI will do the same. Digital traffic is projected to increase 400 percent in the next five years alone.

If wind and solar offered an inherently viable alternative for fueling that growth — as is frequently claimed — we'd witness a rush of "cord-cutting," instead of these pledges and offsets. Nothing prevents deep-pocketed tech companies from abandoning public grids to build their own green power plants. That's not happening because the cloud needs what conventional energy systems provide: reliable and affordable power.

Give Microsoft credit for its pre-Davos candor in noting that a new energy future, pledges aside, "will require technology that does not exist today." The physics of some challenges are not easily conquered — even by trillion-dollar tech companies.

(Source: city-journal.org)



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## Ardeshir Sa'ad Mohammadi:

## NICICO on Growth and Development Track

National Iranian Copper Industries Company (NICICO) is on the path of development and growth in a way that its capital hit over 10,000 billion tomans in the current year.

[FMIL] is the symbol of the company at Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE).

Chief Executive of the National Iranian Copper Industries Company (NICICO) Ardeshir Sa'ad Mohammadi made the remarks among shareholders of the company at the Extraordinary General Assembly meeting.

"We are glad although the global price of copper has decreased \$400 in each ton as compared to the last year's corresponding period," he added.

Although the global price of copper in the world has decreased \$400 in each ton, sales volume of the company in the nine months of the current year (from March 21 to Dec. 22) has registered a 128 percent growth as compared to the last year's corresponding period.

Also, the EPS (Equity per Share) of the company, which has been announced 111 tomans at the second adjustment, was realized, showing a 128 percent growth as compared to the same period of last year, Sa'ad Mohammadi added.

It is hoped that the company will register good records from itself at the ending three months of the current year (from Jan. 21 to March 20), he stressed.

He also put the sales volume of the company in the first nine months of the current year (from March 21 to Dec. 22) at 16,020 billion tomans, showing a considerable 135 percent increase as compared to the same period of last year.

The sales growth volume of the company was realized at the condition that some large and major copper production companies such as CODELCO registered a 18 percent decline in its sales volume as well as seven percent slump in its production volume, he said, adding, "given the above issue, giant step was taken at the company both in sales a production volumes."

Increased production volume of the company and also exchange rate have been effective in profitability of the company, he said, adding, "190,000 tons of cathode was produced in the company in the first nine months of the current year (from March 21 to Dec. 22), the volume of which registered a 21 percent growth more than the scheduled program."



179,000 tons of cathode was produced in the company in the first nine months of the last Iranian calendar year (from March 21 to Dec. 22, 2018), the CEO of the company added.

Sa'ad Mohammadi pointed to the 2,632 percent efficiency of the company over the past 14 years and added, "the National Iranian Copper Industries Company has earned 105 percent efficiency for its shareholders since the beginning of the current year up to the present time (from March 21 to Dec. 22) despite 5 percent decrease of price of copper in the world.

Also, the average annual efficiency of stocks of the company since its acceptance at Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE) has stood at about 188 percent, the rate of which is considered as considerable and eye-catching figure as compared to the similar markets.

He pointed to the twofold growth of value of copper market at Stock Market since the beginning of the current year (from March 21 to Dec. 22), and added, "the market value of the company stood at 30,000 billion tomans since the beginning year, the rate of which hit about 60,000 billion tomans on Dec 25 (Jan. 15, 2020).

Statistics showed that 2.5 million tons will be added to the copper demand within the next 4 years, he said, adding, "moreover getting lion's share of the global market of copper, we have decided to introduce the National Iranian Copper Industries Company in the list of top 10 copper production companies in the world."

Islamic Republic of Iran accounts for about

4.15 percent share of copper reserves in the world, he said, adding, "Iran also hold only 1.5 percent of copper production in the world. Considering this reserve volume, this figure is not eye-catching."

For this purpose, "we have taken effective plans in order to lag behind in the world copper market."

At the end of the Extraordinary General Assembly meeting, the capital of the National Iranian Copper Industries Company (NICICO) hit from 7,800 billion tomans to 10,140 billion tomans, showing a 30 percent hike as compared to the same period of last year.

Elsewhere in his remarks, CEO of the company revealed the 105 percent efficiency of stocks of the company during the 10 months of the current year (from March 21, 2019 to Jan. 22, 2020) and added, "the company earned 105 percent efficiency and rate of return to its shareholders since the beginning of the current year up to Dec 25 (from March 21, 2019 to Jan. 15, 2020)."

He put the price of each stock of the company since the beginning of the current year at 3,815 rials, the rate of which hit 7,673 rials on Jan. 2020. The stock price hike of the company shows that stock of NICICO has experienced a considerable more than twofold price hike.

He pointed to the profitable stock of the company at TSE and added, "the market value of stocks of the company before organizing the Extraordinary General Assembly meeting hit an eye-catching and unprecedented figure of 598,494 billion rials."

He further pointed to the organizing Extraordinary General Assembly meeting of the company on Dec 29, 1398 [Jan. 19, 2020] as well as capital increase of the company as much as 30 percent and added, "the current and registered capital of the company stands at 7,800 billion tomans, the rate of which will hit 10,140 billion tomans with 30 percent proposed capital increase of 2,340 billion tomans.

In the end, Chief Executive of the National Iranian Copper Industries Company (NICICO) Ardeshir Sa'ad Mohammadi said that his company paid 110 tomans DPS for each stock of the company in the first nine months of the current year, showing a 128 percent hike as compared to the same period of last year.

Dr. Kiyarash Mehrani Deputy CEO of the company for Economic and Financial Affairs was the next speaker who pointed to the organizing the Extraordinary General Assembly Meeting of shareholders of the company and added, "with the aim of financing development projects, the company intends to increase its capital from 7,800 billion tomans with 30 percent hike."

Large companies adopt various methods for financing, one of these methods is the use of resources and profits obtained with the aim of increasing capital.

For this purpose, the National Iranian Copper Industries Company intends to increase its capital from 7,800 billion tomans to 10,000 billion tomans, showing a 30 percent hike.

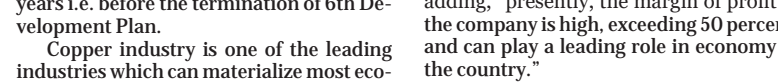
He pointed to the accumulated profit as one of the internal resources that companies as use it for increasing their capital.

He went on to say that NICICO needs about 2,300 billion tomans new capital for advancing and implementing its development projects.

With increasing the capital of the company in the current year, the capital of the company will hit from 7,800 billion tomans to at least 10,000 billion tomans, he said, adding, "also, the company intends to increase its capital from 10,000 billion tomans to 23,000 billion tomans in coming years."

Since the copper industry has high rate of return and efficiency rate, we can provide some part of the required resources from shareholders, he added.

Given the above issue, the company has planned to complete construction operation



of most of its projects within the next three years i.e. before the termination of 6th Development Plan.

Copper industry is one of the leading industries which can materialize most eco-

nomical objectives of the company, he said, adding, "presently, the margin of profit of the company is high, exceeding 50 percent, and can play a leading role in economy of the country."

Deputy CEO of NICICO for Development and Exploration Affairs:

### "Capital Increase", Guarantor of Development and Dynamicity of NICICO

Deputy CEO of the National Iranian Copper Industries Company Eng. Behrouz Rahmati pointed to the organizing extraordinary general assembly of the company and also the issue of capital increase and added, "fortunately, NICICO has taken the issue of development projects seriously and in this line, the company has put

the issue of capital increase atop of its agenda."

Safeguarding and preserving assets of shareholders and increasing profitability of the company have been considered as the main task and duty of senior managers of the company, he said, adding, "increasing production capacity and

carrying out development projects in companies is one of the best methods for increasing wealth among shareholders. Experiences show that those companies which have failed to carry out development projects have been sidelined and marginalized from the world economic competition.



NICICO  
NATIONAL IRANIAN  
COPPER INDUSTRIES CO.



# Mourning the martyrdom of Sayyidah Zahra (AS)

By Yusuf Abdullahi

**NIGERIA/KATSINA** — In the name of Allah Who states “O men! We have created you all out of a male and a female, and have made you into nations and tribes, so that you might come to know one another; verily, the noblest among you in the sight of Allah is the one who is deeply conscious of Him. Behold, He is all knowing, all aware. Q49:13

May the everlasting peace and blessings of Allah be upon His chosen servant master Muhammad and his purified progeny.

Based on a narration on the above subject, Sayyidah Fatima (AS) has attained martyrdom on the 13th of Jimadal - ula, 11 years after hijra. I wouldn't be graphical here, but I strongly advice our esteemed readers to refer to historic materials to find the facts on the actual circumstances surrounding the issue. After her secret burial, Imam Ali (AS) read his parting words addressing the Great Messenger (S):

“Prophet of God, please accept my salaam and those of your daughter who is being buried not far from you, and who is to meet you so quickly. O the Chosen Messenger! The death of your dear daughter has left me without patience and solace. I have lost my self-restrain and power of endurance. After having endured the separation from you, I shall have to bear this catastrophe patiently. O Prophet of God! I laid you down in the grave with my own hands, your soul departed from your body while you were resting upon my breast and your head was lying between my neck and my heart. Surely, we belong to Allah and towards Him is our return Q2:156. Your trust (your daughter) that was entrusted to me was taken back from me. Sorrow now lives with me and happiness has taken leave. This grief is so overbearing that it engulfs and swallows other sorrows, and it has left me with sleepless night and joyless days. From now onwards, my life will be continued heartache till God gathers me with you both in the realm of His Favors and Peace.

“O Messenger of God! your dear daughter will tell you how your followers have behaved with her and how they ill-treated her. Ask her the detail of all what happened to her during such a short period (barely three months) after your departure to Heaven. This period of separation from you was so short that people still remember you and were still talking about you. Please, both of you accept my parting salaam and goodbye. It is the wish of a sincere heart which loved and always love you both, a heart which will cherish and will carry your tender and loving memories to its grave. Goodbye O daughter of the chosen messenger of God! May you rest in peace which humankind denied you in this world. If I leave your grave to go to my place, it is not because I am tired of your company. I wish I had it to the end of my life. And if I make a permanent home on your grave it will not be because I doubt the reward that God has reserved for those who bear sorrows patiently. Goodbye! May God's peace and blessing be with you”

In a famous hadith, mother of believers, A'isha said “I have not seen a person more similar to the Prophet's appearance, conduct, guidance, and speech, whether sitting or standing, than Fatima. When she enters, the Messenger of Allah stands up, kisses and welcomes her, then takes her hand and asks her to sit in his place.” (Tirmizi and Ibn Abdul Rabbeh in Eqd al - Farid). She has also narrated: “(I declare) By Allah that I have not seen anyone more beloved to Allah's Messenger than Ali, or a woman on earth more beloved to him than his wife (Ali's wife, Fatima).” Narrated by Mustadrak al-Hakim: V.3, p.154, Khasaes An-Nisaee: p.29. The Messenger of Allah (S) said: the best of the women of Paradise are: Khadija daughter of Khowailid, Fatima daughter of Muhammad, Asiyah daughter of Muzahim (Pharaoh's wife), and Mariam daughter of Imran mother of Jesus. Whenever the prophet (S) went to a trip, she was the last he would bid a farewell and was the first he would meet on return. A generally narrated hadith has also affirmed, “Whoever harms her has harmed me and whoever angers her has made me angry; Whoever makes her glad has made me glad, and whoever saddens her has made me sad.”



