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# Is it a powerful dollar or a declining one?

Alarm sounding for U.S. economic collapse as Trump's is insisting on trade deal with China



©File photo



## ARTICLE

**Fatemeh Salehi**  
Mehr News Agency  
journalist

## Syrian army's great and new victories: Terrified terrorists are escaping

The Syrian army has launched a battle in Maarat al-Numan front in Idlib province and achieved significant victories in western Aleppo over the past few days. It has destroyed terrorists' stronghold.

The Aleppo's frontline appears to have been reopened since the Syrian army completely retook Aleppo from terrorist forces in 2016. Russia and Syria have decided to remove terrorist forces remained in south-west Aleppo. At the same time, the Syrian army along with its allies have opened Idlib frontline, which according to the latest information from the battle fronts in the strategic city of Maarat al-Numan, the liberation of the city is certain. Some media even quoted sources on the ground as saying the Syrian army is advancing from the east of Idlib.

Over the past 24 hours the Syrian forces have liberated Tell Mannas and Maar Shamshah villages near Maarat al-Numan, a city that is considered a stronghold for al-Nusra Front on the southern outskirts of Idlib. The Syrian army has succeeded in expelling al-Nusra Front and the Ajnad al-Kavkaz terrorist group from the areas under its control, expanding from Aleppo-Hama road to Saraqib and Maarat al-Numan cities.

But on the western part of Aleppo's frontline, military operations are underway in the areas of Kafr Hamrah, Khan Al-Asal, al-Mansoura, Hraytan, al-Lirmon and al-Rashideen that all are located in the northwest of Aleppo.

The Syrian army is seeking to drive terrorist groups out of these areas and reach the M5 highway. In the meantime, terrorist groups facing defeats, have been accusing each other of treason.

These terrorist groups accuse Turkey of withdrawing support for them, while some media sources have stated that at a meeting between Turkey and the so-called Free Syrian Army on Thursday, Ankara pledged to provide arms support. According to media reports, Turkish intelligence chief Hakan Fidan was present at the meeting, insisting on supporting armed groups in the war. **→10**

## Taliban claims it shot down U.S. military aircraft in central Afghanistan

U.S. military aircraft crashed in eastern Afghanistan on Monday, a Taliban spokesman and Afghan journalist affiliated with the militant group said.

Tariq Ghazniwal, a journalist in the area, said that he saw the burning aircraft. In an exchange on Twitter, he told The Associated Press that he saw two bodies and the front of the aircraft was badly burned. He added that aircraft's body and tail were hardly damaged. His information could not be independently verified.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said a U.S. air force plane crashed in the Ghazni province. He claimed the crash killed "lots" of U.S. service members. The militant group often exaggerates casualty figures.

Ghazniwal said the crash site was about 10

kilometers from a U.S. military base.

U.S. Army Maj. Beth Riordan, a spokeswoman for U.S. Central Command, declined to comment when told about the Taliban claim. She earlier acknowledged American military officials were investigating reports of a crash in Afghanistan. She said that it remained unclear whose aircraft was involved in the crash.

Earlier, senior Afghan officials said a plane operated by Afghanistan's state-owned airline Ariana crashed in the country's central Ghazni province.

Arif Noori, a spokesman for the provincial governor's office in Ghazni city, said: "A Boeing plane belonging to the Ariana Afghan Airlines has crashed in the Sado Khel area of Deh Yak district of Ghazni province around 1:10 p.m. local time."

However, Noori later told Agence France-Presse (AFP): "We still don't know if it is a military or commercial plane."

Ghazni Gov. Wahidullah Kalimzai told Anadolu Agency (AA) that they still have no concrete information since the plane crashed in an area controlled by the Taliban. A search and rescue unit was dispatched to the area, he added.

However, Ariana CEO Mirwais Mirzakwal stated that the crashed plane did not belong to the airline in remarks carried by the Pajhwok Afghan News and reported by Demirören News Agency (DHA). The airline later dismissed the claim that one of its planes had crashed in a statement on its website, saying all its aircraft were operational and safe. **→10**

## Palestinians reiterate rejection of U.S. 'deal of the century'

Palestinian factions have reiterated their rejection of the controversial US plan on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict which is expected to be unveiled by President Donald Trump this week, calling for a "day of rage."

Palestinian Authority spokesman Nabil Abu Rudeineh stressed that the Palestinians would not allow the plan, which Trump calls the "deal of the century" to pass.

"The Palestinian leadership, with the support of our people, will defeat attempts to liquidate the Palestinian cause," Abu Rudeineh said Sunday. "The leadership will hold a series of meetings on all levels — including the factions and organizations — to announce its total rejection of conceding al-Quds," he added.

The spokesman also called on the Arab world to support the Palestinian stance, warning that Trump's plan would trigger turmoil in the region.

A Palestinian official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said Monday that Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas had rejected repeated requests from Trump to talk to him on the phone.

Ismail Haniyeh, the political leader of the Hamas resistance movement, also stressed that the deal is doomed to fail, warning of a "new phase" in the Palestinian struggle against the occupying regime.

"We firmly declare that the 'deal of the century' will not pass. The new plot aimed against Palestine is bound to fail," and could lead the Palestinians to a "new phase in their struggle" against Israel, Haniyeh said in a statement on Sunday.

Haniyeh also called for a meeting in the Egyptian capital with other Palestinian factions, including the Fatah movement, in order to form a common response to Trump's plan.

## ■ Palestinian factions call for 'day of rage'

Palestinian factions on Sunday called for a "day of rage" in response to the controversial plan. Trump is expected to host Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his main political rival Benny Gantz at the White House on January 28 to unveil the so-called deal of the century.

Even though the full plan has not been released, Israeli media outlets have described it as a deal that meets nearly all of Tel Aviv's demands in exchange for the possibility of recognizing a Palestinian state someday. According to the English-language online newspaper Times of Israel, the deal drastically undermines Palestinian hopes for restoring land.

Palestinian factions, in a statement signed by the National and Islamic Forces in Ramallah and El-Bireh, said the day Trump's plan is announced should be declared as a "day of popular rage." **→10**

## Zarif denounces Trump's threats against cultural sites as terrorism

TEHRAN — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Monday that U.S. President Donald Trump's threat to target cultural sites in Iran is "clear example of cultural terrorism".

"The United States president's threat to destroy Iran's cultural and historical sites is a clear example of international cultural terrorism and is in continuation of the United States regime's violation of law to break the Iranian people's resistance," he said during a speech at a cultural gathering at the National Library in Tehran. **→2**



© Tehran Times/ Mohammadreza Abbasi

## Rocket attack on U.S. embassy aimed to prevent foreign troops pullout: Hadi al-Ameri

By staff & agencies

The head of Iraq's Fatah Alliance, Hadi al-Ameri, on Monday criticized attacks on foreign embassies, saying that the subversive acts against the embassies are aimed at undermining the Iraqi sovereignty and blocking the expulsion of foreign troops from Iraq.

At least three rockets struck the U.S. Embassy compound in Baghdad on Sunday, leaving one person injured, a U.S.

official told CNN initial reports indicate.

Ameri emphasized that the U.S. has targeted Iraq's sovereignty by its January 3 strikes on the Baghdad airport, saying the United States committed a major crime and the appropriate response is to expel its troops from Iraq.

A U.S. official told CNN that one person was injured in the attack, but that the injury was minor and the individual had since returned to duty. **→10**

## Zarif: Trump's dream about bilateral meeting is 'wishful thinking'

TEHRAN — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has said that U.S. President Donald Trump's dreaming about bilateral meeting to reach a "Trump deal" is "wishful thinking".

"Donald Trump is still dreaming about a bilateral meeting—to satisfy HIS lust for a 'Trump deal'. It's wishful thinking," Zarif tweeted on Sunday.

Trump has been repeatedly seeking

a rewriting of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the official name for the 2015 nuclear agreement.

He has also been seeking for direct talks with Iran. Zarif reminded him that talks is only possible within the 5+1 framework.

"The only possible venue for talks is at the P5+1 table—which HE left—reverting to pre-2017, AND compensating Iran for damages," Zarif insisted. **→2**

## No American, Israeli general will be safe if they kill ours: IRGC chief

TEHRAN — Chief of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) has warned the U.S. and Israel that none of their military commanders will be safe should they take action against Iranian generals.

"The Americans and the Zionists beware that if they threaten our commanders with assassination and if they implement their threat, life of none of their commanders will be safe," Major General Hossein Salami said on Monday, according to Mehr.

Brian Hook, the U.S. special representative for Iran, told the Arabic-language daily Asharq al-Awsat on Thursday that Es-mail Ghaani, who is successor of Lieutenant General Soleimani, could be assassinated.

"Our enemies received the painful consequences of assassinating Martyr General Haj Qassem Soleimani, and they realized that if they do such acts, they will be faced with crushing and continuous blows," he added. **→3**

## Yemeni scholars condemn Saudi Arabia's normalization efforts with Israel

A group of Yemen's religious scholars have strongly condemned a recent visit by senior Saudi cleric and former justice minister, Sheikh Muhammad bin Abdul Karim bin Abdulaziz al-Issa, to the former Nazi concentration camp, Auschwitz, in Poland along with a Jewish group, and all the Riyadh regime's efforts to normalize relations with the Israeli regime after years of clandestine contacts.

"The suspicious visit took place under the permission and encouragement of the Saudi regime, and was aimed at normalization with the occupying Zionist regime. It was led by former Saudi justice minister and secretary general of the so-called Muslim World League (MWL), Muhammad al-Issa, and included some crooked scholars," Yemen Scholars Association said in a statement released on Sunday. The statement added, "Issa and his companions took an brazen step by praying at the site of alleged Holocaust in utter disregard to Islamic teachings," describing it as an unprecedented step on the path of normalization.

The association then categorically rejected any effort aimed at rapprochement, reconciliation and normalization of ties with the Tel Aviv regime, which occupies Palestinian territories and defiles Muslim sanctities.

It also called for a religious decree, which would end Saudi Arabia's jurisdiction over the mosques of Masjid al-Haram in Mecca and Al-Masjid al-Nabawi in Medina. The association finally demanded an emergency conference at the level of Arab and Muslim scholars, where thinkers would discuss matters of paramount importance, especially the issues of occupied Jerusalem al-Quds and Palestine.

The statement came a day after Mohamed Abdel-Salam, a spokesman for Yemen's Houthi Ansarullah movement, denounced Saudi Arabia's efforts to normalize ties with the Israeli regime in the name of Islam.

(Source: Press TV)

**Dear readers,**  
The next issue of the Tehran Times will be published on Saturday, February 1.



## Larijani calls for Iran-Russia co-op to counter U.S. dictatorship

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani said on Monday that the United States “is dragging the region towards an international dictatorship”, calling for Iran-Russia cooperation to counter Washington.

Larijani made the remarks during the second Iran-Russia joint supreme committee for parliamentary cooperation.



“The United States is dragging the regional situation towards international dictatorship and demonstrating humiliating behavior. In this situation, cooperation between Iran and Russia is very important,” Larijani said.

The Russian parliamentary delegation arrived in Tehran on Monday. The team was headed by State Duma chief Vyacheslav Volodin.

Larijani noted that Iran and Russia are important and influential countries in the region.

He also called for expansion of economic ties. For his part, Volodin attached great importance to expansion of cooperation and interaction.

In a press conference after the meeting, Volodin said that Russia seeks to expand relations with Iran in various areas.

“We respect the relations between the two countries and we believe the ties must be continued within the framework of mutual respect and hope on the future,” the State Duma chief said.

Elsewhere, he said that Iran and Russia are two partners that are committed to non-interference in other countries’ affairs and do not exercise double standards.

## Zarif denounces Trump’s threats against cultural sites as terrorism

**1 →** In a tweet on January 4, Trump threatened to target 52 Iranian sites, including cultural and civilian ones.

Zarif said that respecting the cultural sites is respecting the “human dignity” and attacking historical and cultural sites is attacking humanity and history.

He noted that according to the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, causing harm to a country’s cultural properties is like harming the whole humanity’s culture and is an unforgivable crime.



“This convention has banned targeting cultural sites and properties even in armed conflicts”, he added.

Elsewhere, Zarif said that Trump’s threat shows his hatred for not only the rich Iranian culture, but for “culture, civilization, and anything that expresses peace and stability”.

In a threat delivered over Twitter on Jan. 4, Trump said that he is prepared to “HIT VERY FAST AND VERY HARD” culturally important targets in Iran should the country retaliate for the American assassination of General Qassem Soleimani.

In a statement read by Iran’s envoy Majid Takhte-Ravanchi to the United Nations Security Council on January 9, Zarif said that the U.S. is seeking to emulate the war crimes of Daesh by threatening to destroy the cultural heritage of Iran.

“It now even seeks to emulate the war crimes of DAESH, menacing the cultural heritage of the millennia-old civilization of Iran,” he said.

A U.S. Senator, Chris Murphy, said in a tweet on January 4 that targeting civilians and cultural sites is what terrorists do. “Targeting civilians and cultural sites is what terrorists do. It’s a war crime,” he tweeted.

“As a historian who has written about the medieval Islamic roots of the Islamic State group (Daesh), I can tell you that by threatening Iran’s cultural heritage, Trump puts himself in the company of some repugnant characters,” David J. Wasserstein, a professor of history and Jewish studies at Vanderbilt University, wrote on January 7.

According to theconversation.com, Wasserstein said, “Nazi leader Adolf Hitler wanted to demolish the landmarks of Paris as World War II neared an end — a fate that was only avoided because his soldiers refused to carry out the orders.”

The professor also said, “More recently, the Taliban blew up Afghanistan’s famed Bamiyan Buddhas and the Islamic State group destroyed the ancient cities of Hatra and Palmyra, along with much of Mosul, including the 900-year-old Nuri mosque.”