Mourning Ceremony of Hazrat Fatemeh Zahra (SA) in Tehran.

No doubt, her sincere worship, good neighborliness, patience, perseverance, hospitality and family life and children up-bringing are exemplary lessons for all! However, it is imperative to raise some questions; where are Sayyidah's narrations? Didn't she narrate? How and why did others narrate including her children's peers that were born at Medina? And, what was her crime that that she was persecuted to the extent of martyrdom? All justice seeking people as earlier advised should revisit history to differentiate the actual lovers of the noble messenger from his enemies. When Fadak, the famous garden given to her by the prophet (S) was usurped, she delivered her renown speech; “O Muslims! is my inheritance usurped? O son of Abu Quhafa, is it in the Book of Allah that you inherit my father and I do not inherit my father? Surely, you have done a strange thing! Did you intend to desert the Book of Allah and turned your back on it? Allah said: (And Sulaiman was Dawood's heir. Q27:16) and said about Yahya bin Zachariah: (Grant me from Thyself an heir, who should inherit me and inherit from the children of Yaquob. Q19:5-6) and said: (And the possessors of relationships are nearer to each other in the ordinance of Allah. Q8:75), and He said: (Allah enjoins you concerning your children: The male shall have the equal of the portion of two females. Q4:11), and He said: (Bequest is prescribed for you when death approaches one of you, if he leaves behind wealth for parents and near relatives. Q2:180). You claimed that I have no position and no inheritance from my father, and there is no kinship between us. So did Allah distinguish you with a verse, from which He excluded my father? Or do you say: people of two religions do not inherit each other? Are I and my father not of one religion? Or are you more aware of the Qur'an than my father and my cousin?

While morning the martyrdom of this unique lady, we remember the significant attention Islam focusses to the morality and education of female who grows to become mothers as the moral status of every society largely depends on its women. This, regardless of the injustice of the West which criticizes Islam on disenfranchisement of her rights. No doubt, the exalted position Islam accorded woman cannot be compared with any other civilization. A female is given utmost care and protection at all stages of her life as a daughter, wife and mother. From the Islamic point of view, superiority has nothing to do with sexes. Allah states “O men! We have created you all out of a male and a female, and have made you into nations and tribes, so that you

might come to know one another; verily, the noblest among you in the sight of Allah is the one who is deeply conscious of Him. Behold, He is all knowing, all aware. Qur'an 49:13. The criterion for Allah's reward is based on individual's actions “we will give a pure and wholesome life to every one man or woman who acts righteously and has faith and we will reward them in accordance with the best of what they used to do” Qur'an 16:97. In contrast to the incessant criticism against Islam on women's rights, the religion's emphasis on the need for support and enlightenment in their respect so that they could play more significant role in the development of social, economic and political arenas is very clear.

In the Islamic revivalism and societal reform led by Shaikh Uthman Bn Fodio in the Hausa land more than a bicentenary ago, these narratives were evident in the Shaikh's family and the society in general. Nana Asma'u, his popular daughter authored tens of poems which made a lot of impact not only to the moral excellence of women but men inclusive. Her books compiled by Jean Boyd are more obtainable in Britain and America than Nigeria. The impact of her works is inevitably beyond the moral and educational scope of her time. Boyd and Mack (1997, p. 7) described her contributions “in transforming the women's organization that had existed among the non-Muslim women prior to their capture, and channeling their interests and needs into organizing representative of the Jihad community's values. Through her organization of itinerant women teachers of other women (the ‘Yan taru). Nana Asma'u made working of the community both desirable and honorable. Her legacies impacted other Jihad leaders and the caliphate as a whole. On learning and scholarship in Sokoto Caliphate, Professor Yusuf Adamu of Bayero University, Kano – Nigeria, cited 56 selected works of Nana Asma'u compiled by Jean Boyd, which she and Mack in 2000 categorized the areas of her interest as: eschatology: 18 politics; 8 women as sustainers; 12 history; 18 the family; 12 health; 4 the caliphate and idealism; 4 theology; 4 Sharia law and women; 4 women and Bori 4 and theology; 8.

While commending the sisters' forum of the Islamic Movement for their efforts to pursue moral and academic excellence for the socio - economic growth and stability of our nation, I call for the unconditional release of Shaikh Ibraheem el-Zakzaky (H) and his disciples.

Wassalamu alaikum.

*Veteran calligrapher Jalil Rasuli's calligraphy work on Hazrat Fatima (SA), the daughter of the Prophet Muhammad (S).*

## Division and discrimination at UNSC

By Quayyum Raja

**KASHMIR** — Two recent issues have once again shown cracks in United Nations Security Council due to political prejudices of some of its permanent members namely America, Britain and France. First, Jammu Kashmir and the second, assassination of top Iranian General Qassem Soleimani, who has become a HERO in the Muslim World.

China as a permanent member of the Security Council raised Kashmir Issue at UNSC on 15th of January, where America, Britain and France repeated that Kashmir is a bilateral issue between India and Pakistan and not an international issue. Therefore, India and Pakistan should resolve it between themselves. First of all, Kashmir is not a bilateral or territorial dispute between India and Pakistan. Britain had two types of system in the sub-continent: British India and the British Indian states. On the basis of Indian Independence law, the partition of British India created two nations such as India and Pakistan. The British Indian states had to determine their own future with free will. The majority of Jammu Kashmir wanted to remain independent, but India and Pakistan invaded Jammu



Kashmir to engulf it in their respective union by force. This created the Kashmir Issue. The United Nations imposed a ceasefire in Jammu Kashmir on 1st of January 1949 on the condition that the people of Jammu Kashmir would be given a chance to determine whether they wanted to remain independent or join the either union. The United Nations has failed to implement its own resolutions. Russia has not supported America, Britain and

France, but urged India and Pakistan to restore peace in the region. It must be noted that section b7 of the Indian Independence Law passed by the British Parliament forces Britain to help resolve Kashmir, but it doesn't, because Britain conspired to divide Jammu Kashmir back in 1947 due to the proximity of the Soviet Union and China's direct border with Kashmir (China-Gilgit) and wants to continue this policy. Secondly, it is British

tradition to create a problem before leaving any colony and handing over power to its agents rather than those who fought for independence. Britain continuous to inflame issues rather than their solutions.

As for the assassination of the Iranian General, if it was either an American or British citizen, they must have immediately moved a resolution at UNSC to condemn the killing. Although Russian Foreign Minister immediately rang his American counterpart and deplore the killing describing it as a violation of international law and China was also infuriated, American president Trump kept bragging about that General Soleimani was killed for the sake “peace.” If such a claim was made by any other head of state, America and its allies must have immediately tabled a resolution to impose economic sanctions on the country responsible of killing.

These are just two recent events which have once again shown that the United Nations created by America is not a forum for everyone, particularly the Muslims. Therefore, the Muslims must think hard and fast whether they should remain a part of American controlled body that discriminates against them at their own expense!

## Infectious disease expert discusses what we know about the new virus in China

By Tanya Lewis on Jan. 22, 2020

Federal disease agency director Anthony Fauci discusses the novel pathogen that has, so far, sickened hundreds in Asia and one person in the U.S.

The first confirmed U.S. case of a traveler infected with the virus behind China's continuing pneumonia outbreak has health authorities on alert to prevent it from spreading. The patient—a man in his 30s—returned from the country's city of Wuhan (where the virus appears to have originated) to his home in Snohomish County in Washington State on January 15. He developed symptoms and sought treatment from his doctor on January 19, and a day later, a real time reverse transcription-polymerase chain reaction (rRT-PCR) test confirmed he had the virus. The patient appears to be doing well and was being treated this week at a hospital in Everett, Wash., and placed in isolation out of an abundance of caution, said a spokesperson for the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in a news briefing on Tuesday afternoon.

The virus, called 2019 novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV), is known to have infected hundreds of people so far, and Chinese authorities have now reported at least 17 deaths. It was first identified in Wuhan late last year and is believed to have jumped from animals to humans at a local seafood market that also sold other wild animal meat. Authorities have since confirmed cases of human-to-human transmission. The pathogen is a coronavirus, a member of a family of viruses that include severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS), which caused major outbreaks in 2003 and 2012, respectively.

Cases of 2019-nCoV have been confirmed in several other countries, including Thailand, Japan and South Korea. Three U.S. airports—in San Francisco, Los Angeles and New York City—began screening travelers from Wuhan last week. Such measures have now been expanded to two more airports—in Atlanta and Chicago—and passengers traveling to the U.S. from Wuhan will be funneled to those five locations. The risk to the U.S. public is low at this time, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. But the agency says it is working closely with other health organizations to contain the virus's spread.

National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases director Anthony Fauci has been closely following developments related to the new virus. Scientific American spoke with Fauci about 2019-nCoV's likely mode of transmission, its similarity to other coronaviruses and the question of whether a vaccine is on the horizon.

■ Do we know how the U.S. patient contracted the virus?

He was not in any market where there may have been an animal reservoir, and he does not recall coming into contact with someone who was ill. That's not surprising: often people contract respiratory infections without knowing the definite exposure source. But he was in Wuhan.

■ Is the most likely source of this virus an animal market in Wuhan?

It almost certainly came from an animal—almost certainly.

■ Do you suspect the virus is transmitted via a respiratory route?

A respiratory infection is almost certainly transmitted through droplets. Respiratory spread is a very good guess. We have not definitively proved that the virus entered through the respiratory tract, but it is highly likely. When you have symptoms of fever, cough, infiltrates in the lung and respiratory symptoms, historically, respiratory is the route.

■ How similar or different is the virus from other coronaviruses such as SARS or MERS?

First of all, it's a coronavirus, the same family as SARS. It has some of the same molecular homology as SARS. It's closer to SARS than it is to MERS. But it isn't overwhelmingly close.

■ Do we know the mortality rate of the new virus?

It's a moving target. It's a rough estimate. If you look at the number of cases, it's around 300. There have been six deaths so far. [Editor's Note: On Wednesday, several outlets reported that Chinese authorities had announced 17 deaths, and some had cited more than 540 cases.] We're only seeing the ones who are hospitalized. If there are asymptomatic infections, the mortality rate would be much less. Among symptomatic people, the mortality rate is around 2 percent. It was 10 percent with SARS, and 30 to 35 percent with MERS. It may be less virulent than those two or it may evolve. It's too early to know.

■ Aren't the symptoms of this viral infection similar to many other types of respiratory infection? How can you tell them apart?