■ **‘Passive unilateralism encourages active unilateralism’**

Zarif also said that “passive unilateralism encourages active unilateralism”, expressing regret over countries’ passive position on the U.S. unilateralism.

“The countries which have submitted to Trump’s unilateralism and violation of law in order to be safe from his aggression have provided the grounds for aggression against themselves,” he said.

# People’s trust in rulers more important than winning elections: Rouhani

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — President Hassan Rouhani on Monday highlighted the importance of the upcoming parliamentary elections, but noted that peoples’ trust in the country’s rulers is more important than the outcomes of elections.

“Undoubtedly, the elections, especially the Islamic Consultative Assembly’s election is of great importance, but the people’s trust (in the rulers and the establishment) as well as social wealth are more important than the elections,” Rouhani told a gathering of provincial and city governors ahead of the February 21 parliamentary elections.

The parliamentary elections, the 11th of its kind since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, will be held in over 200 constituencies across the country’s 31 provinces.

Rouhani has criticized the Guardian Council for banning a considerable number of candidates, including sitting MPs, to run for parliament, indirectly suggesting that the council is favoring the principlist candidates over moderates or reformists.

“We all should guard republicanism of the system,” Rouhani said in his address to governors.

“We are nothing. The durable power for a country is the people’s power,” the president said, noting that the rulers’ power is indebted to the people.

The president said that the establishment’s call on people to partake in the elections should be similar to the call on people to participate in the rallies marking the victory of the Islamic Revolution or joining each other to defend the country in case of a war against the country by the aggressive enemies.

“Do we invite a particular faction to attend the rallies marking the victory of the Revolution or do we invite all walks of the life (without any distinction),” the president



asked, pointing indirectly to the Guardian Council’s assessment of the parliamentary hopefuls.

Article 99 of the constitution states that the Guardian Council “is responsible for supervising the elections of the Experts Assembly, the President of the Republic, the Islamic Consultative Assembly, and referrals to the public vote and referenda.”

“The governors are directing and managing the elections. The country’s constitution has been cautious and has said a monitoring body (the Guardian Council) should monitor the elections process too in order to prevent any possible fault,” Rouhani said, adding, “But now the trend has become inverse. The monitoring body has been turned into the executive body and the executive body has been just turned into a logistic body.”

“I am worried about a (possible) day when the term Republic might be regarded as a

crime,” the president added.

On Wednesday, Rouhani had said it is not possible that a single faction run the country. In response, Ayatollah Jannati, the Guardian Council chief, said his council does not favor one faction over another.

“The Guardian Council neither benefits nor agonizes from approving or rejecting the competence of anybody, and factions are not different for it,” Jannati said, adding the council “only sticks to law”.

Jannati also criticized Rouhani for expressing dismay over the rejection of some candidates, saying, “The president should not make statements that would worry the public opinion or disappoint people or misused by the enemies.”

In his Monday address, Rouhani added, “The first election in Iran was a referendum. Some people feel unhappy about the term referendum, but they should know that the

base of our election was a referendum. The main pillar of our establishment has been built on referendum via which we chose our establishment as an Islamic Republic.”

■ **‘We should not White House terrorists succeed’**

Elsewhere in his remarks, the president pointed to the U.S. maximum pressure policy against his country and said, “(U.S. President Donald) Trump wants to say to the world that Iran is an abandoned lonely island. He wants to build a wall around Iran forever. We must not let him to do so.”

He urged the Iranian people to take a firm and united stand against the United States and its allies trying to undermine the country’s integrity.

“This is a matter of national interests. And we should all stand up and not allow Trump to succeed,” the president remarked.

The president pointed to the two FATF-related bills of Palermo and CFT, saying, “The rules and regulations that have been drafted by the government and been approved by the Majlis (parliament) should not remain uncertain... In this way we will face problem in our international interactions.”

“We should not let the White House terrorists succeed; they are terrorizing Iran’s relationship with the world banks. We have to be careful, they are terrorizing people’s trust in the system,” he said, according to Press TV.

On October 7, 2018, the parliament voted in favor of the CFT. However, the oversight Guardian Council rejected the bill by finding 22 faults with it, which put the fate of the bill at the hands of the Expediency Council.

The opposition to join the FATF rose after the Trump administration revoked the 2015 nuclear deal in May 2018 and started imposing sanctions on Iran. Since that date, it has slapped multiple rounds of sanctions on Iran.

## Zarif: Trump’s dream about bilateral meeting is ‘wishful thinking’

**1 →** In another tweet on Saturday, Zarif also advised Trump to base his foreign policy decisions on facts, rather than Fox News headlines or his Farsi translators.

“Donald Trump is better advised to base his foreign policy comments and decisions on facts, rather than Fox News headlines or his Farsi translators,” the chief diplomat said.

Trump said in a tweet on Saturday, “Iranian Foreign Minister says Iran wants to negotiate with The United States, but wants sanctions removed. @FoxNews @OANN No Thanks!”

The tweet by Trump came after Zarif said in an interview with the German magazine Der Spiegel that Tehran still does not reject talks on the condition Washington “correct[ed] its past” and removed a series of tough economic measures.

Zarif said Trump has misunderstood his remarks, suggesting that Trump must read the entire interview to be better informed.

“To be better informed, he can read my entire interview (in English) [spiegel.de/international/...](https://www.spiegel.de/international/...),” Zarif stated.

Zarif posted an excerpt from his interview, when he was asked about the possibility of negotiations following the U.S. assassination of Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, advising Trump, “Too many words? Then just read this.”

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

Zarif: 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,” Zarif said in the interview.

The JCPOA was signed between Iran and the 5+1 group — the five permanent members of the UN Security Council — plus Germany in July 2015. It was also ratified in the form of a UN Security Council resolution.

However Trump unilaterally quit the nuclear deal in May 2018 and introduced the harshest ever sanctions in history on Iran as part of his administration’s “maximum pressure” strategy against Iran.

U.S. Senator Chris Murphy said last week that U.S. President Donald Trump quit the JCPOA, just because it had President Barack Obama’s name on it.

“The Iran deal was working, but Trump ripped it all up just because it had Obama’s name on it,” Murphy said in a tweet.

Ben Rhodes, former Obama’s adviser, also said in July 2019 that Trump quit the

JCPOA, because Obama negotiated it.

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

The Daily Mail reported in July 2019 that Kim Darroch, the former British ambassador to the U.S., had said Trump discarded the nuclear deal for “personality reasons,” as the deal had been agreed to by Obama..

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

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

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

Straw said that the United States’ withdrawal from the JCPOA had “no logic”.

## U.S. senator urges White House to back off from a war with Iran

*By staff and agency*

U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Eliot Engel has criticized U.S. President Donald Trump for beating drums of war against Iran, urging the White House to “back off from a perpetual war”.

“The United States, frankly, has been involved in too many wars in the last twenty years. And, I think it’s time to back off and not have a perpetual war,” he told Geo News in an interview published on Saturday.

He also called assassination of Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani “an ill-advised action”.

The U.S. House of Representatives has approved a resolution limiting Trump’s ability to make war on Iran.

The Democratic-controlled House voted 224 to 194, mostly along party lines, sending the war powers resolution to the Senate. The partisan vote reflected the deep divide in Congress over Trump’s Iran policy and how much of a say lawmakers should have over the use of the military. France 24 reported on January 10.

“The president has to make the case first, first, not

after he launches an ill-advised attack and then comes up with a reason why it was necessary and why it was legal,” France 24 quoted Engel as saying, referring to Soleimani’s assassination.

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

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

Top Iranian political and military figures had vowed “harsh revenge” for the martyrdom of General Soleimani. Ayatollah Khamenei said on January 8 that such military actions are not enough and the U.S. forces must leave the region.

“The issue of revenge is another issue... The United States’ corruptive presence in the region must come to an end. They have brought war, sedition, destruction, and also the destruction of infrastructures to the region,” he stated.

The Leader also described the assassination of Soleimani as a cowardly act that brought disgrace



upon the U.S.

Analysts called the U.S. assassination of the top general as an act of war against Iran.

## ‘We apologize’ for Trump’s aggression: Americans say in letter to Iranians

**TEHRAN (Tasnim)** — The peace advocacy group CodePink is collecting American signatures for a letter apologizing to the Iranian people for U.S. aggression, particularly President Donald Trump’s decision on January 3 to order the assassination of Lt. General Qassem Soleimani in Iraq.

“As Americans committed to peace and the safety of all people, we, the undersigned, apologize for the actions of our reckless, hate-filled president,” the letter says, “and pledge to do everything we can to stop Trump’s aggression, remove the crippling sanctions you are suffering under, and resume a process of diplomacy with your country.”

In a tweet about Saturday’s demonstrations, CodePink co-founder Medea Benjamin warned that war was still a very real possibility. Common Dreams reported.

“Think we avoided war with Iran a few weeks ago?” said Benjamin. “Think again. We are still on the brink.”

CodePink’s letter condemns in no uncertain terms the continuing conflict.



“The recent U.S. actions towards Iran are the most dangerous and provocative of all of Donald Trump’s foreign

policy decisions,” reads the letter. “The assassination of Gen. Soleimani—ordered by President Trump and carried out on sovereign Iraqi soil—risked the safety of the entire world, set a dangerous precedent, and was likely illegal under international law.”

“Please accept our hand in friendship,” says the letter. “May the peacemakers prevail over those who sow hatred and discord.”

General Soleimani, Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, who was the deputy head of Iraq’s Hashd al-Sha’abi (PMU), and a number of their entourage were killed in a strike by American drones near Baghdad International Airport on Friday, January 3.

The White House and the Pentagon claimed responsibility for the assassination of General Soleimani in Iraq, saying the attack was carried out at the direction of Trump.

In the early hours of Wednesday, January 8, the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) targeted the U.S. airbase of Ain al-Assad in retaliation for the U.S. move.



# Iran will never hold talks with 'terrorist admin of Donald Trump', says MP

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Iran will never hold talks with the terrorist administration of Donald Trump even if America lifts the sanctions, an Iranian lawmaker said on Monday.

"Given the recent atrocity committed by the U.S. as a terrorist state which is headed by a person named Trump, we will never and under no conditions hold negotiations with the U.S.," said Alaeddin Boroujerdi, Mehr reported.

Boroujerdi, a member of the Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, said the United States has officially introduced state terrorism by committing an unforgivable sin against the Iranian nation and the Islamic Republic.

He was referring to the U.S. assassination of top Iranian general Qassem Soleimani in a drone strike in Iraq. The strike was ordered by Trump. Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the second-in-command of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), and several others were also killed in the attack.

Boroujerdi's remarks came a few days after Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said the Trump administration "can correct its past, lift the sanctions and come back to the negotiating table. We're still at the negotiating table."

"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," Zarif said in an interview with Der Spiegel published on Friday.

Zarif's remarks provoked a fierce backlash within Iran, especially after Trump said in a tweet on Saturday, "Iranian Foreign Minister

says Iran wants to negotiate with The United States, but wants sanctions removed. @FoxNews @OANN No Thanks!"

Trump also posted the same tweet in Persian.

The Iranian foreign Minister, however,

responded to Trump on Sunday, saying Trump should base his foreign policy comments and decisions on facts, rather than Fox News headlines or his Farsi translators.

He also posted an image of part of his Der Spiegel interview to show how Trump had misstated him.

Later in the day, Zarif said in another tweet, "@realDonaldTrump is still dreaming about a bilateral meeting—to satisfy HIS lust for a 'Trump deal'. It's wishful thinking. The only possible venue for talks is at the P5+1 table—which HE left—reverting to pre-2017, AND compensating Iran for damages."

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

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

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

## Tehran: Trump has no business talking about culture, national identity

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi says he was not surprised when the U.S. president, who only knows how to run cabarets, said his administration had identified 52 cultural sites in Iran to strike.

"I was not surprised when Trump admitted to targeting 52 [cultural] sites; a president who only knows how to run cabarets has no business speaking about culture and national identity," Mousavi said on Monday.

"As each person is recognized with his/her identity, nations are also recognized with their national identity in the world stage," he said.

Mousavi said Iran's diplomacy is based on its national and historical identity.

Trump tweeted on January 4 that his military would strike "very important" targets related to Iran if the Iranians attempted to take retaliatory action against the U.S. for the assassination of top General Qassem Soleimani, in the Iraqi capital Baghdad on January 3.

Iran embraces hundreds of historical sites such as bazaars, museums, mosques, bridges, bathhouses, madrasas,



mausoleums, churches, towers, and mansions, of which 22 being inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list. Under the 2025 Tourism Vision Plan, the country aims to increase the number of tourist arrivals from 4.8 million in 2014 to 20 million in 2025.

"Military threats definitely cannot deter us from our historical ideal of peace and dialogue," Mousavi said.

"If we see that the Islamic Republic of Iran is the pro-

poser of peace, dialogue among civilizations, a world free of violence and good relations with neighbors, it comes from the Iranian identity," the spokesman added.

The U.S. administration of Donald Trump has put enormous pressure on Iran, especially after Trump unilaterally quit the nuclear deal in May 2018 and introduced the harshest ever sanctions in history on Iran as part of his administration's "maximum pressure" strategy against Iran.

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

Tensions between the two countries reached its peak on January 3, when General Soleimani, Iran's top anti-terror commander, was assassinated in cold blood under the direct order of Trump.

Iran retaliated in January 8 by attacking an important U.S. base in Iraq with dozens of missiles.

## No American, Israeli general will be safe if they kill ours: IRGC chief

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

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

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said on January 17 that Iran's revenge "was a blow to America."

"Of course, it was an effective military blow, but more importantly and higher than military blow, this was a blow to America's grandeur as a superpower," Ayatollah Khamenei said while addressing worshippers during the Tehran Friday Prayers on January 17.