It's a syndromic and epidemiological association. If somebody comes into an emergency room in Washington State with a respiratory illness, and they haven't been to China, they probably have the flu or some other virus. But if they came from Wuhan, it's likely to be the new coronavirus. The symptoms are very common to a number of viruses, though, so [the association] is based on epidemiology [and is confirmed by the rRT-PCR test].

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■ How are the patients with this virus being treated?

It's mostly symptomatic treatment. There are experimental antivirals that have been used in vitro and in vivo. If the patients need antibiotics for complicating bacterial infections, you give them antibiotics. If they need to be put on a respirator, they're put on a respirator. Most patients in China are doing well. But a proportion of them are very ill and are on respirators.

■ How long will it be before we have a vaccine for this virus?

We've already started to develop a vaccine. We got the [genetic] sequence from the Chinese. We're partnering with a company called Moderna to develop a messenger RNA-based platform for a vaccine. We will likely have a candidate in early phase I trials for safety in about three months. That doesn't mean we will have a vaccine ready for use in three months; even in an emergency, that would take a year or more. But we're already on it.

■ How common are coronaviruses, and how often do they jump from animals to humans?

Coronaviruses represent 10 to 30 percent of common colds. Over the past 18 years we've had three coronaviruses from animal reservoirs: SARS, MERS and now this. There could be several intermediary hosts, but at least with SARS and MERS, the primary host is thought to be a bat. We don't know what the primary host is for this virus yet.

*Tanya Lewis is an associate editor at Scientific American who covers health and medicine. (Source: Scientific American)*



## Iron Age relics recovered in western Iran

**HERITAGE** **TEHRAN** — A total of ten prehistorical objects, estimated to date from the Iron Age, have recently been confiscated from two antique dealers in Chardavol county, Ilam province, western Iran.

“The police have discovered 10 objects, [estimated] to date from 4,000 years ago in the Iron Age, through its [routine] investigations in Chardavol county,” provincial tourism chief Abdolmalek Shanbehzadeh announced on Thursday, CHTN reported.



The accused persons were detained in this regard and surrendered to the judicial system for further investigation, the official noted.

Iron Age, is in fact final technological and cultural stage in the Stone–Bronze–Iron Age sequence. The date of the full Iron Age, in which this metal for the most part replaced bronze in implements and weapons, varied geographically, beginning in the Middle East and southeastern Europe about 1200 BC but in China not until about 600 BC, according to the Encyclopedia Britannica.

Although in the Middle East iron had limited use as a scarce and precious metal as early as 3000 BC, there is no indication that people at that time recognized its superior qualities over those of bronze.

## IKIA adopts anti-coronavirus measures

**TOURISM** **TEHRAN** — Imam Khomeini International Airport has adopted preventive measures against coronavirus since Friday including checking temperatures and registering all passengers flying from China and East Asian countries, said the deputy director for the airport operations at Imam Khomeini Airport Company (IKAC).



Passengers with high temperatures will be guided to the airport city's designated medical facilities for anti-coronavirus measures, Hassan Khoshkhoo said, IKAC News reported.

In IKIA, health officials are increasing surveillance at international entry points using thermal scanning machines to screen people as they depart.



## ROUND THE GLOBE

### Historic site of Lyon

Located in the Auvergne-Rhone-Alpes region, at the confluence of the Saone and the Rhone Rivers, the city of Lyon is dominated by two hills: Fourviere to the west and Croix-Rousse to the east.

The long history of Lyon, from a proto-urban agglomeration from the Celtic era to its founding by the Romans with the capital of Trois Gaules in the 1st century BC, has continued to play a major role in Europe's political, cultural and economic development, and is vividly illustrated by its urban fabric and the many fine historic buildings dating from all periods.



Humans have settled at this site destined for urbanization for more than two thousand years and built a city whose stages of development are still visible today: from the Roman vestiges of antique Lugdunum to the medieval streets on the slopes of Fourviere and the Renaissance dwellings of Vieux-Lyon, from the peninsula with a wealth of classical architecture to the slopes of Croix-Rousse with its very particular canut dwellings, which bear witness to an essential page in the history of the laboring classes of the 19th century.

The specificity of Lyon is its progressive expansion towards the east while preserving, at each stage of its growth, the richness of its earlier dwellings. Unlike many other cities where the center was destroyed in order to be rebuilt in the same place with new architecture, Lyon's center has shifted location, enabling the safeguarding of whole districts whose permanence renders the history of the city visible on the buildings themselves.

(Source: UNESCO)

# ‘Country-size guesthouse of Iran wholeheartedly ready to receive tourists’

→ 1 “Nowadays, the world is even more involved in fast and surprising upheavals and ups and downs as a result of unprecedented progresses in technology and industry. As such, the modern human is also influenced by the urban, mechanical life and his soul needs some refinement and relief,” the statement reads.

“In such a situation, only travel and tourism can give us relief, joy and sympathy and provide us with unforgettable experiences and memorable coexistence. In fact, tourism can be thought of as a familial or friendly gathering, the pivotal contents of which are kindness, cooperation and synergy. In this chaotic era, tourists are like a delightful breeze endearing our souls and uniting all the people from around the world, regardless of their race, country, language, and beliefs.”

Referring to advantages of visiting the country, the minister explained, “With a deep and practical faith in this attitude, the Iranian government is trying its best to pave the way for incoming tourists and this is why there is a significant growth in tourism infrastructure in our country.

In this regard, some incentives such as visa waiver, 90-day visa on arrival, standard residence services, attractive tourism routes and packages, and cheapest and most secure tours to Iran along with the last international tourism standards have enabled us to experience a 53% growth in our inbound tourism, winning the first place in the world in this regard. In addition, when it comes to the prices, Iran has the most competitive prices for tourism in the world and has emerged as a new phenomenon in the world of tourism, attracting the attention of many countries.”

“Even if we disregard all that have been said, the unique tourist attractions of Iran are a good reason to have a journey to the land of history, civilization and nature. With 24 UNESCO World Heritage sites, 34,000 nationally registered heritage sites and 600 active museums, Iran has a huge capacity to receive international tourists. In addition, high security, cheap tours, premium travel facilities, hospitable people, numerous historic and natural treasures, unique ecotourism facilities, diverse tourism packages (historic-cultural tourism, sport tourism, marine tourism, food tourism, medical tourism, etc.), interesting rituals, and diverse handicrafts and traditional arts provide enough reasons to visit Iran.”

Pointing to unique and unparalleled beauties of Iran, Mounesan said, “The rich history and civilization of this land, the numerous and spectacular tourist attractions, four-season weather, and high cultural and ethnic diversity have made an invaluable treasure of Iran and put this country in the top 10 tourist destinations in terms of tourism, cultural and



Iranian Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Ali-Asghar Mounesan in an undated photo

natural attractions.

Astonishing mountains, breathtaking glaciers, beautiful volcanos, pristine forests, green foothills, delightful lakes, springs and waterfalls, picturesque beaches and wonderful islands, historical sites and distinct architecture, globally registered cities and villages, diverse and colorful handicrafts, delicious traditional cuisine and organic, healing drinks, etc. are only a small part of the beauties you can visit while staying in Iran.”

“With such advantages, each day the beautiful and safe cities of Iran are hosting thousands of tourists from different countries, having enjoyed the unique experience, most of whom decide to return and bring new fellow travelers with them.”

**Hereby I invite all the tourists from around the world to visit Iran during these last months of the Persian year, as well as the spring, and experience a distinct journey to the land of history and civilization.**

## Envoy highlights Iran’s tourism capacities at Madrid fair

**HERITAGE** **TEHRAN** — Tehran's ambassador to Madrid Hassan Qashqavi on Friday drew public attention to Iran's tourism capacities in a meeting held on the sidelines of the 40th FITUR tourism trade fair, which will be running through January 26 at the Spanish capital.

Referring to a 50 percent growth in the number of Spanish tourists to Iran over the past year, Qashqavi said that Iran is among the top ten countries in terms of tourist attractions diversity.

The ambassador noted that promotion of the tourism industry is high on the Iranian government's agenda, adding, given the capabilities of Spain in this sector, the issue can serve as one of the areas of cooperation between Tehran and Madrid.

The envoy pointed to the remarkable capacities of the two countries for widening cooperation in the fields



Tehran's ambassador to Madrid Hassan Qashqavi (2nd L) draws public attention to Iran's tourism capacities at the 40th FITUR tourism trade fair in the Spanish capital, January 24, 2020.

of tourism, cultural heritage and handicrafts, voicing Iran's readiness for promoting collaboration in those spheres.

During the meeting, two Spanish tourists recounted their memories of visiting Iran. They hailed Iranians' hospitality and the country's high security despite the anti-Iran propaganda, Mehr reported on Saturday.

In December 2019, Spanish Charge d'Affaires to Tehran, Jose Luis Solano, said, “I believe that there are very good tourism relations between the two countries as we have many requests each year from Iranians for [obtaining] visas and traveling to Spain.”

Iran is a country that is highly important in terms of culture and it embraces all the necessary attractions for Spanish tourists who like to travel to the country, he added. “Every year we see an increase in the number of Spanish visitors to Iran, and this is constant growth.”

## UNESCO-registered Iranian, Spanish geoparks sign MoU

**TOURISM** **TEHRAN** — Iran's Qeshm and Spain's Villuercas Ibores Jara geoparks, both registered on UNESCO Global Geoparks Network, have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to expand cooperation in the field of ecotourism, IRNA reported on Saturday.

The agreement was signed by Qeshm geopark director Alireza Amirkazemi and Villuercas Ibores Jara geopark director José Maria Barrera at the 40th FITUR tourism trade fair, which will be running through January 26 at the Spanish capital.

Exchange of experience and information as well as sightseers, and promotion of handicrafts exports are among the pillars of the agreement, the report said.

Villuercas Ibores Jara is situated in the south-east of the

province of Caceres (in Extremadura, Spain). It's extraordinarily rich in natural heritage including protected birds, biodiversity corridors, monumental trees, and Biosphere Reserves, with emblematic species such as the abundant cranes and raptors linked to the quartzite outcrops of the sierras: griffon, black and Egyptian vultures, black storks, eagle owls and golden eagles.

Qeshm is an island which has the shape of a dolphin. It is the largest island of the Persian Gulf region and stands parallel to the south coasts of the Hormuz Strait. The island has abundant wildlife, including birds, reptiles, dolphins and turtles. In Qeshm Island, zoogeographical areas of Palearctic and Oriental, and phytogeographical areas of Afro-tropical, Oriental and Eurasian, are meeting each other, which generated a huge variety in fauna and flora.



## Former Thomas Cook unit Condor sold to Polish Airline Group

The parent company of Polish carrier LOT is buying German airline Condor, creating a new European airline group.

Condor was formerly part of Thomas Cook Group, but it has been searching for a new owner since the latter's collapse in September. To keep flying over the quieter winter months, Condor secured a loan of \$419 million (€380 million) from the German federal government and the state of Hesse.