In his Monday remarks, Salami said the enemies of Iran have not stood idle but resort to every method to harm the Islamic Revolution.

"In spite of all plots and ploys, the enemies of the Iranian nation have recognized today that military threats against us are futile and would not work for them," said



the commander.

He also said Soleimani's assassination

laid bare the "satanic face" of the U.S. and increased the Iranian nation's hatred of the U.S.

Last week, General Salami said "Martyr Soleimani" is more alive and more dangerous for the enemy than "Qassem Soleimani".

"Haji Qassem had displaced and bewildered the enemy and was a man of changing the power balance at the peak of inequality," he said.

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

## Iran to punish killers of Gen. Soleimani sooner or later: Judiciary chief



**TEHRAN (Tasnim)** — Iran's Judiciary Chief Ebrahim Raisi said the Islamic Republic's officials will meet the killers of Lt. Gen. Qassem Soleimani to bring them to justice.

Addressing a meeting of the Judiciary's Supreme Council in Tehran on Monday, Raisi pointed to the effects of the martyrdom of Lt. Gen. Soleimani on the latest regional events and said the martyr's blood has encouraged freedom-seeking nations to stand against oppression.

"God willing, the legal and judicial issues regarding this crime will be pursued," he said, adding, "In talks with the president of the Supreme Court of Iraq, it became clear that they have a great motivation to pursue this."

"We will also follow up on (the issue) through international circles," the

Judiciary chief went on to say.

"Sooner or later we will meet the killers of Haji Qassem not for negotiation but for trial and punishment," the official stated.

General Soleimani, Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, who was the deputy head of Iraq's Hashd al-Sha'abi (PMU), and a number of their entourage were killed in a strike by American drones near Baghdad International Airport on Friday, January 3.

The White House and the Pentagon claimed responsibility for the assassination of General Soleimani in Iraq, saying the attack was carried out at the direction of U.S. President Donald Trump.

In the early hours of January 8, the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) targeted the U.S. airbase of Ain al-Assad in Iraq in retaliation for the U.S. move.

## Iran supports Syria's territorial 'integrity'



**TEHRAN (FNA)** — Senior Advisor to the Iranian Parliament Speaker Hossein Amir Abdollahian stressed Tehran's continued support for Syria's territorial integrity and sovereignty.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran welcomes any measure which protects Syria's territorial integrity, strengthens its national sovereignty and returns stability and tranquility to the region," Amir Abdollahian said in a meeting with Syrian Ambassador to Tehran Adnan Mansour on Monday.

He also expressed the hope that the crisis in Idlib, created due to the terrorists' presence in the region, would be resolved soon and the province would be fully controlled by the Syrian government.

Mahmoud, for his part, said there is no doubt that the role of the Resistance Front in the region will not fade away after martyrdom of IRGC Quds Force Commander

Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, adding that Iran has always proved that it can turn all crises into opportunity.

In a relevant development in July, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad in a meeting with Abdollahian had stressed that his country would stand beside Tehran against the U.S. threats and pressures.

"Syria will support Tehran against the U.S. threats and illegal acts against the Iranian nation," Assad said during the meeting in Damascus.

During the meeting, bilateral ties between Iran and Syria, anti-terrorism war in Syria and developments in the region came under discussion.

Amir Abdollahian, for his part, informed Assad about the latest developments with regard to the Iran nuclear deal and the Iranian officials' measures to confront the U.S. hostile policies.

## Beijing thanks Zarif for praising China's strong effort to contain coronavirus

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif's remarks fully reflect the traditional friendship and sincere partnership between China and Iran, says Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying.

She made the remarks when asked to comment on Zarif's appreciation for China's response to the pneumonia outbreak caused by the novel coronavirus.



"State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi has conveyed an oral message to Foreign Minister Zarif to express thanks to the Iranian side," Hua said.

The Chinese spokesperson added, "At present, the Chinese government is taking resolute and forceful measures to conduct scientific and effective prevention and control of the epidemic, and maintaining close cooperation with the World Health Organization and other international partners. We are fully confident that the outbreak will be brought under control and defeated as soon as possible."

In a post on his Twitter account on Thursday, Zarif expressed Iran's support for the Chinese people following the outbreak of a new strain of coronavirus in the East Asian country.

He also praised the Chinese government for responding in a timely and decisive manner in the fight against the new coronavirus-infected pneumonia epidemic.

People from all over the country were united in their hearts, so that there was confidence that China would win the epidemic prevention and control war, Zarif added.

The Iranian foreign minister also expressed hope that all Chinese people would have a healthy and peaceful Spring Festival and wished them health in the Chinese Year of the Rat.

Regardless of adversity, Iran has always stood by the Chinese people, Zarif underlined.

According to the New York Times, a top Chinese health official warned on Sunday that the spread of the dangerous new coronavirus, already extraordinarily rapid, is accelerating further, deepening global fears about an illness that has sickened more than 2,700 people worldwide and killed at least 80 people in China.

People who are carrying the virus but not showing symptoms may still be able to infect others, according to the Chinese official, Ma Xiaowei, the director of China's National Health Commission. Such asymptomatic transmissions would make the disease much more difficult to control, as seemingly healthy people travel and interact with others.

## EU chief, German FM discuss JCPOA

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Josep Borrell, the European Union foreign policy chief, and German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas met in Berlin on Monday to discuss the 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the JCPOA.

"Good meeting with my friend German Minister of Foreign Affairs @HeikoMaas this morning in Berlin. Discussed pressing international issues and European foreign policy action: Berlin #Libya conference, #JCPOA and Western Balkans. We will continue to work hand in glove," Borrell tweeted on Monday.



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

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

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

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

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

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

Borrell said in a statement issued on Friday, "There is agreement that more time is needed due to the complexity of the issues involved. The timeline is therefore extended."



STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	420668.1
IFX	5323.09

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	46,318 rials
GBP	54,858 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$58.01/b
WTI	\$52.43/b
OPEC Basket	\$63.26/b
Gold	\$1,585.25/oz
Silver	\$18.32/oz
Platinum	\$993.45/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

Major automakers' monthly output exceeds 103,000

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Three major Iranian carmakers, namely Iran Khodro (IKCO), SAIPA Group and Pars Khodro, manufactured 103,677 vehicles during the tenth Iranian calendar month of Dey (December 22, 2019-January 20, 2020), IRNA reported citing the data released by Codal website. According to the data, during the mentioned period IKCO manufactured 51,923 vehicles, Saipa Group produced 39,863 cars, and Pars Khodro's output reached 11,891.



As reported, the mentioned carmakers, manufactured a total of 706,823 vehicles during the first ten months of the current Iranian year (March 21, 2019-January 20, 2020). The country's major car makers manufactured 604,806 vehicles during the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-December 22), according to Codal website.

Zimbabwe approaches the UAE for potential investment

Sanctioned by the West and spurned by China, Zimbabwe has turned to the United Arab Emirates in its latest bid to find a savior that can arrest the collapse of its economy.

Zimbabwe's government has approached the UAE in hopes of selling a stake in its national oil company, according to three company and government officials familiar with the plan. It also wants companies in the UAE to buy more of its gold, they said.

President Emmerson Mnangagwa has said UAE investors will build solar plants in Zimbabwe, and UAE President Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan a year ago issued a decree to open an embassy in Zimbabwe.

Dubai also contributed to relief efforts when Zimbabwe was hit by a cyclone last year.

Zimbabwe's economy is in free-fall: It likely contracted by more than 6 percent last year, according to government estimates. Half the population is in need of food aid, inflation is running at over 500 percent and its currency has depreciated by more than 90 percent against the dollar since a 1:1 peg was abolished in February last year.

"They need investment desperately," said Jee-A van der Linde, an economic analyst at NKC African Economics in Paarl, South Africa. "It's been snowballing. I don't know where it's going to end up. I don't know how that would be appealing for the UAE"

Oil companies in the UAE said they were unaware of the interest. The UAE's Foreign Ministry didn't respond to requests for comment.

The UAE is not the only country Mnangagwa has targeted for potential investment. Since taking power from Robert Mugabe in a November 2017 coup, he has crisscrossed the globe repeating the mantra 'Zimbabwe is open for business.'

Two trips to Russia and former Soviet republics revived interest in a platinum project and a fleet of second-hand Belarusian buses now ply the streets of the capital, Harare.

By May 2019, investment pledges worth \$27bn had been announced in projects ranging from steel mills to abattoirs. There's little evidence that they are being developed.

■ Extending financial bailout

A visit by Wang Yi, the Chinese foreign minister in January ended with only pledges of further infrastructural projects being carried out by China. There was no mention by the "all-weather-friend" as Zimbabwe likes to describe China, extending any financial bailout.

Zimbabwe wants to sell a stake of as much as 25 percent in the National Oil Infrastructure Company of Zimbabwe, the people said, declining to be identified as the plans haven't been disclosed.

NOIC owns storage depots at the port of Beira in neighboring Mozambique as well as five locations in Zimbabwe. It also owns gas stations and the pipeline that brings oil products from Beira to Mutare for companies including Puma Energy BV, in eastern Zimbabwe.

Zimbabwe is prone to frequent shortages of motor fuel and sees a relationship with the UAE, possibly through the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company, as a way of securing supply, one of the people said.

(Source: gulfbusiness.com)

Iran to start offering 2 new oil products at IRENEX next week

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Two new oil products, namely Propylene and Normal Hexane, are going to be offered at Iran Energy Exchange (IRENEX) for the first time next week, IRNA reported on Monday, quoting the managing director of IRENEX.

"After the offerings of propylene and normal hexane products at IRENEX, the country's demand will be met through domestic resources," Seyed Ali Hosseini said.

According to the official, Shazand's Emam Khomeini Oil Refinery which is the current supplier of the mentioned products has committed to offer 80 percent of its annual output, which is 40,000 tons and 60,000 tons of propylene and normal hexane, respectively, at IRENEX on a monthly basis.

Later Kermanshah and Abadan refineries will join Emam Khomeini Refinery to supply their products for offering at IRENEX.

Normal hexane is used as a solvent in the



petrochemical and lubrication industries and propylene is commonly used as a feedstock for petrochemical plants, Hosseini said.

Since the U.S. withdrew from Iran's nuclear pact in May 2018, vowing to drive Iran's oil exports down to zero, the Islamic Republic has been taking various measures to counter U.S. actions and to lessen its economy's reliance on oil.

In this regard, Iranian think-tanks and energy experts have been repeatedly stating that the country should increase its refining capacity in order to make up for the reductions in crude oil sales by exporting oil products.

Therefore, in the past few months, the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) and its subsidiaries have been constantly offering various oil products at IRENEX.

NIOC has managed to sell millions of dollars of oil products via IRENEX over the past two years.

IUST hosts conference on railway transportation



**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Iran University of Science and Technology hosted the country's first conference on "Railway Transportation, Opportunities, Capacities and Production Boom" on Monday, IRIB reported.

Speaking in the opening ceremony, Jabbar-Ali Zakeri, the chancellor of IUST's railway engineering faculty, said: "Indigenizing [the equipment and machinery in] all the sectors of the rail industry, except for the rail itself, had begun 15 years ago, and this year it was fully completed with the unveiling of the national rail."

In November 2016, Iran's Esfahan Steel Company (ESCO) signed a contract with the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways (known as RAI) for manufacturing 40,000 tons of U33 rails (later called the National Rail Track), and consequently launched its rail production line with €28.2 million plus 573 billion rials (about \$13.6 million) of investment.

Later in 2019, ESCO handed over the first cargo of the domestically-manufactured rail tracks to RAI.

In September 2019, Iranian Transport Minister Mohammad Eslami said the country will become a major rail track producer in the region in near future.

He noted that moving toward self-sufficiency in this sector is a must and delivery of the first cargo of the National Rail has been a big achievement in this regard.

Iran's sixth five-year national development plan (2016-21) stresses, among other things, the need to develop the rail transport network.

According to the country's transport ministry, Iran needs to build 1,500 kilometers of railroads, for which it needs 1.8 million tons of rails.

The Islamic Republic of Iran Railways says Iran needs an average of 300,000-400,000 tons of rails per year to meet the needs of this key transport sector.

Red meat production down 3% in Q3 yr/yr

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Production of red meat in Iran has dropped three percent during this year's autumn (which corresponds to the third quarter of the Iranian calendar year) compared to the same season in the previous year, Statistical Center of Iran (SCI) has announced.

As the SCI has reported, 81,500 tons of red meat have been produced in the country during autumn, IRIB reported.

The report said that beef and veal had the lion's share (53 percent) in the country's red meat output during autumn with 43,200 tons, followed by lamb and mutton with 29,400 tons, goat meat with 6,600 tons, and red meat from other livestock with 2,300 tons.

As previously announced by SCI, production of red meat in Iran has dropped 22 percent during this year's summer compared to the same season in the previous year.

Some 77,000 tons of red meat have been produced in the country during summer.

Last month, the managing director of Iran's Central Union of Animal Farmers said there is no need for imports of red meat this year (ends on March 19, 2020), due to surplus production.



Pointing out that the country's red meat output meets almost 90 percent of the domestic demand every year, Saeed Soltani Sarvestani said: "This year, however, we don't need to import any red meat since our production has exceeded demand."

To support domestic production, importers and suppliers

TEDPIX up, IFX down on Monday



**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), rose 2,355 points to 420,668 on Monday, IRNA reported.

Over 6.735 billion securities worth 34.866 trillion rials (about \$830 million) were traded at TSE. The first market's index climbed 1,648 points and the second market's index went up 5,075 points on Monday.

The value of trades at Tehran Stock Exchange 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.

TSE has 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.

On Monday, while TSE witnessed the growth of its index, Iran's over-the-counter (OTC) market known as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB), experienced decline of its main index, IFX.

The index fell 17 points to 5,323, as 2.603 securities valued at 18.339 trillion rials (about \$436 million) were traded at IFB on Monday.