Although the parties gave no purchase figure, Rafal Milczarski, president of the management board of Polish Aviation Group (PGL), LOT's owner, called it a “fair price” and one that enabled Condor to pay back the loan.

“The acquisition of Condor fits perfectly into PGL's strategy. It also secures the future of Condor and offers stability and great opportunities to its employees, customers, and business partners,” Milczarski said in a statement.

“We want to develop Condor's iconic brand in Germany and also introduce it to other markets in Europe. We wholeheartedly welcome all Condor employees to the PGL family and invite them to build together one of the greatest aviation groups in Europe.”

LOT was the surprise winner of a sales process that attracted a high double-digit number of initial bidders. Six of these gave indicative offers before three put forward binding offers. Other interested parties included buyout groups Apollo and Greybull, Reuters reported.

Condor's German rival Lufthansa initially expressed an



interest but subsequently dropped out. Competition concerns made any deal between the two unlikely.

The rationale for LOT seems to be the complementary nature of the Condor business. The German airline is predominantly a leisure carrier, flying tourists to destinations across the world. This isn't a market that LOT has much exposure to.

Condor will continue as a stand-alone brand with its own management team. Together the two airlines carry around 20 million passengers a year.

“The Polish leisure market is a sizeable one as evidenced by Ryanair's development of its Buzz brand. This move

could allow LOT to access that market as well as to gain a potential foothold in the competitive German market with a respected brand,” John Strickland, a UK-based aviation consultant, said.

Milczarski knows the acquisition represents a challenge. He acknowledged at a press conference that Condor needed to replace its aging fleet of Boeing 767 long-haul aircraft. It could potentially order 30 aircraft over the next three years, 10 of which would go to LOT.

The deal is expected to close by April once it has secured antitrust approvals and Condor has exited insolvency protection proceedings.

■ **A big deal?**

Observers of European airline industry have expected further consolidation across the market with the big airline groups adding to their businesses while smaller carriers drop out of the market.

The LOT-Condor deal offers up a curveball with two smaller players joining forces.

“We fail to see the strategic imperative for LOT or significant synergy benefits for the two companies, which make us doubt the long-term success of this transaction. As such, we do not see a meaningful impact to other European airlines,” Daniel Roels, senior research analyst at broker Bernstein, said in a note to investors.

(Source: Skift)



# Iranian company acquires solar desalination technology

**ENVIRONMENT** **TEHRAN** — An Iranian knowledge-based company has acquired the technical knowledge to produce new generation of solar desalination systems (MED/MVC-ZLD), IRNA news agency reported on Saturday.

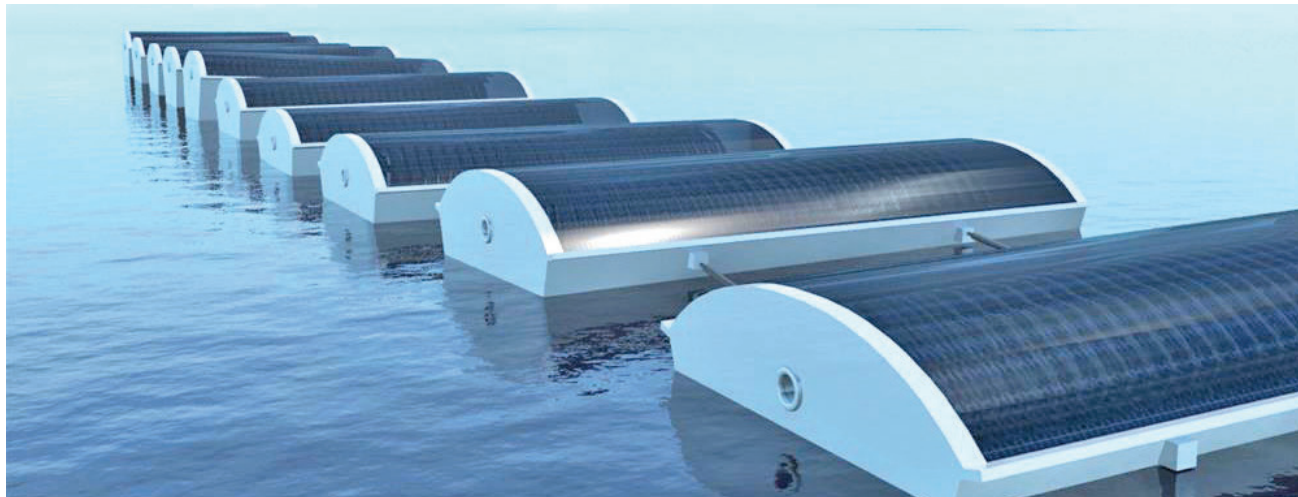
Desalination is a process that takes away mineral components from saline water. More generally, desalination refers to the removal of salts and minerals from a target substance, as in soil desalination, which is an issue for agriculture.

Current water desalinating systems are highly energy-consuming; systems using solar energy are one of the low-cost ways to produce fresh water.

Tropical areas and those affected by water scarcity usually have high solar energy potential, which makes it more efficient to use solar energy for treatment of saline water.

There is no domestic producer of solar desalination systems in the country and there are no other manufacturers in the world except for a few companies in Germany and the United States.

Iran is an arid and semiarid country with scarce and sensitive water resources and the increasing demand for water has led to an alarming decrease in annual per



capita renewable water resources. Due to the fact that available water resources are unevenly distributed in terms of both time and space, water resources in many areas are under pressure.

The reasons behind present shortage of water for urban and domestic uses are the uneven distribution of water across the country, the expansion of population centers

as well as developments in unsustainable agricultural and industrial activities.

Iran has an average annual precipitation of about 250 mm; less than one-third of the world average.

Mohammad Reza Goldansaz, a researcher in the field of water resources, said in June 2019 that an annual amount of 50 billion cubic meters of groundwater resources are

withdrawn to supply agricultural, industrial as well as drinking water in Iran.

In past few years, water transfer projects have been proposed by the government to ensure water supplies for the provinces of Semnan and Sistan-Baluchestan suffering from severe water shortages, which needs efficient water desalination systems.



## Special plan prepared to attract overseas Iranian researchers

**SOCIETY** **TEHRAN** — The Vice Presidency for Science and Technology has prepared a special plan to attract scientists and researchers living abroad, IRNA news agency reported on Saturday.

The project aims to promote "supporting technological activities and startups", "postdoctoral facilities", "supporting employment in innovation centers and accelerators as a trainer and consultant", "providing facilities for opportunity studies", "providing housing facilities", "supporting employment in reputable domestic companies", "support for lectures and specialized workshops" and "support for

cooperation as invited and appointed professors".

It is estimated that about one percent of all Iranian students are studying abroad, which is not above the international average of around 3 percent.

Before the Islamic revolution in 1979, some 170,000 students were studying in the country and 100,000 students abroad.

According to official statistics, the number of students studying in the country has reached over 4.5 million while there are currently 48,000 students studying in other countries.

## Australia wildfires pushing global CO2 levels to record high

Catastrophic wildfires in Australia are pushing global carbon dioxide levels to new highs, scientists have warned.

The UK's Met Office predicted 2020 would see one of the largest annual jumps of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere since records began, with the raging bushfires blamed for up to a fifth of the increase.

Fossil fuel burning and changes in land use are also driving the rise and worsening global warming, the meteorological agency said in its yearly forecast of carbon concentration, which has been measured at the Mauna Loa observatory in Hawaii since 1958.

The level of CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere is expected to peak at 417 parts per million (ppm) in May, before settling at an average of 414ppm — an increase of 2.74ppm from last year.

As well as pumping carbon emissions into the atmosphere, the wildfires are burning vegetation, which would otherwise act as a "sink" to soak up CO<sub>2</sub>.

More than 24 million acres of land have been destroyed as the blazes have raged across New South Wales and Victoria since September, and the extreme scale of the fires means regrowth of plants will be slower than usual.



Professor Richard Betts, of the Met Office's Hadley Centre for climate change research, said: "Although the series of annual levels of CO<sub>2</sub> have always seen a year-on-year increase since 1958, driven by fossil fuel burning and deforestation, the rate of rise isn't perfectly even, because there are fluctuations in the response of ecosystem carbon sinks, especially tropical forests. Overall these are expected to be weaker than normal for

a second year running."

If the Met Office's forecast is accurate, the CO<sub>2</sub> rise in 2020 would be the fourth highest since records began. The larger previous increases in 1998, 2016 and 2019 were all linked to warmer temperatures caused by the El Nino climate cycle, according to the Met Office.

The uptake of carbon dioxide by land ecosystems is known to be affected by weather

patterns linked to year-by-year swings in Pacific Ocean temperatures.

In years with a warmer tropical Pacific, many regions become hotter and drier, limiting the ability of plants to grow and absorb CO<sub>2</sub> and increasing the risk of wildfires. The Met Office said this, along with other weather patterns and human-induced global warming, contributed to the hot, dry weather that has fuelled Australia's most devastating bushfires in decades.

Professor Betts added: "The success of our previous forecasts has shown that the year-to-year variability in the rate of rise of CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere is affected more by the strength of ecosystem carbon sinks and sources than year-to-year changes in human-induced emissions. Nevertheless, the anthropogenic emissions are still the overall driver of the long-term rise in concentrations."

Australia's wildfires have killed at least 33 people, destroyed thousands of homes, and burned to death millions of animals.

The devastating blazes could become "normal" if global temperatures rise as projected between 3C and 5C this century, the Met Office warned earlier this month.

(Source: The Independent)

## ENGLISH IN USE

### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → ع

## FDA to penalize manufacturers producing unlabeled GM foods

Iran's Food and Drug Administration (FDA) will penalize food manufacturers who have not labeled genetically modified (GM) food products, Vahid Mofid, the caretaker of the FDA department of food and beverages has announced.

All food products containing ingredients derived from GMOs must be labeled, including soybean and corn oil, rapeseed and cottonseed, he also noted.

He went on to say that eight laboratories in addition to the Energy & Power Industries Laboratories Company can test the products in terms of containing GM organism.

Labeling the products is merely done out of respect for the customer and providing the consumer with different choices and has nothing to do with the product's safety and health, he concluded.

## سازمان غذا و دارو با محصولات تراریخته فاقد برچسب برخورد می کند

مدیرکل فرآورده های غذایی و آشامیدنی سازمان غذا و دارو، وحید مفید در گفت و گو با خبرنگار ایرنا اعلام کرد: تمام محصولات تراریخته در سطح عرضه کنترل می شوند و در صورتی که تراریخته باشند اما برچسب نداشته باشند، حتما برخورد می کنیم.

وی اضافه کرد: برخی محصولات در کشور مانند ذرت، سویا و کلزا از نوع تراریخته وجود دارد و فرآورده های غذایی در صورت استفاده از این محصولات تراریخته باید آن را روی برچسب خود اعلام کنند.