Japan trades lower as many Asian markets remain closed for Lunar New Year

Japan traded lower on Monday as investors appeared to be wary about the fast-spreading coronavirus, which started in the Chinese city of Wuhan.

The benchmark Nikkei 225 fell 2.03% to 23,343.51 while the Topix index declined 1.61% to 1,702.57.

Travel-related stocks fell: Japan's biggest airline, ANA, declined 3.02% while shares of travel agency H.L.S dropped 6.77%. Shares of Airtech, which manufactures products specializing in clean air system and are used by hospitals, rose 17.06%.

The Japanese yen, which is considered a safe-haven currency, changed hands at 109.06 per dollar, weakening from an earlier level around 108.72.

In India, the Nifty 50 was down 0.4% while the Sensex slipped 0.44%.

Markets in Australia, China, Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan are closed for public holidays.

U.S. futures also pointed to declines on Wall Street, with the Dow Jones Industrial Average implied to drop around 285 points at Monday's open as of 02:28 P.M. HK/SIN.

The dollar index, which measures the U.S. dollar against a

basket of its peers, traded at 97.860, climbing from an earlier low around 97.783.

"Uncertainty continues to weigh on markets with increasing concerns about the deadly and contagious coronavirus, which continues to spread," Liz Kendall, senior economist at ANZ Research, wrote in a morning note.

More than 2,700 people in China have been infected by the deadly pneumonia-like virus that comes from a large family of viruses known as coronaviruses.

Chinese authorities said 461 people are in critical condition while 80 people have died so far from the disease. The scale of the virus outbreak is already affecting the Chinese economy, according to preliminary data.

Internationally, more cases have also been reported in countries like the United States, Singapore, Australia, and South Korea.

Gold prices rose on Monday as the precious metal is seen as another safe-haven asset in times of uncertainties. Spot gold was up 0.57% to \$1,579.29 an ounce while U.S. gold futures rose 0.45% to \$1,578.9.



Oil prices declined during Asian trading hours as traders worried about demand for crude in light of the coronavirus outbreak. U.S. crude futures fell 2.36% to \$52.91 a barrel while global benchmark Brent was down 2.22% to \$59.34.

(Source: cnbc.com)



# ‘NIOC seriously pursuing development of joint fields’

**ENERGY** **TEHRAN** — Director of the integrated planning at the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) says the company is seriously following up on developing the West Karoun and South Pars joint fields and the contractors for the rest of the shared fields are also mostly determined.

Speaking to Shana on Sunday, Karim Zubeidi gave an overview of the company's performance regarding the development of the country's joint fields in recent years, especially West Karun and South Pars fields.

Mentioning NIOC's activities in the South Pars gas field which Iran shares with Qatar in the Persian Gulf, Zubeidi said: Qatar started extracting gas from South Pars field sooner than Iran, however in recent years we have been able to increase our production so that it is equal or even greater than that of Qatar, considering the fact that nearly 60 percent of the field is expanded in the Qatari side.

He further underlined the development of the country's western joint fields, saying: "The West Karoun region has also gone through continuous development in the recent years.



This region's in-situ deposit is estimated to be 100 billion barrels."

West Karoun oilfields, which Iran shares with Iraq at the western part of Iran's southwestern region of Karoun, include five major fields namely North Azadegan, South Azadegan, North Yaran, South Yaran and Yadavaran.

Iran's oil industry has been strongly focused on developing joint oil and gas fields, aiming to increase the share of such fields in the country's oil and gas production.

Back in June 2019, Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh put the development of Iran's shared oil and gas fields as the main priority of the ministry and NIOC.

In the decree addressed to Masoud Karbasian, the NIOC head, completion and inauguration of the phases 13, 14, 22 and 24 of South Pars gas field as well as increasing the capacity of crude oil production in the joint fields of Karun region and construction of the Goureh-Jask oil pipeline and the Jask port's oil terminal are mentioned as the main priorities for NIOC.

## TCCIMA holds meeting to discuss energy issues

**ENERGY** **TEHRAN** — The 13th gathering of the Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA)'s Energy Committee was held on Monday to discuss various energy issues including renewables, petrochemicals, as well as oil and gas industry, Shana reported.

The meeting was attended by representatives of the private sector from various energy related institutions and organizations including the Head of TCCIMA's Energy Committee Reza Padidar, the Deputy Head of Iran's Association of Petrochemical Industry Corporation (APIC) Fariborz Karimaei, and the Secretary of Iran Federation of Oil Industry (IFOI) Shahrouz Zargouyan.

During the meeting, Padidar mentioned some of the events in the oil industry in recent weeks and presented a brief overview of the performance of Iran's oil, gas and petrochemical industries in the face of the U.S. sanctions.

Further, Karimaei, pointed to the need for a regulatory body in the petrochemical industry and said: "A strong and independent regulatory body to supervise various fields including services and commodities can be a good basis for attracting investment in this industry."

Elsewhere in the meeting, Zargouyan mentioned his federation's plans for holding the country's first international Pitch & Match event for the oil industry.

"This is a good opportunity to inject new international startup technologies and innovations into small, medium and large domestic companies active in the oil industry," he commented.

"In the current situation, it is necessary to replace traditional suppliers with companies that offer more advanced solutions with lower costs; companies that have faster operation speeds, have the prospect for longer-term contracts and offer more guaranteed partnerships," the official explained.

Implementation of this plan will identify internationally accredited startup companies willing to cooperate with Iran, and by selecting and evaluating these companies, arrangements will be made to hold B2B meetings with representatives of Iranian companies on the day of the event, he added.



erate with Iran, and by selecting and evaluating these companies, arrangements will be made to hold B2B meetings with representatives of Iranian companies on the day of the event, he added.

## Oil drops below \$60 as China virus drives demand concern

Crude prices extended declines on Monday, dropping below \$60 for the first time in nearly three months as the death toll from China's coronavirus rose and more businesses were forced to shut down, stoking expectations of slowing oil demand.

Brent crude LCOc1 fell by \$1.79 a barrel, or 2.95%, to \$58.90 by 0903 GMT, its lowest since late October. Oil prices last fell below \$60 on Nov. 1.

U.S. crude CLc1 was down by \$1.63, or 3%, at \$52.55.

Global stock exchanges also fell as investors grew increasingly anxious about the widening crisis. Demand spiked for safe-haven assets, such as the Japanese yen and Treasury notes.

Saudi Arabia's Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman Al-Saud said on Monday that OPEC and allied global producers led by Russia can help to balance the oil markets in response to any demand changes.

He also said the Kingdom, the de-facto leader of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), was watching developments in China and that he felt confident the new virus would be contained.

Markets are being "primarily driven

by psychological factors and extremely negative expectations adopted by some market participants despite (the virus)' very limited impact on global oil demand," the minister said.

Prince Abdulaziz added that the outbreak of the SARS virus in 2002-2003 did not lead to a significant reduction in oil demand.

OPEC and its allies, known as OPEC+, have been withholding supply to support oil prices for nearly three years and on Jan. 1 increased their agreed output reduction by 500,000 barrels per day (bpd) to 1.7 million bpd through March.

Prince Abdulaziz said on Friday the aim of OPEC+ was to cut seasonal inventory builds that typically occur in the first half of the year. All options would be open when OPEC+ meets in Vienna in March, he said.

Brent crude oil prices dropped by nearly 14% since a spike in tensions between the United States and Iran took prices to a closing high above \$68 a barrel on Jan. 6.

The losses since are in spite of a fall in production from Libya by 75% to less than 300,000 barrels per day because of an ongoing blockade on oilfields.

(Source: reuters.com)

## Vietnam begins 48 MW wind farm construction

Climate Fund Managers (CFM), the manager of the Climate Investor One facility (CI1), have announced that construction has begun of its 48MW near-shore wind farm in Tra Vinh Province Vietnam.

CI1's Construction Equity Fund has committed D 71 million to the project company, "Tra Vinh Wind Power Company", which is jointly funded by Korean energy firm ST International. Vestas, the pioneering global supplier of wind turbines will act as EPC for the project.

The collaboration makes use of ST International's extensive knowledge of the Asian energy market, Vestas's expertise in developing, constructing and operating wind power facilities, and CI1's innovative end to end financing solution.

As one of the fastest-growing Asian economies, the government of Vietnam are aware of the need to minimize the environmental footprint of their country's growth.

In pursuit of these goals, Vietnam has set significant renewable energy targets, aiming to rise from 0.3% renewable energy reliance in 2016, to 21% by 2030.

The Tra Vinh wind farm will assist Vietnam in meeting its rapidly growing

energy demand, whilst supporting their ambition to move away from fossil fuel power in favor of renewable energy.

The project is expected to avoid 68,600 tCO2 or equivalent annually, create 500 additional jobs, and serve over 132,500 people.

Andrew Johnstone, Climate Fund Managers CEO, stated the "beginning of construction at the Tra Vinh wind farm represents a significant milestone for Climate Investor One. It is the first large scale development completed by CI1 in Asia, representing the culmination of two years of hard work, innovation, and development.

The installation has several innovative features, and is already creating a positive impact at the local level through its community development program, both hallmarks of CI1's value contribution to the countries it operates in."

Tommaso Rovatti Studihrad, Vestas Sales Director for South-East Asia said the following "Partnering with CFM on this ground-breaking project enforces Vestas' commitment to lead the wind energy transition and introduce further clean electricity generation in Vietnam."

(Source: oedigital.com)

## Weak natural gas, LNG prices to put dent in Shell and BP full-year figures, analyst says

By Mark Lamme

Weak natural gas and LNG prices will put a dent in the full year earnings of Shell and BP when the supermajors report their results in the next two weeks, an analyst has said.

Iain Armstrong, equity analyst at Brewin Dolphin, said prices had been driven down by a global glut of LNG, while slower macro-economic growth puts a crimp on demand.

But Mr. Armstrong said the "numbers won't collapse" because most of Shell and BP's contracts for LNG sales were linked to oil prices, which fell less than LNG and natural gas prices.

The analyst said BP's gearing would probably put CEO Bob Dudley off announcing a dividend increase on his last full-year results day before he bows out.

But Mr. Armstrong said he "wouldn't 100% rule it out", "because it's Bob and it's his last chance".

Shell's CCS earnings attributable to shareholders excluding identified items, the company's preferred performance measure, came to \$13.5 billion in the first nine months of 2019, a drop of 14% on the previous year.

At BP, underlying replacement cost profit was \$7.4 billion in the first three quarters, down 19.7% year-on-year.

Average prices BP was able to charge for natural gas dropped 7% to \$3.49 per thousand cubic feet in that period, while liquids were down 11.7% to \$58.38 per barrel. Shell reported decreases of 6% for gas and 11%

for liquids.

### ■ Sequentially declining earnings

Mr. Armstrong said the last three months of 2019 had "not been very kind" and were unlikely to improve matters for either firm, resulting in four quarters in a row of sequentially declining earnings.

Shell and BP would have brought more production on stream after completing maintenance programs in Q3, but "natural gas prices in the U.S. had been awful and were not going to change soon".

Downstream performance and refining margins have been "pretty awful" across the whole industry, and Shell "has not managed to escape from that", according to Mr. Armstrong.

The fourth quarter also tends to be a "messy" for oil and gas companies, who tend to take their exploration writedowns and tidy up outstanding tax distortions and operating anomalies.

He said BP's full-year earnings were likely to show a drop of 20-25%, with weak gas prices slightly offset by increased production and the acquisition of BHP Billiton's U.S. shale assets.

Gearing for both companies has been distorted by changes to reporting standards for IFRS 16 leases.

Shell's gearing was 27.9% at the end of September, compared to 23.1% a year earlier, largely due to the start of its share buybacks and the cancellation of its scrip dividend program.

BP won't have got the proceeds yet from the sale of

certain non-core assets yet, which will have impacted its gearing, 31.7% at the end of Q3.

### ■ The divestment program

Investors will be looking forward to getting a progress report on the UK-headquartered firm's £7.6 billion divestment program, to be completed this year.

Mr. Armstrong also observed that ESG (environmental, social, and governance) had become the key factor for oil and gas firms – the "elephant in the room".

He said environmentalists and shareholders were going to "push as much as they can" to get the likes of Shell and BP to invest in projects that have "nothing like the same returns as oil and gas".

"Shareholders want to have their cake and eat it," Mr. Armstrong said. "They want you to invest in renewables, but they do not want you to cut the dividend. They also want you to lower debt."

Companies might decide that instead of giving money back to shareholders in dividends, the better option would be to put the increase into renewables.

"Some people would disagree with that approach, but some might think that would be a good thing to do," Mr. Armstrong said.

Every new oil and gas project is another nail in the coffin of the 1.5C climate change target, which means the cost of debt and funding for those developments is only going to go one way, "and that's not down", Mr. Armstrong said.

He predicted that governments will put more pressure

## How reliable are the big 3 oil forecasters?

By Irina Slav

The oil market hinges and moves on forecasts. Whether it's an oil demand growth forecast or a production forecast, no forecast is more closely watched and scrutinized than that provided by one of the big three: the IEA, EIA, and OPEC.

The problem is, these forecasts often vary wildly from one another, meaning at least one of these forecasts will be wrong.

Bloomberg's Julian Lee last week wrote in a column about the discrepancy between OPEC's oil demand estimates for 2020 and those of the IEA and the IEA, noting that while the oil producing cartel expected global oil inventories to keep declining this year, both the International Energy Agency and the IEA expected these to continue building.

Motive Behind the Forecasts?

One might argue that there is some wishful thinking on the part of OPEC, which really wants its production cuts to work and shrink global inventories to put a firm floor under oil prices.

Yet there is some wishful thinking on the part of the U.S. EIA, too, in light of the administration's energy dominance agenda. The IEA has had to revise downwards its oil production estimates before, when actual production data has turned out to be lower than earlier forecasts based on statistical modeling.

It is a fact that U.S. production is growing, and OPEC acknowledges this grim reality. But it's possible that U.S. production might not be growing as much as forecasts show. That leaves the International Energy Agency.

### ■ The supply and demand forecast

Does it, too, have a vested interest in one supply and demand forecast over another? Theoretically, it shouldn't. The authority seems to be increasingly busy with warning against continued inaction with regard to climate change to take sides in the oil supply and demand prediction game. Also, a lot of the time, its figures converge with the IEA's and/or OPEC's.

For this year both OPEC and the IEA see oil demand growth at some 1.2 million bpd. The IEA is in the middle, forecasting global oil and other liquid hydrocarbons demand this year to grow by 1.3 million bpd.

For non-OPEC supply, the IEA is actually less bullish than OPEC. It expects production outside the cartel to rise by some 2.1 million bpd, while OPEC itself sees this growth at 2.35 million bpd. The IEA has the highest non-OPEC supply growth forecast for this year, at 2.6 million bpd.

The differences, according to Lee, however, are striking when it comes to the state of global oil inventories over the last three years, since the first production cut deal entered into effect at the beginning of 2017.

According to self-congratulatory OPEC, world oil inventories since 2017 have fallen by 653 million barrels. According to the IEA and the IEA, on the other hand, there has been no decline in the amount of global oil inventories. All the OPEC+ cuts have done, their numbers suggest, is to curb the size of the inventory builds in each of the three years since the cuts were introduced.

The IEA, in fact, has estimated that global oil inventories have risen by some 100 million barrels over the last three years. The IEA has an even higher number, at 142 million barrels.

### ■ The oil inventories

It appears the discrepancy comes from different methods of counting how much oil in storage there is in the world and the different things the IEA, the EIA, and OPEC actually count, according to Lee. Then there is the fact that not all oil inventories in the world are readily available for counting. Chinese oil in storage, for example, is notoriously secret as Beijing does not release public updates about it as the IEA does.

So if there is no information about all the oil in the world, how much faith should one put in global inventory estimates, regardless of the authority making these estimates? Not too much would be a reasonable answer. The state of global inventories, after all, is just one piece of the puzzle.

Supply and demand growth forecasts, along with consumption and production trends, are much more important than inventories for gauging where oil prices will go next. These tend to change more often and all of them affect inventories. The level of inventories itself is the end result of supply, demand, production and consumption.

For those wondering if there is enough oil in the world in case a serious outage occurs, the answer is yes, with all three authorities in agreement.

In the OECD alone there is enough oil to meet 60.6 days of demand. According to Bloomberg's Lee, this is a much more sensible indicator of supply levels than the volume of oil inventories. It is certainly a more understandable one: these are inventories in the context of global demand. So regardless of how successful the OPEC+ deal is in the end, the world has no shortage of oil for now.

(Source: oilprice.com)

First Announcement

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# Is it a powerful dollar or a declining one?

Alarm sounding for U.S. economic collapse as Trump's is insisting on trade deal with China

By Mohammadreza Farahzadi

**TEHRAN** — Nowadays, if a country exports one billion euro of its crude oil to a European country, the mentioned billion euro of revenue can be accessible and utilized in the world trade system only and only after its equal dollar-based value has been recognized by the U.S. otherwise the said revenue has no any value in the international markets' transactions.

Accordingly, requesting the U.S. dollar and depositing a hefty amount of the dollar in the world nation's central banks is the only way to determine national currency in any country. The world nations have no way out of this trend unless they reinvigorate their exports to the U.S. or invest in the United States to gain more dollars or deposit them more in the U.S. projects. The world nations, which are deeply depended on dollar, even accept the consequences of trading with dollar, including inflations, in order to use privileges of having share in the world trade system and have a say there.

It is worthy to say that, within the framework of imposing "trade with dollar policy" on the world trade system, the U.S. expanded its military supremacy under the pretext of providing security for supplying energy as well as shipping. The U.S. later provided a cold-war situation and made the world nations so depended on the security of shipping and energy that the world countries had no way but accepting the dollar's upper hand.

After the World War II, the representative of 44 world nations managed to establish two key organizations of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank in line with enhancing their economic growth and fixing or reinvigorating the value of their national currencies based on Bretton Woods system in 1945.

The Bretton Woods system of monetary management established the rules for commercial and financial relations among the United States, Canada, Western European countries, Australia, and Japan after the 1944 Bretton Woods Agreement.

The U.S. as the winner of the World War II, managed to take the privilege of announcing the value of each ounce of the gold as the supporter for the dollar as well as a new trend in which the values of other countries' national currencies would be regulated and fixed based on the dollar's value. In the beginning, value of each dollar was determined based on the value of each ounce of the gold which was \$35, but later this evaluating system collapsed in 1970 due to lack of enough gold for providing support for the dollar.

In 1971, the gold lost its position to provide support for the dollar and \*Fiat dollar hit the international markets. In the recent 50 years, the dollar was used as a political currency in the world trade. A trend to which the U.S. strategic partners and other world nations have been to adhere.

\*Fiat money has been defined variously as: Any money declared by a government to be legal tender. State-issued money which is neither convertible by law to any other thing, nor fixed in value in terms of any objective standard. Intrinsically valueless money used as money because of government decree.

As certain basic goods, including crude oil and natural gas were trading based on dollar value, enthusiasm to attained more dollars was continuously on rise. An Oil Shock in the 1970s, which made the oil price manifold more, also turned large industrial countries into economic crisis. Simultaneously, the oil exporting countries' request to attain more dollars, caused the U.S. Treasury Department to print more banknote which in turn pave the ground for creation of inflationary dollar in the world.

The above-mentioned situation faced the oil importing countries, especially Japan and Germany, high unemployment rate and severe economic recession.

The U.S. however did not face any form of inflationary economy at the time because it resorted to creating fractional trade-balance with its trade partners to force them to apply for more dollars. Therefore, the U.S. trade partners which enjoyed the highest rate of exports to the United States only earned Fiat dollar or dollar-based credits against their exports to the U.S. in several decades.

In fact, the exporters were selling their goods to the U.S. free of charge as they were earning Fiat dollars or bonds.

The bonds are issued by the U.S. Treasury Department to cover budget deficit. The bonds include profit rate for domestic or foreign customers who enjoy dollar deposits in the U.S. banks. Therefore, Today the U.S. is living with the money it has earned via presenting bonds or paying with Fiat dollar.

With the other words, a part of payments against the



other countries' exports to the U.S. are fulfilled by the bonds which are noting but debts of the United States' government and people.

Inevitably and due to preventing the decline of dollar and the world's financial system, certain industrial economic-power countries, including China and Japan, have to accept not only Fiat dollar and the bonds against their exports to the United States but also they have to purchase more bonds when the bonds' value face decline. The move helps the exporters to the U.S. save the value of their previously-purchased bonds.

It should be noted that China itself enjoy the highest positive trade balance and dollar deposits in the world.

In the current situation, the U.S.' unrivaled leadership of the world which has been based on "the world nation's dependency on security of energy supply by the United States' military" and "the role of dollar in the world trade" since 1945, has in recent years been challenged severely by two world powers of Russia and China.

If the U.S. President Donald Trump is forcing the world nations to invest in the United States or procure their needed energy from the U.S., he wants only to narrow down the country's trade balance deficit with the Washington's trade partners as well as decreasing the private and public sectors' debts.

The mentioned debts, which are surpassing the U.S. per capita production, have pushed the U.S. towards a serious destructive stage which can lead the country into an economic recession severer than the recession in the first decade of the third millennium or even another decline of the Wall Street.

Trump's insistence on attracting more foreign investments has its roots in the U.S. Treasury Department's policy that the country's debts and budged deficit have reached at a critical stage which may cause the economic-power countries, including China, India, Russian ad even Europe to revise and replace dollar with another currency gradually or omit dollar from their economic interactions via using the method of barter trade. The mentioned countries may even try not to deposit their currency resources in the U.S. Treasury Department or resort to purchase more gold to narrow down their dependency on the U.S. Fiat dollar.

In line with the said policy, China and the Russian central bank have managed to increase their stockpile. Moscow hit the record on gold purchase in 2019.

Trump knows well that in such situations the dollar, which once was the generator of his country's military and economic powers, has moved rapidly towards a dollar that will accelerate the United States' decline both in military and economic terms.

Trumps, who is trying hard to persuade China to import oil and gas from the U.S., wants Beijing, which is one of the greatest economies around the world, to be depended on the U.S. dollar to ultimately prevent creation of a substitute currency for dollar.

On the other hand, China in its new deal with the U.S.

and in line with saving Beijing's economic strength in the international arena, has agreed to purchase as much as \$200 billion of agricultural products, energy and industrial and financial services from the United States within the next two years.

However, the European Union (EU) has voiced its concerns over the inked deal between Washington and Beijing, which as the EU has claimed, will result in damaging trade balance harming the European companies. The EU has threatened that it will file a complaint before the World Trade Organization.

China and Russia, via their long term cooperation, and Britain, via leaving the EU, have heard the alarm of irrecoverable economic recession of the United States sooner than the other countries.

At the beginning of the third millennium, China and Russian started their long term cooperation with lower dependency to the U.S. dollar. In 2014, the President of China and Russian signed a 30-yaer-long agreement on exporting 30 trillion cubic meters of Russia's natural gas with the value of \$400 billion to China.

In January 2019, the second pipeline of transferring Russia's crude oil to China went on stream which turned Russia into the largest oil exporter to China. In fact, today there are several politically-constructed gas and crude oil pipelines around the world which have turned their implementers into the main players in the diplomatic and economic arenas. The term of Geopolitics might also been turning into Geoenergy.

The Russia-China gas transferring project, which is now atop energy-transferring agenda worldwide, has remarkably changed the political balance in favor of Moscow so that the country's President Vladimir Putin has decided to restructure the country's traditional political system to institutionalize the newly-gained power of geoenergy policy.

Base on the above explanation, it could be clarified that Russia and China are turning into the generating and consuming energy hubs which will simply challenge the U.S. leadership in providing security of energy supplies.

The oil and gas that were once exported to the western countries by Russia and instead the country was facing political-economic instability and sanctions, now are exported to China bringing about stable economy and political powers.

Briefly saying, Russia, China and India, with good economic growth and multi-billion population market, enjoy the capacity of resorting to barter trade or omitting the U.S. dollar from their trade transactions. If so, the new currency will be valued based on the value of the international energy or the gold, the world nations will get rid of dependency of the U.S. dollar, oil crude can be traded out of the baskets of dollar defined in the U.S-made world trade system and the crude can be sold in barter trade method.

The proposed method can be model for the future world trade.

## 8 takeaways from the Davos Day Of Innovation And Solutions

By Randall Lane

While Donald Trump and Greta Thunberg dominated the news coverage, the biggest conversations this week at the World Economic Forum at Davos focused on "stakeholder capitalism," and both the opportunities and necessities for business to align with the public and nonprofit sectors to solve the world's most intractable problems.

With that in mind, Forbes helped convene Imagination in Action, in partnership with Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), MIT Connection Science and Global Citizen, the advocacy group that in September will put on Global Goal Live, the largest live-broadcast cause-related event in history. The day was designed to highlight amazing minds and ideas, harnessing new platforms, technologies (especially AI and blockchain) and philosophies to change the world for the better. Speakers ranged from actor and activist Priyanka Chopra-Jonas and the world's vaccine czar, Gavi chair Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, to Cisco CEO Chuck Robbins and hedge fund billionaire turned capitalist reformer Paul Tudor Jones. Here are eight crucial takeaways distilled from nearly eight hours of big thoughts.

### 1. For 4 percent growth, study 1960s economics.

Whereas history remembers the '60s for activism and strife, it also produced the go-go years, economically. To get that economic dynamism back, says Paul Tudor Jones, corporations need to move away from the shareholder obsession that Milton Friedman crystallized in the 1980s, and return to a more balanced approach that also values employees, customers and the environment. "The pie actually grows for you and grows for society," said Jones, who founded JUST Capital to hold corporations accountable to what the American people expect from big business. (Disclosure: Forbes is a JUST Capital partner, and I'm a JUST Capital board member.) "In the 1960s, when private margins were half today, GDP was twice what it's been for the past ten years." The shift to shareholder prioritization, Jones adds, strains government resources, undermining our



Imagination in Action Summit at the TCS Dome in Davos, Switzerland, on January 21, 2020. (Photo: John Werner)

political discourse.

2. Every company is an education company. Hans Vestberg, Verizon's visionary CEO, says he views employees as an essential corporate asset, whose loyalty and excitement must be stoked. And rather than leaving it at a pat line, Vestberg focused on ongoing training and education for his 140,000-person workforce, with quarterly assessments across the organization, to ensure all employees have a path forward and "feel leadership responsibility."

3. The unionization of data. "Companies such as Google, Amazon and Walmart are harnessing data to unleash human potential," said Sandy Pentland, who launched Imagination in Action along with John Werner, both of MIT Connection Science. But he also likened individual data rights in the 21st century to worker rights in the 19th century. Data cooperatives would give people a pathway to push back against big tech's use of personal data.

4. Multilateralism remains essential. While much of the world suffers from nationalist fever, Gavi, the global vaccine alliance born at WEF, which celebrated its 20th anniversary this week, demonstrates that issues that transcend borders, whether pandemics or climate or financial panics, require global coordination and cooperation, with an ROI delivered for all. Gavi is an incredible success story, with 760 million kids vaccinated since 2000. Okonjo-Iweala, the Gavi chair, is now shooting to take that number past 1 billion. "Prevention is better than cure," said Okonjo-Iweala, who posits that every dollar spent immunizing saves \$54 in healthcare costs, not to mention the human cost.