مفید افزود: هشت آزمایشگاه علاوه بر آزمایشگاه مرجع در کشور می توانند تراریختگی را تعیین کنند.

مدیرکل فرآورده های غذایی و آشامیدنی سازمان غذا و دارو گفت: درج تراریختگی در برچسب جلوی ترکیبات، صرفاً احترام به مشتری و فراهم کردن قدرت انتخاب برای مصرف کننده است و هیچ ارتباطی با ایمنی و سلامت آن فرآورده ندارد.

## PREFIX/SUFFIX

### “chloro-, chlor-”

■ **Meaning:** green or chlorine

■ **For example:** This is the fundamental process by which **chlorophyll** 'captures' the energy of sunlight.

## PHRASAL VERB

### Pan out

■ **Meaning:** to happen or develop in a particular way

■ **For example:** We'll have to see how things pan out.

## IDIOM

### Crystal clear

■ **Explanation:** to understand or has an obvious meaning

■ **For example:** There was no need to repeat the instructions. They were crystal clear.

## Delinquent physician sentenced to free surgery, visit

**SOCIETY** **TEHRAN** — An orthopedic surgeon, convicted of financial crimes, was sentenced to conduct free surgery and visits for the underprivileged people, ISNA reported on Saturday.



The physician was convicted for price gouging and spiking the prices of surgery to a level much higher than is considered legal or fair.

The surgeon was sentenced to pay a fine, in addition to carry out 50 surgeries and make visits to 100 financially struggling individuals free of charge.

## Air-filtering bus to launch across six regions in the UK

An air-filtering bus which removes pollutants from city streets while it operates is to be rolled out into six regions of the UK following a successful trial.

The bus, trialled since 2018 in Southampton, is fitted with fans on the roof that draw in air at a rate of one cubic metre per second and filter out ultra-fine particulate pollution.

The single-decker buses are expected to start operating in Brighton, Manchester, Newcastle, Oxford, Plymouth and Crawley from this summer. Another five buses will be introduced in Southampton.

According to tests, audited by manufacturer Pall, and being assessed by the University of Southampton, the bus removed approximately 65g of pollutants from the air and cleaned 3.2 million cubic metres of the city's air.

David Brown, the chief executive of Go-Ahead group, which owns the BlueStar bus in Southampton, said the system had exceeded their expectations and he hoped that councils would help fund more routes. The trial cost the operator about £100,000 and each bus conversion is around £20,000.



"We think it's part of the solution [to air pollution], along with getting people on public transport anyway," he said. The buses have the cleanest Euro VI engines, whose nitrogen oxides emissions are now less than a single diesel car, "so it's a double-whammy," Brown added.

"For all local authorities who have an issue with air pollution and clean air zones, I genuinely believe this is part of the solution," Brown said. "These are small pilots, but if you could put it on every bus it would actually make a difference."

He said the bill to convert Go-Ahead's entire nationwide fleet would be around £100m.

(Source: The Guardian)

## WORDS IN THE NEWS

### Iraqi weapons dossier

(December 09, 2002)

The twelve-thousand-page declaration from the Iraqi government about its remaining chemical, biological and nuclear programmes has arrived at UN headquarters in New York. This report from Greg Barrow.

**With little fanfare**, the twelve-thousand page Iraqi declaration was wheeled through the main entrance of the UN headquarters in suits. There to receive it was Dr Hans Blix, the head of the United Nations weapons inspection team. For him this information about Iraq's chemical, biological and nuclear programmes is **a vital tool**. Experts among his inspection team can **cross-check** it with **existing intelligence**. But more importantly, inspectors inside Iraq can go to specific sites and **establish** from these documents whether Iraq is indeed telling the truth when it claims it has no weapons of mass destruction.

The five permanent members of the Security Council — Britain, Russia, France, China and the United States — will now **share the task** of making an early **assessment** of the declaration. In **a surprise move** just hours after it arrived in New York, the Council decided to allow these nations to be among the first to view the documents that could **dictate the course** of military intervention against Iraq.

#### ■ Words

**with little fanfare**: when something happens or is announced quietly and in a way that people don't really notice, it is done with little fanfare

**a vital tool**: crucial, very important

**cross-check**: to check something is true by comparing it with other information

**existing intelligence**: information that the United Nations already has on Iraq

**establish**: decide that something is true

**share the task** of: work together on something

**assessment**: judgement, decision

**a surprise move**: a decision or action that surprises people

**dictate the course of**: decide the action taken

(Source: BBC)



## Pope backs Iraqi call for its sovereignty to be respected

➔ **1** Iraqis on Friday rallied in Baghdad in massive numbers to call for an end to U.S. military presence in the country following high-profile assassinations and airstrikes targeting anti-terror forces.

Sayed Sadiq al-Hashemi, the director of the Iraqi Center for Studies, said more than 2.5 million took part in the demonstrations on Friday.



Since the early hours on Friday, huge crowds of men, women and children of all ages converged on the Jadriyah neighborhood near Baghdad University.

The protesters were seen carrying banners and chanting slogans calling for the expulsion of U.S. forces.

“Get out, get out, occupier!” some shouted, while others chanted, “Yes to sovereignty!”

Iraq’s al-Ahd news network reported that Iraqis from all of the country’s provinces had gathered in the city.

The massive rally came after influential cleric Muqtada al-Sadr called on Iraqis to stage “a million-strong, peaceful, unified demonstration to condemn the American presence and its violations”.

Sadr issued a statement on Friday calling for US bases to be shut down and Iraqi airspace closed to US warplanes and surveillance aircraft.

He warned that U.S. presence in the country will be dealt with as an occupying force if Washington does not agree with Iraqi demands to withdraw from the country.

In a message delivered through a representative at Friday prayer in the holy city of Karbala, top cleric Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani also urged Iraqi political groups to do what is needed to the safeguard the country’s sovereignty.

(Source: agencies)

## A president’s childish wishes and the lies that damage the American people’s psyche

➔ **1** Now, the great scope of secrecy and lies about the “Ain al-Assad” incident has involved the U.S. Department for Veterans Affairs besides the senators to pursue the case. The main question by American public opinion from the White House is that how such a project that cost billions of dollars could not protect U.S. troops against Iranian missiles.

Maybe it was because of these criticisms that the U.S. president, following his controversial tweets, represent the new logo of the U.S. Space Force to justify his lies by claiming that the sixth branch of the U.S. military is successful in this regard.

The tweet, of course, was followed by humorous responses from social media users, with many referring to Trump’s role in the movie “Home Alone” and using the term of “president’s childish wishes” about him.

Accordingly, U.S. public opinion seems almost distrustful of Trump’s remarks, and the process of gradual releasing of the number of casualties of U.S. troops indicates the failure of the U.S. military. The issue caused that Trump’s behavior in the Middle East be further criticized.

## Johnson signs Withdrawal Agreement, paving way for Brexit

UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson has signed the EU Withdrawal Agreement, paving the way for Brexit to take place on January 31.

In what is considered a formality, the European Parliament will vote on the agreement on January 29.



“The signing of the Withdrawal Agreement is a fantastic moment, which finally delivers the result of the 2016 referendum and brings to an end far too many years of argument and division,” said Johnson, referring to EU membership referendum four years ago.

“We can now move forward as one country - with a government focused upon delivering better public services, greater opportunity and unleashing the potential of every corner of our brilliant United Kingdom, while building a strong new relationship with the EU as friends and sovereign equals.”

Earlier on Friday, Charles Michel, European Council president and Ursula von der Leyen, European Commission president, signed the document in Brussels.

The original copy travelled to London by train and will return to Brussels to be archived. The UK will keep a copy.

Michel tweeted: “Things will inevitably change but our friendship will remain. We start a new chapter as partners and allies.”

After Brexit takes place on Thursday, the UK will enter a transition period, during which it will attempt to hammer out deals on future relations with the bloc.

Johnson has stressed that this period must not go beyond the end of 2020, but critics and opposition figures say this deadline is unachievable.

(Source: al Jazeera)

# China virus toll rises; Australia reports first cases

## HK declares ‘emergency’ as coronavirus spreads

The death toll from China’s coronavirus outbreak jumped to 41 as the Lunar New Year got off to a gloomy start on Saturday, with Hong Kong declaring a virus emergency, scrapping celebrations, and restricting links to mainland China.

Australia on Saturday confirmed its first four cases, Malaysia confirmed three and France reported Europe’s first cases on Friday, as health authorities around the world scrambled to prevent a pandemic.

The United States is arranging a charter flight on Sunday to bring its citizens and diplomats back from Wuhan, the central Chinese city that is the epicenter of the outbreak, the Wall Street Journal reported.

In Hong Kong, with five confirmed cases, the city’s leader Carrie Lam said flights and high speed rail trips between the city and Wuhan will be halted.

Schools in Hong Kong that are currently on Lunar New Year holidays will remain closed until Feb. 17 and education authorities have asked universities to extend leave for students.

China’s President Xi Jinping, saying the country is facing a grave situation, held a politburo meeting on measures to fight the outbreak, state television reported on Saturday.

The death toll in China has risen to 41, authorities reported on Saturday, from 26 a day earlier. More than 1,300 people have been infected globally, most of them in China, with the virus - traced to a seafood market in Wuhan that was illegally selling wildlife.

Hu Yinghai, deputy director-general of the Civil Affairs Department in Hubei province, where Wuhan is located, appealed for masks and protective suits.

“We are steadily pushing forward the disease control and prevention ... But right now we are facing an extremely severe public health crisis,” he told a news briefing.

Vehicles carrying emergency supplies and medical staff for Wuhan would be exempted from tolls and given traffic priority, China’s



transportation ministry said on Saturday.

Wuhan said it would ban non-essential vehicles from its downtown starting Sunday, further paralyzing a city of 11 million that has been on virtual lockdown since Thursday, with nearly all flights canceled and checkpoints blocking the main roads leading out of town.

Authorities have since imposed transport restrictions on nearly all of Hubei province, which has a population of 59 million.

The newly-identified coronavirus has created alarm because there are still many unknowns surrounding it, such as how dangerous it is and how easily it spreads between people. It can cause pneumonia, which has been deadly in some cases.

### ■ Australia cases

In Australia, three men, aged 53, 43 and 35 in New South Wales were in stable condition after they were confirmed to have the virus after returning from Wuhan earlier this month.

A Chinese national in his 50s, who had

been in Wuhan, was also in stable condition in a Melbourne hospital after arriving from China on Jan. 19, Victoria Health officials said.

State-run China Global Television Network reported in a tweet on Saturday that a doctor who had been treating patients in Wuhan, 62-year-old Liang Wudong, had died from the virus.

It was not immediately clear if his death was already counted in the official toll of 41, of which 39 were in the central province of Hubei, where Wuhan is located.

U.S. coffee chain Starbucks said on Saturday that it was closing all its outlets in Hubei province for the week-long Lunar New Year holiday, following a similar move by McDonald’s in five Hubei cities.

### ■ Protective suits

In Beijing on Saturday, workers in white protective suits checked temperatures of passengers entering the subway at the central railway station, while some train services in eastern China’s Yangtze River Delta region

were suspended, the local railway operator said.

The number of confirmed cases in China stands at 1,287. The virus has also been detected in Thailand, Vietnam, Singapore, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Nepal, and the United States.

There are fears the transmission could accelerate as hundreds of millions of Chinese travel during the Lunar New Year holiday, although many have canceled their plans.

Airports around the world have stepped up screening of passengers from China, though some health officials and experts have questioned the effectiveness of such screenings.

While China has called for transparency in managing the crisis, after cover-up of the 2002/2003 Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome spread, officials in Wuhan have come in for criticism over their handling of the current outbreak.

In rare public dissent, a senior journalist at a Hubei provincial newspaper run by the ruling Communist Party called on Friday for a “immediate” change of leadership in Wuhan on the Twitter-like Weibo. The post was later removed.

### ■ EU to hold meeting on Monday to discuss outbreak

European Health Commissioner Stella Kyriakides called a meeting of European Union state health representatives on Monday to discuss response options to the spread of the new coronavirus.

“We stand ready to act and step up our response if needed,” she tweeted, adding that the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) is “in the process of updating its risk assessment”.

### ■ HK declares ‘emergency’

Al Jazeera’s Adrian Brown, reporting from Hong Kong, breaks down the significance of Chief Executive Carrie Lam’s announcement that the outbreak of the new coronavirus is now an “emergency” for Hong Kong.

(Source: agencies)

## Israel to retain security control of Palestinian state under Trump deal

An Israeli TV has reported that under the terms of the soon-to-be released controversial U.S. plan on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Israel would keep security control of the entire occupied West Bank even if a Palestinian state is established in parts of it.

On Friday, Israel’s Channel 13 TV reported that the U.S.-crafted plan, dubbed ‘the deal of the century’, provides for a demilitarized Palestinian state in some 80 percent of the West Bank under overall Israeli control, adding that the state would not be authorized to maintain an army and sign military treaties.

The report said the United States expects the Palestinians to reject the plan. However, it encourages them to think again, emphasizing that the 80 percent of West Bank territory, intended for their state, would be kept for them for several years.

U.S. President Donald Trump, who is expected to release the plan by Tuesday, has invited Israel’s Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his challenger Benny Gantz to Washington for a preview of the so-called plan.

The U.S. president has said he would likely release the plan before his meeting with Israeli leaders on Tuesday,



dismissing reports on its content as “purely speculative.”

Israeli reports have described the deal as the “most pro-Israel plan ever presented” by a U.S. administration.

The reports on the plan have made no mention of the intended fate of the besieged Gaza Strip.

The U.S. plan on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict — which is widely reported to be biased towards the Tel Aviv regime — has already been unanimously rejected by all Palestinian factions, including Hamas and the Palestinian Authority.

## Iraq million-man demonstrated outright rejection of U.S. occupation: Hezbollah



### ➔ **1** ■ ‘Iraq mass protest a step towards expulsion of U.S. forces’

Separately, Yemeni Information Minister Dhaifallah al-Shami hailed the million-man demonstration against U.S. military presence in Iraq, describing it as a historical event and a step towards expulsion of American troops.

“The massive demonstration in Iraq marks a historical event and a step in the right direction to expel U.S. forces from the region,” Shami wrote in a post published on his official Twitter page.

He added, “Yemen has proved that mass demonstrations are capable of bringing down US hegemony, and that the people of the region are able to end the US presence.”

### ■ U.S. forces advised to pack up and leave Iraq immediately

Additionally, the leader of the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq has lauded the mass turnout in the anti-U.S. demonstration in Baghdad, stating that the million-strong march to demand the withdrawal of U.S. troops from the country brought glory to Arabs and Muslims worldwide.

Sheikh Humam Hamoudi highlighted that Iraqis do not accept by means

the violation of their sovereignty, calling on American soldiers to pack their bags and leave right away.

### ■ Ameri: U.S. administration must heed Iraqis’ call

Moreover, the leader of the Fatah (Conquest) Alliance at the Iraqi parliament, Hadi al-Ameri, said the Iraqi people sent out a clear message to U.S. statesmen by their mass turnout in Friday’s demonstration.

“The Iraqi people demanded the departure of American forces from Iraq. The U.S. administration must therefore respect it,” he wrote in a statement on Friday.

He added, “We thank all strata of the Iraqi society, who participated in the million-strong demonstration. We express gratitude to His Eminence Muqtada al-Sadr for his call to the demonstration. We also thank all national forces that reject foreign military presence in Iraq. We have been able and are able to achieve security and preserve sovereignty throughout Iraq.”

On January 5, Iraqi lawmakers unanimously approved a bill demanding the withdrawal.

(Source: Press TV)

## Saudi Arabia ‘planned to spy on Khashoggi’s fiancée’



Intelligence agencies in the United States believe Saudi Arabia had tried to spy on slain journalist Jamal Khashoggi’s fiancée when she visited the United Kingdom last year.

UK-based The Guardian newspaper on Friday reported that the US agencies asked their UK counterparts to “keep a close eye” on Hatice Cengiz, 38, after they learned of the Saudi plan to surveil her.

According to the report, US officials believed Riyadh had the “ambition and intention” to monitor Cengiz in London last May, months after Khashoggi was killed in October 2018 inside the Saudi consulate in Istanbul.

“The Guardian’s revelations about the effort by US and British authorities to ensure Cengiz was protected follows a report by the Washington Post columnist David Ignatius that the US state department recently rejected a proposal by a U.S. defense company to train Saudi intelligence services,” said the report.

It added that the proposal was rejected since Saudi Arabia did not have “proper safeguards in place to prevent lawless covert

operations” such as Khashoggi’s killing.

The Guardian said the revelations “highlight the concerns of human rights activists” who allege Riyadh is using surveillance to “monitor and intimidate dissidents and critics of the kingdom”.

The report said it was not confirmed if the surveillance of Cengiz was electronic or physical, or whether the plot was successful.

The Guardian report came days after claims that a mobile phone belonging to Jeff Bezos, the billionaire owner of the Washington Post, was hacked after he received a WhatsApp message from the personal account of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS).

A digital forensic analysis suggested the theft of data from the phone of Amazon’s boss in 2018 started with an infected video file sent via WhatsApp.

It’s unclear whether the alleged hack of Bezos’s phone accessed any sensitive corporate information. Saudi Arabia has categorically denied the kingdom was involved in the hacking.

(Source: al Jazeera)



# Esteghlal, Shahr Khodro qualify for ACL playoff

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Esteghlal and Shahr Khodro from Iran booked their places at the 2020 AFC Champions League playoff on Saturday.

Esteghlal defeated Kuwait SC 3-0 at the 2020 AFC Champions League Preliminary Stage 2 in Dubai's Maktoum Bin Rashid Al Maktoum Stadium.

Malian striker Cheick Diabaté scored twice in the 27th and 54th and Vouria Ghafouri made it 3-0 in the 59th minute.

Esteghlal will take on Qatar's Al Rayyan SC at the Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium on Tuesday. Eventually, the winners will sit in ACL's Group A along with Al Wahda FSCC of the UAE, Iraq's Al Shorta and another team from the qualifying stages.

The other Iranian team, Shahr Khodro, defeated Bahrain's Riffa 2-1 at the Sharjah Stadium. Mohammadreza Khalatbari scored for Shahr Khodro in the 19th minute but Taher equalized the match in the 35th minute.

With eight minutes remaining, Amin Ghasseminejad scored the winner for the Iranian team.

Shahr Khodro will play Qatar's Al Sailiya SC on Tuesday at the Abdullah bin Khalifa Stadium and the ultimate winners will advance to Group B alongside Al Hilal SFC of Saudi Arabia, the UAE's Shabab Al Ahli Dubai and Pakhtakor of Uzbekistan.

Iran's Persepolis and Sepahan have already secured their places in the group stage of the competition.

The 2020 AFC Champions League is the 39th edition of Asia's premier club football tournament organized by the Asian Football



Confederation (AFC), and the 18th under the current AFC Champions League title.

The winners of the tournament will automatically qualify for the 2021 AFC Champions League, the first time since 2008 that an AFC

Champions League holders are guaranteed automatic qualification regardless of their domestic league performance, and also earn the right to play in the 2020 FIFA Club World Cup in Qatar.

The runners-up will also qualify if the

winners are from Qatar. Both finalists are guaranteed to qualify for the 2021 FIFA Club World Cup in China alongside the hosts' representative and the winning club from a playoff involving the losing semi-finalists.

## Iran beat Afghanistan at CAFA U19 Girl's Futsal Championship



**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Iran eased past Afghanistan 16-1 at the CAFA U19 Girl's Futsal Championship 2020 on Saturday.

Roghayeh Sume'eh scored seven goals for Iran and Maral Torkman and Fahimeh Arzani each scored three goals. Ziba Afroogh had a brace and Nasrin Ghomi also scored one goal.

Iran will play Uzbekistan in a must-win game on Sunday.

"The CAFA futsal competition is being held for the first time and the participating

teams compete in the event with a mix of football and futsal players," Iran coach Niloofar Ardalan said before traveling to Dushanbe.

The round-robin tournament has brought Tajikistan, Iran, Kyrgyz Republic, Turkmenistan, Afghanistan and Uzbekistan together in Dushanbe from Jan. 24 to 29.

Iran had started the competition with a 15-0 win over Tajikistan on Friday.

The Central Asian Football Association (CAFA) is an association of the football

playing nations in Central Asia.

## Persepolis to host Tractor in a must-win game: IPL



**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Iran Professional League (IPL) kicked off Saturday after month long break and Persepolis football team welcome Tractor to Tehran's Azadi Stadium on Sunday.

IPL leaders Persepolis will start the second half of the season with the major changes since the Reds have appointed their ex-coach Yahya Golmohammadi as Gabriel Calderon's replacement.

If Persepolis win the match, they will open up a gap of five points to the teams below them. The IPL most decorated

team have boosted their attacking options with the signing of Nigerian striker Christian Osaguona.

Tractor also have a great chance to get back on track with a win in their away match. They have defeated Persepolis 1-0 in Tabriz thanks to a goal from Ehsan Haji Safi.

In another matchday 17 fixture, NaftMasjed Soleyman will host Sanat Naft Abadan.

Sanat Naft, headed by Dragan Skocic, are the favorites to win IPL for the first time. The team sit fourth, four points adrift of Persepolis.

## Disappointing end for Iran handball team in Asia



**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Iran finished their 2020 Asian Men's Handball Championship run with a 29-26 defeat to the UAE and finished the competition in sixth place overall.

Failing to book a place at the 2021 World Men's Handball Championship, let the Iranian team down in the last match.