5. Giving while living. Erasing the annual spending gap of \$350 billion to end extreme poverty will require the superrich to pay more. An elegant way: Every billionaire could donate 5 percent of his or her net worth each year, which, assuming most tycoons can garner 7 percent a year, doesn't even require a dip into net worth. "The greatest gift is the idea that you can change the lives of millions of people," says Chris Stadler, managing director of CVC and the chairman of Global Citizen. (Forbes and Global Citizen have agreed to partner on philanthropy research in 2020.)

6. AI must also have an artificial heart. Elon Musk's fears of AI aren't misplaced. But if AI is put through a mission-driven filter, the ends will justify the means. "Tech enables what's possible, which drives norms and best practices," says Tommy Nicholas, cofounder and CEO of Alloy, which applies AI in the fintech sector.

7. Equality generates prosperity. The United Arab Emirates is blessed with natural resources, and yet has vastly outperformed most other oil-rich companies with liberal trade policies—and a willingness to tap the potential of its people. "We had a dream as a small nation," said Mohammad Al Gergawi, the UAE's minister of Cabinet Affairs and the Future, who made news by announcing that Dubai would become the seventh host city for Global Goal Live on September 26, 2020. "I was in the third grade the first time I saw a flag. We still didn't have university. We were looking to hire government officials, we only had 45 university graduates, and only 5 were female. We were startup country." Today, women make up two thirds of government employees, half the national assembly and one third of the cabinet. The economy booms without the kind of strife seen in much of the region.

8. Generation Z can make the difference. People like Greta Thunberg and Malala Yousafzai and Emma Gonzalez aren't aberrations, said Priyanka Chopra-Jonas, who leverages her 100 million followers to push her alignment with Global Citizen and UNICEF. "I wouldn't have had the courage to do that at 15," said Chopra-Jonas. "It's so amazing to finally see the power these girls are getting—the power they have... each drop of water makes an ocean."

(Source: Forbes)

## Pakistan introduces first fully-electrical vehicle

By Mubashir Ali Sangal

Pakistan launched on Friday its first fully-electrical three-wheeler vehicle in a bid to reduce carbon emission in the line of 'Green Pakistan's' mission.

The first fully-electrical three-wheeler vehicle has been unveiled in an event organized by the Ministry of Climate Change with the collaboration of the Board of Investment and Saggar Engineering Works Limited in Lahore.

While leading the guests the Adviser to Prime Minister (PM) on Climate Change Malik, Amin Aslam termed that the Electrical Vehicle (EV) policy will mean to play a pivotal role in Pakistan.

It is eco-friendly, low-price and the money which is used for oil importation will be reduced — thus, it will serve the country in one way or the other way. He added.

The battery is designated as EcoRik Li-Ion Battery, with powering 48V, 125Ah, and 6kwh. It will be charged in 5 hours, and once the Rickshaw gets charged it can drive for 125 Km. The advisor added.

Moreover, the vehicles will be locally manufactured except for the electric kit.

The advancement comes after the cabinet approved

in November 2019 — to put at least 30pc of vehicles on electricity by 2030. Among which, 0.5 million will be three-wheeler vehicles, alongside 100,000 cars and 1,000 buses.

Yet, the government's aide Fawad Chaudhry had vowed 5 months earlier in a political show for introducing fully-electrical rickshaws and bikes in the country.

In the meantime, achieving the above target Pakistan will able to reduce carbon emission by 60pc.

Currently, there are 3 million private cars and 20m motorcycles and rickshaws beating the roads, according to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics.

Even so, the country enjoys hybrid vehicle with Honda's Vezel and Freed, Toyota's Prius and Aqua, however, these cars aren't being locally manufactured in Pakistan, but are directly imported from Japan.

To be cited, the PM Imran Khan has launched the 'Clean Green Pakistan' campaign in November 2019, which aims to combat climate change by introducing planting 10 billion trees in five years, banning plastic bags, introducing electric vehicles, along with projects of green buildings, proper waste management, and clean drinking water.

(Source: Daily Times)





## Marble Palace set to open as art museum after four decades

**TOURISM d e s k** **TEHRAN** – The Marble Palace, a historical royal residence in Tehran, is set to open to the public as an art museum after 41 years.

Originally called “Kakh-e Marmar”, the palace is scheduled to open to the public by the next month, ISNA reported on Sunday.



The palace served as a museum for a year before the victory of the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Now, after four decades, it will be a venue for showcasing Persian arts and cultural heritage hand-crafted since the first millennium BC onwards, the report added.

Construction of the palace started in 1934 by French engineer Joseph Leon and Iranian architect Fat'hollah Ferdows on the orders of Reza Shah for the purpose of official functions and receptions.

The palace and its premises is currently under ownership of the Mostazafan Foundation of the Islamic Revolution.

Iran embraces hundreds of historical sites such as bazaars, museums, mosques, bridges, bathhouses, madrasas, mausoleums, churches, towers, and mansions, of which 22 being inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list. Under the 2025 Tourism Vision Plan, the country aims to increase the number of tourist arrivals from 4.8 million in 2014 to 20 million in 2025.

## Delta forced to pay \$50,000 fine for discrimination

Delta Air Lines has been forced to pay a \$50,000 fine imposed by the U.S. Department of Transportation to answer for allegations the airline discriminated against Muslim passengers.

According to a consent order issued by the DOT, Delta “engaged in discriminatory conduct” against three Muslim passengers on two separate incidents in 2016—one on a flight from Paris to Ohio and another on a flight from Amsterdam to New York City.

Delta disagrees with the government’s contention that it engaged in discriminatory conduct.

“While Delta does not dispute that each of these two incidents could have been handled differently, Delta asserts that this fact does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that Delta acted improperly,” according to the order.

The airline said in a statement to CNN that it strives to “model inclusion.”

“While we understand that our best customer service was not reflected in how the incident was handled, we disagree with the Department of Transportation’s contention that Delta engaged in discriminatory conduct,” said Delta spokeswoman Emma Kate Protis. “For that reason, we have worked to improve our investigative process since these incidents and we have supporting programs, policies, training and procedures that back up our commitments in this area.”

According to CNN, in the Paris incident a married couple, both U.S. citizens, were at the center of a fellow passenger who raised concerns with a flight attendant.

(Source: MSN)



## ROUND THE GLOBE

### Historic Centre of San Gimignano

The Historic Centre of San Gimignano sits on a height of land, dominating the surrounding landscape. During the Middle Ages, its location in Val d'Elsa, 56 km south of Florence, provided an important relay point for pilgrims travelling to or from Rome on the Via Francigena.

The town became independent in 1199 and between the 11th and the 13th century the noble families and upper middle-class merchants who controlled the free town built many fortified tower houses (probably 72) as symbols of their wealth and power.



The town grew around two principal squares: the triangular Piazza della Cisterna, ornamented with a lovely central well, and the Piazza Duomo, dating from the late 13th century with its more intricate layout containing the majority of public and private monuments.

After 1353, the town went into a period of decline due to waves of famine and plague that caused a drastic decrease in population. Within a hundred years, the town was downgraded to the level of the other lands under the Florentine control. This status, however, prevented the town from the urban renewal that transformed many Italian historical towns after the Middle Ages.

While only 14 of the original tower houses have survived, San Gimignano has retained its feudal atmosphere and appearance, embellished with several notable palaces during the 12th and 14th century. The town also has several masterpieces of Italian art dating to the 14th and 15th centuries. These are found in the cathedral as well as in other prominent religious and public buildings.

(Source: UNESCO)

# Discover “Dome of Soltaniyeh”, 14-century architectural marvel in Iran

**TOURISM d e s k** **TEHRAN** — The UNESCO-listed Mausoleum of Oljaytu, which is commonly known as “Dome of Soltaniyeh” (Soltaniyeh Cupola), is one of Iran’s must-visit destinations for those interested in traditional Persian and genuine Islamic architecture.

A World Heritage, the mausoleum is surmounted by one of the largest brick domes in the globe, though some mistakenly refer to it as “the largest dome in the world”. The monument stands tall in a town of the same name, Soltaniyeh, west-central Zanjan province. Meaning “Town of the Sultans”, Soltaniyeh was briefly the capital of Persia’s Ilkhanid dynasty (a branch of the Mongol dynasty) during the 14th century.

The 14th-century structure is highly recognized as an architectural masterpiece particularly due to its innovative double-shelled dome and elaborate interior decoration. The very imposing dome stands about 50 meters tall from its base. Covered with turquoise-blue faience tiles, the stunning structure dominates the skyline of Soltaniyeh, an ancient city in Zanjan province, north-western Iran.

The interior has long been under renovation, chockfull of scaffolding poles. However, its decoration is such impressive that scholars including A.U. Pope described it as ‘anticipating the Taj Mahal’. It is the earliest existing example of the double-shelled dome in Iran.

A great-grandson of Hulegu, founder of the Il-Khanid dynasty, Oljaytu was a Mongol ruler who, after dabbling in various religions, adopted the Shia name Mohammed Khodabandeh.

According to the UNESCO, the Mausoleum of Oljaytu is an essential link and key monument in the development of Islamic architecture in central and western Asia. Here, the Ilkhanids further developed ideas that had been advanced during the classical Seljuk phase (11th to early 13th centuries), during which the arts of Iran gained distinction in the Islamic world, thereby setting the stage for the Timurid period (late 14th to 15th centuries), one of the most brilliant periods in Islamic art.

UNESCO says, “Excavations carried out in the 790-ha Mausoleum of Oljaytu property have revealed additional vestiges of the old city, and a large part of this property has retained its archaeological character. As the ancient capital of the Ilkhanid dynasty, Soltaniyeh represents an exceptional testimony to the history of the 13th and 14th centuries in Iran.”

The very large dome is the earliest extant example of its type, and became an important reference for the later development of the Islamic dome. Similarly, the extremely rich interior of the mausoleum, which includes glazed tiles, brickwork, marquetry or designs in inlaid materials, stucco, and frescoes, illustrates an important movement



A view of the 14th-century Mausoleum of Oljaytu, a UNESCO site, located in Soltaniyeh, Zanjan province.

towards more elaborate materials and themes.

In the Persian urban designing, domes in places of worship and public places, including traditional bazaars, caravansaries, schools and baths, are designed in such a way that can be seen from different parts of urban or rural area.

The domes are normally double-shelled. While the interior shell is designed to carry the weight of the structure, the exterior shell serves as both a decorative element and as insulation against the elements. The aerodynamic shape of the domes also makes the structures more sustainable.

#### Under tourists’ eyes

Here is a select of comments that visitors to the mausoleum have posted to TripAdvisor, one of the most popular travel websites in the world:

#### “A huge and wonderful Dome!”

Soltaniyeh is really ancient and huge and when you visit it you will have this amazing feeling that you are in 600 years ago!

It’s really jaw-dropping and I strongly recommend you to visit this place! (Ehsan H. from Tehran; Date of experience: November 2019)

## Sister arch bridges: one in Iran, the other in Switzerland



A view of the Veresk Bridge in Iran's Mazandaran province

**TOURISM d e s k** **TEHRAN** – The masonry arch bridges of stone or brick have long been constructed across the globe, some lasting for millennia. They are also iconic for having similar characteristics, amongst them Veresk Bridge in Iran’s Mazandaran province and Wiesen Viaduct in the canton of Graubunden, Switzerland, both designed in the 20th century for single-track railway.

Swiss Embassy in Iran on Sunday, January 26, posted a story on its twitter account (@SwissEmbassyIr) showing pictures of the two bridges. “The iconic Veresk Bridge in #Iran’s Mazandaran Province, constructed in 1937 by a multinational team including Swiss engineers. A similar single

track railway construction, the Wiesen Viaduct, inaugurated in 1909, is located in the Swiss canton of Graubünden (photos David Gubler),” the tweet wrote.

The Veresk Bridge, located in Veresk district of Savad-Kooh county, connects the railway between Tehran and the Caspian Sea region. The bridge is known as one of the masterpieces of the Danish engineering firm Kampsax, (consisting of Danish, German and Austrian engineers) serving the Trans-Iranian Railway network in northern Iran. The construction of this bridge included craftsmen of many nationalities, including Swiss and Italian people.

Near the bridge is a memorial structure built in memory of all the construction workers who lost their lives in the course of building the bridge and its nearby tunnels. The Chief Engineer, Austrian Walter Aigner, following his wishes, is buried in the local cemetery of Veresk.

Under the bridge is a tunnel through which trains pass after crossing the bridge and gradually dropping altitude and before pulling into the train station. During World War II, it was known as the Pol-e-Pirooz, or the “bridge of victory”. Currently, trains connecting Tehran to Gorgan or Sari pass over the bridge an average of four times a day.

The Wiesen Viaduct, made from concrete blocks with dimension stone coverage, spans the Landwasser southwest of the hamlet of Wiesen, in the canton of Graubunden.

Designed by the then chief engineer of the Rhaetian Railway, Henning Friedrich, it was built between 1906 and 1909 by the contractor G. Marasi under the supervision



Wiesen Viaduct in the canton of Graubunden, Switzerland of P. Salaz and Hans Studer.

#### UNESCO registration

Iran’s tourism ministry pursues possible inscription of cross-country railways, which includes arrays of bridges including the Veresk Bridge, stations and other historical monuments on the UNESCO World Heritage.

This industrial heritage, which dates from the World War I and II, contains expanded railway networks mainly stretched from south to north. It also includes a variety of monuments such as Tabriz railway station as well as Veresk and Sekhat-tala bridges built at hard-to-access points of deserts or highlands.

## The coronavirus: What travelers need to know

Many airlines are accommodating travelers who want to modify, delay or cancel their itineraries to China.

The death toll from a novel coronavirus has now reached at least 80, with most of the nearly 3,000 cases reported in the Chinese city of Wuhan, the epicenter of the disease. At least 10 other countries have also reported cases, and five people in the United States have been diagnosed; all had recently returned from China.