On Thursday, Team Melli were the winners until the last seconds of the match against Korea Republic but they conceded a goal and the match ended in a 24-24 draw.

Superior goal difference helped the Koreans advance to the 2021 World Men's Handball Championship as one of top-four finishers.

Iran suffered three losses against Bahrain, Qatar and the UAE in the competition.

The Persians defeated New Zealand and Kuwait and drew with Korea.

Qatar, Bahrain, Japan and Korea advanced to the 2021 World Handball Championship after booking their places in the competition's semis.

## Australia book an Olympic berth after 12 years

**BANGKOK (Reuters)** — Australia claimed Asia's third and final qualifying berth for the Tokyo Olympic Games on Saturday when a fine solo effort from Perth Glory's Nick D'Agostino earned Graham Arnold's side a 1-0 win over Uzbekistan at the Asian Under 23 Championship.

The teams were meeting in the third-place playoff at the continental championship,

which doubles up as Asia's qualifying tournament for the Olympic Games, and victory for the Australians means the country will play at the Olympics for the first time since 2008.

D'Agostino struck two minutes into the second half at the end of a run that saw him skip past two defenders before sliding the ball into the bottom corner of Abdurvakhid Nematov's goal.

Uzbekistan's hopes were all but extinguished before the hour mark when substitute Oybek Bozorov was sent off for a dangerous challenge on Zachary Duncan six minutes after stepping off the bench.

It was a killer blow for a side that had had the better of the limited opportunities in the opening 45 minutes.

Jasurbek Yakshiboev squandered a pair

of chances early in the first half, finding the hands of goalkeeper Thomas Glover with a header before bending a shot from the edge of the area wide when he had had the time to find the corner of the net.

Australia offered little in the final third of the first half after seeing D'Agostino's fifth-minute header chalked off by referee Mohammed Hassan for a foul on Nematov.

## Chinese Champions League qualifier to be played behind closed doors due to coronavirus

Shanghai SIPG will play their 2020 AFC Champions League playoff against Buriram United of Thailand on Tuesday behind closed doors as China tries to contain the spread of the coronavirus that has already claimed the lives of 41 people.

Buriram had requested to the Asian Football Confederation that the game be postponed due to the growing public health emergency but instead China's first game since the outbreak of the virus in the central city of Wuhan will take place behind closed doors after a decision made by Shanghai municipal authorities on Saturday.

The winner of the single-leg game will progress to the group stages but it remains to be seen what happens with the three Chinese teams already there. Beijing Guoan's first home game is on Feb. 11, Guangzhou Evergrande start the following day with Shanghai Shenhua hosting for the first time on Feb. 18.

Sources have told ESPN that the AFC is currently in talks



with the Chinese Football Association (CFA). One possible outcome is that the schedule will be changed to ensure all

Chinese teams play their first three games in the group away from home, meaning that it will be April by the time they are in action on home soil.

Elsewhere, there have been other problems in Chinese football. The women's qualifiers in Asia for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, due to take place in early February, have been moved from Wuhan, the epicentre of the outbreak, to the eastern city of Nanjing.

While there has not yet been an official announcement, it is expected that the Super Cup, the traditional curtain-raiser to the Chinese season that was due to take place on Feb. 5 between champions Guangzhou Evergrande and cup winners Shanghai Shenhua, will be postponed. It also remains to be seen if start of the Chinese Super League on Feb. 22 will be pushed back.

Other sports have been affected too, with the start of the 2020 Chinese Basketball season postponed.

(Source: ESPN)

## Sepahan miss chance to move IPL top

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Sepahan football team were held to a goalless draw by Machine Sazi in Iran Professional League (IPL) on Saturday.



Amir Ghalenoei's side could have moved top of the IPL on goal difference with a win.

In Sirjan, Gol Gohar drew 1-1 with Saipa.

Struggling Paykan suffered another defeat in the competition, losing to Nassaji 1-0 in Tehran.

Zob Ahan also defeated Pars Jonoubi 1-0 in Isfahan.

On Sunday, IPL leader Persepolis will meet Tractor in Tehran. If Persepolis win the match, they will open up a gap of five points to the teams below them.

Naft Masjed Soleyman will also entertain Sanat Naft.

## 30 badminton players to participate at Fajr International Challenge

A total of 30 athletes will take part at the 29th Fajr Badminton International Challenge 2020.

The competition will be held in Shiraz, Iran from February 4 to 8.

Badminton World Federation (BWF) has been working with the Iran Badminton Federation and appreciates its support, reassurances and the steps it has taken regarding safety of participants at the tournament.

Given the above circumstances, BWF has decided that the 29th Fajr Badminton International Challenge 2020 will not count towards the Olympic qualification process.

Points from the tournament will however still count towards the BWF World Rankings, but will not be taken into consideration in the final list used for Olympic qualification.

(Source: bwfbadminton.com)

## FFIRI denies talks with De Biasi

**TASNIM** — The Football Federation Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI) denied reports that it is in discussions with Giovanni "Gianni" De Biasi over Team Melli hot seat.

Italia transfer market expert Gianluca Di Marzio on Thursday reported that the Italian coach would pen a 30-month deal with the Iranian federation.

FFIRI spokesman Amir Mahdi Alavi strongly denied rumors linking De Biasi to Team Melli.

Team Melli have been without a coach since early December after the federation parted ways with Marc Wilmots following poor results in the 2022 World Cup qualification.

Iran sit in third place in Group C with six points from four games after defeats to Iraq and Bahrain.

## Iran's Asgari advances to Karate 1-Premier League Paris final

**IRNA** — Bahman Ghoncheh Asgari from Iran booked a place at the Karate 1-Premier League Paris final.

Asgari reached the final of Male Kumite -75kg after beating Joaquin Gonzalez Lavin of Chile 2-0 in semi-finals.

Asgari will face Logan Da Costa from France on Sunday.

Sara Bamanyar from Iran will also clash for bronze medal in the Female Kumite -50kg after losing to Turkey's Ozcelik Arapoglu 3-0 in semi-finals.

More than 700 competitors from 92 countries have participated at the event underway in Paris, France.

## Alireza Beiranvand opts to stay at Persepolis

**PLDC** — Alireza Beiranvand, who had been linked with a move to a Belgian club, has decided to stay in Persepolis.

On Thursday, Beiranvand said goodbye to his teammates in the training and the local media reports suggested that he would leave Persepolis to join a Belgian team in the January transfer window.

Beiranvand has a \$700,000 release clause in his contract which allows him to leave Persepolis.

On Friday, Persepolis goalkeeping coach Davoud Fanaei announced in his Instagram story Beiranvand is not going to leave the team.

## Tractor eye Brazilian defender Matias

**TASNIM** — Iranian football club Tractor has set its sight on signing Brazilian defender Jefferson Yuri de Sousa Matias.

The 24-year-old defender currently plays for Portuguese football team Academica.

Tractor have already completed the signing of Algerian forward Okacha Hamzaoui in the January transfer window.

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

The Tabriz-based football team will meet Persepolis on Sunday in Tehran's Azadi Stadium.



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**GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING**

One who turns to what is not approved by people, will be spoken of in such a way that cannot be imagined.

Imam Ali (AS)

## “The Orientalist” on Henry Corbin to premiere in Tehran

**A R T d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Iranian director Masud Taheri’s documentary “The Orientalist” about French philosopher, theologian and orientalist Henry Corbin, will premiere at Eyvan Shams Hall in Tehran on Monday.



A poster for Iranian director Masud Taheri’s documentary “The Orientalist” about French scholar Henry Corbin.

Produced by the Documentary and Experimental Film Center, the film is a sequel to Taheri’s 2017 documentary “The Eastern” about Japanese expert on Islam Toshihiko Izutsu. Moreover, “The Orientalist” will be reviewed during a session at the National Library and Archives of Iran on Tuesday. Scholars Enshallah Rahmati, Ehsan Shariati and Reza Kuhkan are scheduled to deliver speeches during the session. Corbin (1903-1978) was a philosopher, theologian, Iranologist and professor of Islamic Studies at the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes in Paris. He was the author of “En Islam Iranien” (Islam in Iran).

## Iranian cultural attaché meets Georgian cinema scholars

**A R T d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Iranian cultural attaché in Georgia Hamid Mostafavi met with Otar Litanishvili, dean of the Film and TV Faculty at the Shota Rustaveli Theater and Film State University, in the Georgian capital Tbilisi on Thursday to discuss the expansion of relations in the film and theater fields.

Mostafavi elaborated on Iran’s latest achievements in cinema and theater, and emphasized the need to collaborate on art and cultural activities between the two countries, the Persian service of IRNA reported on Saturday.

For his part, Litanishvili said that the university is eager to cooperate with Iranian cultural centers in the fields of theater and film.

They also agreed to sign a memorandum of understanding to facilitate organizing mutual film weeks and workshops in the near future.

Litanishvili, who is also a filmmaker, said they welcome any plans from Iran to organize screenwriting workshops for Georgian students at the Shota Rustaveli Theater and Film Georgia State University.

Georgian scholar Guliko Mamulashvili also attended the meeting.

## NEWS IN BRIEF



### “My Daeshi Lover” comes to Iranian bookstores

**CULTURE d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Egyptian writer Hajar Abdulsamad’s debut novel “My Daeshi Lover” has recently been published by Ketabestan Publications in Tehran.

Translated by Mahdieh Davudi, the book reveals the true face of ISIS and clarifies their crimes through a love story.

The novel also discusses the social issues that lead young girls and boys to join the terrorist organization of ISIS.

# Iran examining 38 cities to pick as 2020 Book Capital

**CULTURE d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Iran is scrutinizing 38 cities to select one for the 2020 Book Capital.

Ten finalists will be selected from among a number of cities, including Urmia, Tabriz, Shiraz, Hamedan, Sabzevar, Bushehr, Babol, Bandar Abbas and Bojnurd, the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance announced on Saturday.

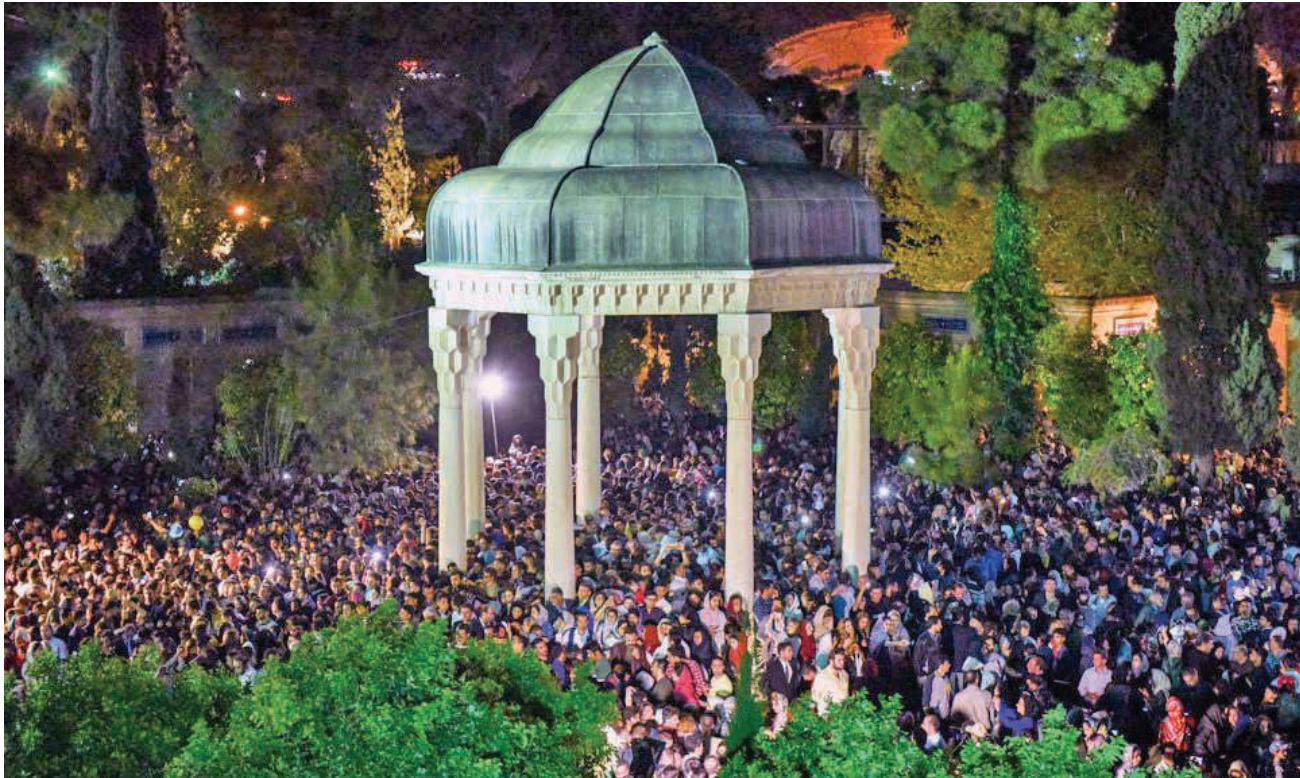
The ministry picks Iran’s Book Capital every year in collaboration with several cultural organizations, including the Iranian National Commission for UNESCO.

In addition, several villages across the country are selected as Book Loving Villages of the Year during the Festival of Book Loving Villages and Nomads.

Winners of the titles will be announced during a special ceremony at the National Library and Archives of Iran in Tehran on February 9.

Yazd, the central Iranian city that is home to many magnificent historical mosques and ancient Zoroastrian fire temples, currently is Iran’s 2019 Book Capital.

Ten villages, including Jaidasht and Kersihki in Fars Province, Arkan in North Khorasan Province, Hesar Zir Khan in Khorasan Razavi Province and Esfandiar in South Khorasan Province, are Iran’s Book Loving Villages.



People celebrate Iranian New Year’s Eve at the mausoleum of Hafez in Shiraz on March 20, 2018. (Mehr/Amin Berenjar)

## Director Ashkan Khatibi to restage “The Good Doctor”

**A R T d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Director Ashkan Khatibi will restage American playwright Neil Simon’s comic play “The Good Doctor” at Tehran’s Sepand Hall on February 14 at 6:30 pm.

The play is a musical comedy set in 19th century Russia and consists of a series of short plays based on short stories and other works by Russian writer Anton Chekhov.

The only connecting thread between the series is the character of the writer, who is reminiscent of Chekhov.

The performances will be held by a cast composed of Katibi’s acting students.

Khatibi staged the play for the first time in August 2018 at Divare Chaharom Theater, a private hall in downtown Tehran.

“The Good Doctor” had been performed previously at various theaters in Tehran and several other Iranian cities by different directors and troupes.

Khatibi also plans to stage “Reading Chekhov under the Supervision of a Representative from the Russian Federation” at Sepand Hall on February 14 at 8:30 pm.

The play is based on plays by English



A poster for “The Good Doctor” by director Ashkan Khatibi.

playwright and novelist Michael Frayn, Iranian writer Omid Sohrabi and Khatibi himself.

Both plays will remain on stage for two weeks.

## Shahrdad Rohani hopes Iranian music moves towards peace and friendship

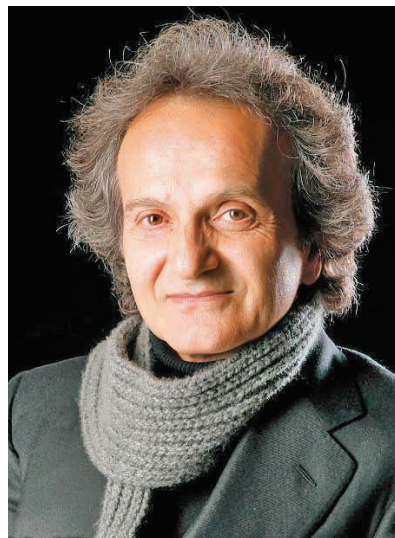
**A R T d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Tehran Symphony Orchestra conductor Shahrdad Rohani has expressed his hope that Iranian music moves towards peace and friendship after guest conductor Manuchehr Shabai’s remarks on Rohani provoked controversy during the Thursday performance at Vahdat Hall.

In a post published on his Instagram on Friday, Rohani thanked his colleagues in the orchestra for their support.

According to statements published by some official cultural organizations, Rohani is currently outside of Iran to receive treatment for heart disease, however, in an unprecedented act before the beginning of the concert, Sahbai told the audience, “Despite what you have heard or read, Rohani had fled the country after the recent events and whatever you have read about his illness is a lie.”

Sahbai’s remarks were strongly criticized by the audience and the members of the orchestra who declined to perform the second part of their concert.

However, after a long break, they agreed to resume their performance without



Shahrdad Rohani in an undated photo.

Sahbai, who allegedly was transferred to the hospital due to repercussions caused by his arguments with the musicians.

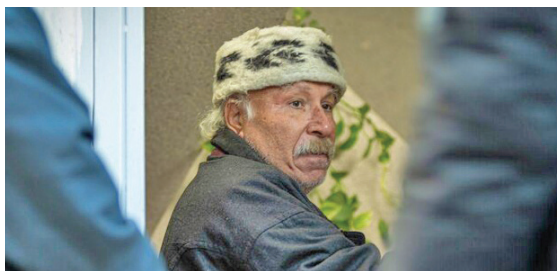
The orchestra’s Sunday concert will be conducted by Bardia Kiaras.

## Director Alireza Davudnejad makes his acting debut with “Butterfly Stroke”

**A R T d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Veteran director Alireza Davudnejad has played a leading role in Iranian filmmaker Mohammad Kart’s directorial debut feature “Butterfly Stroke”, which will have its premiere at the 38th Fajr Film Festival.

With an all-star cast, including Javad Ezzati, Amir Aqai, Tannaz Tabatabai, Pantea Bahram and Ali Shademan, the film will be screened in the New Look and official competition sections of the festival during February.

Sixty-six-year-old Davudnejad is the director and screenwriter of popular movies such as “Sweet Agony”, “Paradise for You”, “Bad Guys”, “Salve”, “Rival Wife”



Iranian director Alireza Davudnejad acts in a scene from Mohammad Kart’s “Butterfly Stroke”.

## Germany returns Nazi art from Gurlitt trove to French family

**BERLIN (Reuters)** — Germany on Wednesday returned three art works to a descendant of a Jewish French collector who owned them until his death in 1941 in Nazi-occupied France.

Two of the pictures came from a trove of works held by Cornelius Gurlitt, which was discovered in 2012 by German tax inspectors in Munich. His father had been an art dealer and sold what the Nazis dismissed as “degenerate” art.

At a ceremony in Berlin, culture minister Monika Gruetters said the return of the pictures was a small but important step.

“We Germans know of our wrongdoing and know that we can never put right the misery. But at least returning these kinds of art works are small but important and necessary steps towards justice in one small area,” she said.

A great niece of the pictures’ owner, Parisian lawyer and art collector Armand Dorville, said she was very touched by their return.

“If pictures could speak, if they could tell us their journey, they would tell us an incredible amount about robbery, theft, fraudulent sales and what we can learn from that,” she said at the ceremony, asking not to be identified.

She thanked the German government for its efforts to discover the provenance of artwork and return them where possible,



Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media, Monika Grütters returns three artworks to a descendant of a Jewish French collector who owned the pieces until his death in 1941 after the Nazis occupied France, at the chancellery in Berlin, Germany January 22, 2020. (Reuters/Madeline Chambers)

especially 75 years after the liberation of Auschwitz.

“You are fulfilling the obligation to keep alive the memory and that this is taking place today on the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz is ... a symbol,” she said.

The two pictures from the Gurlitt collection were a watercolor entitled “Lady in an Evening Dress” and an oil painting “Portrait of a Lady” by Jean-Louis Forain. The third work, “Amazonian on Rearing Horse”, was a drawing by Constantin Guys which had been in private ownership.

## Grammy organizers deny claims award nominations are rigged

**(Reuters)** — The organizers of the Grammy Awards on Thursday denied allegations that nominations for the highest prizes in the music industry are rigged, calling the claims “categorically false and misleading.”

Allegations that the Grammy nominations process is tainted by conflicts of interest were made in a complaint filed earlier this week by the former chief executive of the Recording Academy, Deborah Dugan, after she was placed on administrative leave.

Dugan repeated her claims in interviews on two morning television shows on Thursday, just days before Sunday’s Grammy Awards ceremony in Los Angeles. The Recording Academy has said the live televised show will go ahead as planned.

Bill Freimuth, the chief awards officer at the Recording Academy, denied Dugan’s claims.

“Spurious allegations claiming members or committees use our process to push forward nominations for artists they have relationships with are categorically false, misleading and wrong,” he said in a statement on Thursday.

Freimuth said it was the goal of the Recording Academy “to ensure the Grammy Awards process is led in a fair and ethical manner and that voting members make their choices based solely on the artistic excellence and technical merits of eligible recordings.”

Dugan was placed on immediate administrative leave on Jan. 17, five months after taking the helm as the Recording Academy’s first female chief executive and



The Recording Academy CEO Deborah Dugan announces nominations for the 2020 Grammy Awards at a news conference in Manhattan, New York, U.S. November 20, 2019. (Reuters/Mike Segar)

president. The Academy said at the time that the move was in response to an allegation of misconduct made against her by a senior member of staff but did not give details.

Dugan responded by filing a complaint on Tuesday with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission alleging gender discrimination, unlawful retaliation and unequal pay.

In the complaint, she described what she called a “boys’ club mentality” at the Recording Academy. Dugan also claimed that some members involved in the Grammy nominations process “push forward artists with whom they have relationships” and that in some cases musicians being considered for a nomination sit on the committee voting in their category.