Here’s what travelers making their way to or from China can expect.

#### Where was the disease first discovered?

The outbreak of the deadly coronavirus is centered in Wuhan, a city of 11 million and the capital of the Hubei Province in China. Wuhan is a major manufacturing center, but not known as a tourist destination.

Travelers to Wuhan are likely visiting friends and family, or are business travelers connected to that city’s manufacturing industry. Most business travelers will have already returned home as the factories recently closed for the Lunar New Year — as is tradition. Last week, the Chinese authorities imposed a blanket travel ban on Wuhan and surrounding cities in Hubei Province, a population of 35 million people. No planes, trains or buses are going in and out.

#### What are airlines doing?

All flights in and out of Wuhan have been suspended, and airlines worldwide have announced that they will allow passengers who are traveling to, from or through Beijing or Shanghai to rebook their itineraries without a change fee. There are restrictions, however.

Delta Air Lines states that no refunds will be issued and



A traveler arriving at London’s Heathrow Airport last week. The coronavirus was first detected in Wuhan, China. Credit...Will Oliver/EPA, via Shutterstock

rebooked travel must begin before Feb. 29, 2020; passengers may cancel their itinerary in exchange for a future travel credit (but with payment of any difference in fare and the applicable change fee.)

American Airlines will permit travelers to delay their trips for up to one year from the original ticket date without change fees (but with payment of any difference in fare). United Airlines added Chengdu (in addition to Beijing and Shanghai) to its waiver, and will allow passengers to rebook without change fees (but with payment of any difference in fare) for trips after

Feb. 7. Similarly, Air Canada offers a waiver, with the option to cancel the itinerary in exchange for a future travel credit, and Lufthansa allows for changed itineraries for trips before Sept. 30. Emirates passengers may request a refund if they no longer wish to travel to Shanghai, Beijing or Guangzhou (for travel up to Feb. 6) or change their travel dates (for travel up to Feb. 29).

Cathay Pacific, the Hong Kong-based carrier, and Cathay Dragon, its regional subsidiary which operates in mainland China, are permitting passengers to rebook flight to mainland China, so long as passengers travel before March 31. Travelers flying to China to join a group tour, including from Hong Kong to mainland China, should contact their tour provider. Travelers anticipating visiting China in the coming weeks should monitor their airline’s website for updates.

In a first since the SARS crisis in 2002 and 2003, Cathay Pacific is permitting its crew and staff to wear surgical masks at work. Likewise, American Airlines: “While it is not medically recommended, American will allow flight attendants to wear masks on flights to and from Shanghai, Beijing and Hong Kong,” said Curtis Blessing, an American spokesman, in a statement. The masks are ubiquitous across Asia, but not common in North America.

American, United and Delta are providing additional hand-sanitizing wipes for flights between the United States and China.

Dr. Paulo Alves, the global medical director at MedAire, a Phoenix provider of in-flight, virtual medical care to airlines and their passengers worldwide, said masks are meant to contain to the droplets that someone emits when sneezing or coughing. Passengers are not being issued surgical masks by airlines.

(Source: The New York Times)



# Some 6,000 migratory birds die mysteriously in Miankaleh peninsula

**ENVIRONMENT** **TEHRAN** — Some 6,000 bodies of lifeless migratory birds have been found so far around Miankaleh peninsula, located in the extreme south-eastern part of the Caspian Sea, IRNA news agency reported on Monday.

On the fourth day of monitoring, the number of dead migratory birds have reached 5,900, the carcasses were mostly from three bird species of Flamingo, coot and Northern shoveler that have been discovered around the shores of the Galoogah and Qalehpayan villages of Behshahr city.

The certain cause of death has not yet been announced by the veterinary organization, however, the latest result of the tests rejected any suspicion of Newcastle disease and influenza, as there have not been any symptoms such as bruising, bleeding and enlarged spleen.

Hossein-Ali Ebrahimi, head of Mazandaran province's department of environment, told ISNA that it is decided that any hunting of migratory birds in the east of the province would be banned until further information, and in order to maintain human health, the sale of any migratory birds in Fereydounkar would also be suspended until the exact cause of the deaths is revealed.

The carcasses are being collected and buried with sanitary precautions, he added.

Ebrahimi urged all people in Mazandaran to avoid buying and consuming any wild birds in order to maintain their health.

■ **Loss of migratory birds may be caused by human**

Ali Aboutalebi, a local environmentalist said that several different species of birds such as flamingos, ducks and grebes have been killed over the past few days in the Miankaleh International wetland.

The veterinary report showed no flu or Newcastle disease reported among the



dead birds, he stated, adding, the samples has been transferred to Tehran for further investigation.

"The birds may be killed by human or poisoned prey that is still being investigated," said Aboutalebi, pointing out that no new fatalities were reported in the wetland so far.

He went on to say that in recent years, there have been a similar mysterious death in forests but the results showed that some of the birds have been allergic to a kind of alga.

Generally, the mass death of birds shows a high risk of poisoning or contamination, he concluded.

■ **Water contamination, another possible reason**

Water contamination can be considered as one of the reasons for the deaths, although we have to wait test reports.

Safar Ali Makenali, deputy director of health and prevention of Veterinary Organization, has announced that massive death of birds can be caused by botulism toxin (produced by the bacterium *Clostridium botulinum* common in both soil and water), describing the origin of the toxin as "root of decaying plants".

Poisoning caused by algae and plankton

is being pursued as one of the possible scenarios involved in the death of wild birds in the Miankaleh wetland, but the possibility of illegal fishermen and hunters' involvement cannot be excluded, he explained.

Sometimes the poachers are responsible for such occurrences due to being banned from hunting in these valuable habitats, he lamented.

Several times happened before that the locals burned parts of the wetland intentionally to own the area and use it for agricultural purposes, he also regretted.

■ **Miankaleh peninsula a treasure under serious threats**

The long and narrow peninsula is 48 kilometers long, and between 1.3 and 3.2 kilometers wide, which sets apart the Gorgan Bay from the Caspian Sea. Four villages namely Ashuradeh, Qezel-e shomali, Qezel-Mehdi and Qavasatl are situated on the peninsula.

Miankaleh was designated a Ramsar site in 1975. Major habitats include wetlands, inter-tidal mud with sandy shores, shallow marine waters, forests, peat lands and agricultural areas.

It is home to many unique Caspian birds and reptile species native to this region. It's also a very important internationally recognized refuge for migratory birds.

The peninsula water deficits, additionally mismanagement, unsustainable agricultural practices, and severe depletion of the wells and groundwater resources have exacerbated Miankaleh peninsula's condition.

Local people earn their income from agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry, handicrafts, carpet weaving, traditional poultry farming and tourism. Overgrazing, illegal hunting, fishing, deforestation and the unplanned spread of villages are some of the challenges posing threat to the region's environment.

## Iranian-made HPV vaccine to be commercialized in months

**SOCIETY** **TEHRAN** — Production of human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine (the virus that usually causes cervical cancer in women) is in the final stages of clinical trial and will be launched by the next few months, director of health technology development office of the Ministry of Health, has announced.

According to the plan, the product was expected to enter the domestic market by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20), but sanctions caused problems in its manufacturing process, Hossein Vatanpour said, IRNA reported.

According to Ali Qanbari, head of cancer department at the Ministry of Health, every 3,000 to 4,000 women develop cervical cancer per 100,000, and as the Iranian population is aging, it is predicted that cervical cancer will grow among women over the next two decades.

Referring to HPV virus statistics, he said that 8 percent of adult women are infected with HPV and in the next 10 to 25 years the prevalence of the virus may be higher than expected.

Cervical cancer is a cancer arising from the cervix. It is due to the abnormal growth of cells that have the ability to invade or spread to other parts of the body. Human papillomavirus infection (HPV) causes more than 90% of cases; most people who have had HPV infections, however, do not de-



velop cervical cancer.

There are more than 100 types of HPV, of which at least 14 are cancer-causing (also known as high risk type), which is mainly transmitted through sexual contact and most people are infected with HPV shortly after the onset of sexual activity. Two HPV types (16 and 18) cause 70% of cervical cancers and pre-cancerous cervical lesions.

According to World Health Organization cervical cancer is the fourth most frequent cancer in women with an estimated 570,000 new cases in 2018 representing 6.6% of all female cancers. Approximately 90% of deaths from cervical cancer occurred in low- and middle-income countries. The high mortality rate from cervical cancer globally could be reduced through a comprehensive approach that includes prevention, early diagnosis, effective screening and treatment programmes.

## WHO's Eastern Mediterranean Region scales up preparedness for novel coronavirus

In light of the continued global situation related to the transmission of novel coronavirus, WHO's Regional Office continues to work closely with Member States in the Eastern Mediterranean Region to ensure that national preparedness and response efforts are accelerated in line with the International Health Regulations (IHR 2005).

A total of 1320 confirmed cases have been reported for novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) globally, out of which 1297 cases are in China, about 237 people have been reported as severely ill and 41 people have died (as of 10 am, 25 January, GVA time). New cases have also been reported in Australia, France, Malaysia and French Republic [as of 25 January]. Almost all cases have a history of travel to China.

While no confirmed cases have been reported yet in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, WHO is advising countries to strengthen their preparedness and response capacities. A regional plan to enhance preparedness and operational readiness of countries has been developed using a risk assessment approach. Active entry screening has been established in the majority of the countries in the Region, and details on the entry screening measures are being collected.

Health supplies, including thermal scanners, have been procured and prepositioned in WHO's regional logistics hub in Dubai,



and 3 international reference laboratories for detection have been established, with WHO's Regional Office coordinating the shipment of laboratory samples.

WHO's Regional Office continues to monitor the rapidly evolving situation to minimize the risk of novel coronavirus importation into the Region, and to work closely with countries to ensure that potential cases are quickly identified, tested, and responded to.

WHO recommends that to protect against the novel virus and reduce general risk of its transmission, individuals should avoid close contact with people suffering from acute respiratory infections, wash hands frequently, especially after direct contact with ill people or their environment, and avoid unprotected contact with farm or wild animals. WHO does not recommend any specific additional health measures for travelers.

(Source: WHO)

## ENGLISH IN USE

### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → E

## DOE not convinced to transfer water from Caspian Sea

Studies carried out so far has not yet convinced the Department of Environment (DOE) to transfer water from the Caspian Sea to central Iran, Parvin Farshchi, deputy director of the DOE for marine affairs has said.

Over the past few years Iran has faced recurrent drought spells and low precipitation and the value of water has become more tangible, Khabaronline quoted Farshchi as saying on Saturday. She further explained that water transfer from the Caspian Sea to central Iran has been a matter of interest for some years now and in the [Iranian calendar year of] 1389 (March 2010-March 2011) various research and studies on the issue were conducted.

## سازمان محیط زیست؛ برای انتقال آب خزر مجاب نشده ایم

پروین فرشچی معاون محیط زیست دریایی سازمان حفاظت محیط زیست گفت: مطالعاتی که ما را به انتقال آب خزر به فلات مرکزی مجاب کند، هنوز تکمیل نشده است.

به گزارش روز شنبه خبرآنلاین پروین فرشچی در خصوص وضعیت آبی کشور گفت: طی این سال‌ها با خشکسالی و کمبود بارش روبه‌رو بودیم، بنابراین ارزش‌گذاری آب ملموس‌تر مطرح شده است. معاون محیط زیست دریایی سازمان حفاظت محیط زیست درباره مسائل مطرح شده در خصوص انتقال آب خزر به فلات مرکزی گفت: این موضوع از سال‌ها پیش مطرح بوده و در سال ۱۳۸۹ نیز مطالعات گوناگونی در این حوزه صورت گرفته است.

## PREFIX/SUFFIX

### “extra-, extro-”

■ **Meaning:** outside or beyond

■ **For example:** Chris's behavior that morning was quite **extraordinary**.

## PHRASAL VERB

### Think back

■ **Meaning:** to think about things that happened in the past

■ **For example:** Thinking back, it amazes me how we survived on so little sleep.

## IDIOM

### Cool as a cucumber

■ **Explanation:** calm and composed, especially in times of stress

■ **For example:** Practicing meditation has helped me to be as cool as a cucumber in times of trouble.

## Plane with 144 on board crash lands in southwest Iran, no casualties

**SOCIETY** **TEHRAN** — No serious injuries were reported after an airplane carrying 144 passengers and crew skidded off the runway and crash landed in the middle of a street in Mahshahr city, southwestern Khuzestan province, on Monday.

The plane belonging to Caspian Airlines left Tehran at 6:40 a.m. local time and the incident took place at 7:35 a.m. due to a technical problem in the aircraft's landing gear, ISNA reported. Further investigations are underway.

"Fortunately, all passengers of the Tehran-Mahshahr flight are safe," Reza Jafarzadeh, Civil Aviation Organization's spokesman said.

## UNHCR rushing relief supplies to assist Iranians, Afghans affected by floods

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, is working with the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran and humanitarian partners to provide assistance to survivors of recent floods that swept through Sistan-Baluchestan province in the south of Iran recently in January.

A truck carrying core relief items from UNHCR's existing in-country stockpiles has arrived in Zahedan, the capital of the province, to complement the government's relief effort. Items including tents, jerricans, plastic tarpaulins, blankets, sleeping mats and kitchen sets are being distributed in coordination with Iran's Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants Affairs (BAFIA) to some 2,000 individuals – Afghans and host communities alike.

Thousands of people are reported to have had to leave their houses as banks of rivers burst and water levels rose. Many are now living in crowded emergency shelters. Flood waters have submerged roads, making access to some 500 villages difficult.

The floods have also impacted access to public services, including hospitals, and damaged sanitation facilities. Humanitarian actors on the ground remain concerned that the flooding may increase health risks and spread of diseases. Access to food and drinking water are among the most pressing needs for locals and the estimated 110,000 Afghans who reside in the area. Schools in the region also remain closed.

"It is our duty as humanitarians to help people in need whenever we are in the position to. In close coordination with the Iranian Government, we hope UNHCR's additional support can help people who have lost their homes in the floods," says Ivo Freijssen, UNHCR's Representative in Iran.

As the weather forecast indicates new waves of rain in the coming days in Sistan-Baluchestan province, UNHCR continues to work alongside the Iranian government to support assistance efforts, particularly in refugee hosting areas, as needed.

BAFIA, UNHCR, and UN and NGO partners are currently conducting an assessment to better determine the extent of the damage and needs of affected communities in Sistan-Baluchestan province.

Iran has been one of the world's leading refugee hosts for decades and currently has some one million registered refugees from Afghanistan. In addition, over two million Afghans are estimated to live in Iran either without documentation or on national passports. Despite stringent economic pressures, Iran has strived to maintain access to education, healthcare and other social services for Afghans.

At this time of great need, UNHCR urges the international community to rally around Iran and support the Government's humanitarian efforts.

(Source: UNHCR)

## WORDS IN THE NEWS

### Women's rights in Afghanistan

(December 18, 2002)

An international human rights group says women and girls continue to suffer extreme repression in parts of Afghanistan. Human Rights Watch says it has evidence of increasing abuses, harassment and restrictions of women's rights. This report from Kylie Morris:

Much of the latest Human Rights Watch report focuses on life for the women of Herat in Afghanistan's west, but warns that the situation there is **symptomatic** of developments across the country. It speaks of police abuse, forced chastity tests and restrictions **reminiscent** of the Taliban.

The Human Rights Watch report **concedes** that women's and girls' rights have improved since the **demise** of the Taliban, with many now allowed to return to school and university, but the report documents growing repression of social and political life.

In Herat it says religious police, government officials and **squads** of schoolboys monitor women and girls' behaviour and appearance. The report **cites** the use of local television and newspapers by the governor Ismail Khan to **set standards**. Freedom of movement is restricted and when they do leave their homes, women and older girls must wear the **all-encompassing** burka, or chowdry.

The group has documented testimony from citizens of Herat that women and girls who walk with men on the street, ride with them in cars, or even if alone with them in private homes, have been arrested. That arrest can be followed by a gynaecological examination to **determine** the relationship or virginity.

Human Rights Watch accuses the international community of **double-standards** by justifying the war against the Taliban in part by promising liberation to Afghan women and then supporting war-lords and commanders who abuse women's rights.

■ **Words**

**symptomatic:** a sign or indication of a much bigger problem **reminiscent:** if one thing is reminiscent of another, the first thing reminds you of the second

**concedes:** accepts that something is true

**demise:** the end or death of something

**squads:** small military groups. Here it suggests that schoolboys are behaving like soldiers or the police

**cites:** if you cite something, you quote it as proof of what you are saying

**to set standards:** to set rules for the way people should behave

**all-encompassing:** something that covers everything

**determine:** to discover whether something is true

**double-standards:** a set of unfair principles that allows more freedom of behaviour to one group of people than to another

(Source: BBC)



## Lebanon's parliament passes 2020 budget amid financial crisis

Lebanon's parliament passed the 2020 budget on Monday although its finance committee chief said the forecast revenues might be unrealistic as the country wrestles with a major economic and financial crisis.

The 2020 budget envisages a deficit of around 7% of GDP, the head of parliament's budget and finance committee, Ibrahim Kanaan, told Reuters, wider than the originally hoped-for 0.6% with the economy shrinking and choked by a liquidity crunch.

As lawmakers convened to debate the budget, protesters hurled rocks at police who were deployed in force around parliament.

The budget was first drafted by Saad al-Hariri's government before it resigned in October in the face of protests against the political elite that steered Lebanon into its worst crisis in decades.

Prime Minister Hassan Diab, whose cabinet took office last week with the backing of the Hezbollah movement and its allies, told parliament he would not obstruct the state budget.

Lebanon's crisis is rooted in decades of state corruption and waste that have landed it with one of the world's heaviest public debt burdens. Foreign donors have said any support to Lebanon will depend on it enacting long-delayed reforms. (Source: Daily Star)

## Tunisia's biggest party Ennahda rejects new government proposal

The biggest party in Tunisia's parliament on Monday rejected the idea of a government that excludes other parties, adding that it was ready to contest another election.

The statement by the moderate Islamic Ennahda threatens to upend a second attempt to form a coalition government since elections in October, which fragmented the political establishment.

"We reject the government coalition being confined to some parties," said Abd Karim Harouni a senior official of Ennahda, which has been part of recent unity coalitions that included most parties.



Ennahda's own nominee for prime minister failed to push his proposed government through parliament on Jan. 10, giving President Kais Saied the opportunity to nominate his choice for premier, the former finance and tourism minister Elyes Fakhfakh.

Fakhfakh said last week he would not seek to replicate recent unity coalitions, but would instead build a cabinet only from those, including Ennahda, that were "aligned with the values of the revolution".

Ennahda's rejection of that proposal means Fakhfakh could struggle to assemble majority support in parliament, risking a new parliamentary election.

It points to a tussle for influence between Ennahda and Saied over the shape of the next government, analysts say, with the party's rejection of Fakhfakh's proposal showing its fear that he will overtake it as the major political force.

Although Ennahda, the best-established party in Tunisia and a key part of successive coalition governments, came first in October's election with 53 of the 217 seats, its vote share declined from previous polls.

Saied won the second-round run-off vote of a separate presidential election in a landslide, but as an independent he lacks a parliamentary base of his own.

Tunisia's prime minister and government are primarily answerable to the parliament, but the president also has a veto over new legislation they introduce.

(Source: Reuters)

## Syrian army's great and new victories: Terrified terrorists are escaping

→ 1 The secret behind new operation by the Syrian army after a ceasefire

Syria's forces captured large areas of southern Idlib province during the last operation that was halted by a ceasefire in late August. The most important captured area was the strategic city of Khan Shaykhun. The ceasefire did not work as it allowed terrorists to attack the positions of Syria's army with suicide bombers and car bombs. The advance of the Syrian forces has infuriated the U.S. and the West and made them to resort to human rights claims to obstruct the liberation of Idlib and prevent Damascus from taking the control of the city.

The ceasefire, of course, involved Moscow and Ankara's shared economic interests, including S-400 missile system, Sukhoi SU-35 fighter jets, and the completion of Russian gas pipeline to Europe through Turkey. By the ceasefire, Moscow was seeking to separate Turkey from the U.S. and NATO.

However, after the Syrian army suffered heavy casualties by the attacks carried out by the terrorist groups due to the ceasefire, Moscow forgot about the ceasefire and paved the way for Syria's army to advance. Therefore, Syrian forces headed for Maarat al-Numan and western Aleppo and launched a broad operation.

Anyway, what can be said about the results of the ongoing operation in Idlib and western Aleppo is that terrorist groups had been armed to the teeth and deployed in tunnels and underground fortifications. The terrorist forces who had been stationed in southern Syria and other areas never thought that the Syrian army would be able to take these areas out of their control. Certainly, the same thing will happen for Idlib, western Aleppo as well as the terrorist groups in the east of the Euphrates.

# Taliban claims it shot down U.S. military aircraft in central Afghanistan



"There has been an airline crash, but it does not belong to Ariana because the two flights managed by Ariana today from Herat to Kabul and Herat to Delhi are safe," Mirzakwal later told Reuters. Earlier, three senior Afghan government officials said one of the state-owned airline's planes had crashed in Afghanistan's central Ghazni province.

Social media was rife with suggestions that the plane was from the state-owned Ariana Afghan Airlines; however, the company said the rumors were "not true."

"All the flights of Ariana Afghan Airlines have been completed normally," a statement on the carrier's verified Facebook page read.

Local officials also told The Associated Press (AP) that a passenger plane from Ariana Airlines crashed in a Taliban-held area.

Rescue teams had been dispatched to the scene, but it was unclear whether Taliban militants would block them from reaching it, Noori said. The plane caught fire immediately after the crash, and it is unlikely that anyone survived the incident, Noori said. The number of casualties was



unclear, a second official told Reuters.

Provincial council member Khaliq Dad Akbari also confirmed the crash to dpa, saying that the death toll was unclear. A police spokesman in the province also

confirmed the crash but was also unable to identify the craft.

The mountainous Ghazni province sits in the foothills of the Hindu Kush mountains and is bitterly cold in winter.

Crashes involving military flights, particularly helicopters, are common in Afghanistan where inclement weather and creaky aircraft are often pressed to their limits in the war-torn country where insurgents have been known to target helicopters.

The last major commercial air crash in Afghanistan occurred in 2005 when a Kam Air flight from western Herat to the capital Kabul crashed into the mountains as it tried to land in snowy weather. The last civilian flight to crash was in May 2010, when an aging Pamir Airways plane went down in bad weather during a scheduled flight to Kabul from the northern province of Kunduz. It was carrying six crew and 38 passengers when it crashed into a mountainside 20 kilometers from Kabul.

The war, however, has seen a number of deadly crashes of military aircraft. One of the most spectacular occurred in 2013 when an American Boeing 747 cargo jet crashed shortly after takeoff from Bagram Air Base north of Kabul en route to Dubai in the United Arab Emirates. All seven crew members were killed.

(Source: Daily Sabah)

## Rocket attack on U.S. embassy aimed to prevent foreign troops pullout: Hadi al-Ameri

→ 1 The security situation remains tense," added the unidentified spokesperson, pointing to persisting "threat" by local armed groups.

The U.S. is calling on the government of Iraq "to fulfill its obligations to protect our diplomatic facilities," the official further underlined while noting that the department will not make further comment on the security situation in Baghdad.

It was the third such attack on the U.S. embassy this month but was the first time the complex had been directly hit.

The U.S. State Department says there have been more than 14 attacks on American personnel based in Iraq, accusing "Iranian government or militias backed by Tehran." The fervently anti-Iran Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has become notorious for making false allegations to demonize

Tehran and justify harsh U.S. actions against it.

Meanwhile, earlier reports pointed to as many as five rockets targeting the U.S. embassy in Baghdad's heavily-fortified Green Zone, with other reports saying that three rockets had hit the compound directly.

No group has yet claimed responsibility for the attack.

This is while Iraqi Prime Minister Adil Abdul-Mahdi has condemned the attack and ordered a probe into the incident amid growing demands across the nation for immediate withdrawal of thousands of U.S. forces in the Arab country and the closure of their military bases throughout Iraq.

Abdul-Mahdi further announced that Baghdad was "committed to protecting all diplomatic missions and taking all necessary measures to achieve this."

## More than 100 children in Greece's Moria camp need urgent care

Mohammed, two years and eight months old, has been living in the Moria refugee camp in Greece, for four months with a life-threatening condition and limited access to healthcare.

He was born prematurely with hydrocephalus, a blockage of the circulation of fluid around the brain resulting in increased pressure in the skull, which can cause brain damage.

In the arms of his mother, 26-year-old Fawzia Ahmadi, he wriggles as she attempts to soothe him.

The family of four, including a one-year-old girl, live in a small tent at the top of an olive grove, which is acting as an overspill for the refugee camp, now close to a population of 20,000 people as of January.

It was designed to hold no more than 3,000.

They came here via Turkey, fleeing the continued unrest in their home in Kabul, Afghanistan.

"It's very difficult in the night," Ahmadi said. "He complains of headaches a lot and so we take it in shifts to sleep and check that he is OK. I worry about him so much.

"I've been told that I need to keep him clean but I don't know how I can do that here? We cannot wash him every day, the weather is very cold and so is the water."

Ahmadi said she understands that the local hospital cannot cope with her son's needs.

"I think it's not their problem because there are too many sick people there. My



son is sick but there are already too many kids who are sick, they don't have the time to take care of them all. I just want him to be somewhere warm where I can wash him and take care of him."

Mohammed is just one of at least 140 children in the camp who have chronic, complex and life-threatening diseases who MSF (Doctors Without Borders) are deeply concerned about.

The organization says they are being denied access to adequate medical care.

In July 2019, the Greek government rescinded access to healthcare for asylum seekers and undocumented people living in Greece, leaving around 55,000 people without medical care, according to MSF.

George Makris, the assistant medical coordinator in Greece and the north Balkans for MSF, told Al Jazeera regarding Mohammed's case: "We don't have the resources to investigate this kind of medical condition and we don't have the specialized doctors who are pediatric neurologists either."

(Source: al Jazeera)

## 'Trump wanted Ukraine aid tied to probes of rivals'

US President Donald Trump told a then-top aide in August he wanted to freeze security aid to Ukraine until officials there helped with investigations into Democrats, including former Vice President Joe Biden, the New York Times reported on Sunday.

Trump's statement was described in an unpublished manuscript by former NSA John Bolton, the Times said in a report that could raise pressure on Republicans to call Bolton as a witness in Trump's Senate impeachment trial.

The report, which did not quote the manuscript but cited multiple people describing Bolton's account, may undercut a key element of Trump's defense: that there was no quid pro quo when he asked Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to investigate Biden and his son Hunter Biden in a July phone call.

Biden is a leading contender for the Democratic nomination to oppose Trump in the November 3 presidential election. His son worked for a Ukrainian energy firm while Biden was vice president.

In a statement, a lawyer for Bolton suggested that the Times' account was accurate and said he had submitted Bolton's book manuscript to the National Security Council on December 30, a standard security review for classified information.

"It is clear, regrettably, from The New York Times article published today that the prepublication review process has been corrupted and that information has been disclosed by persons other than those properly involved in reviewing the manuscript,"



the lawyer, Charles Cooper, said.

■ **Democrats want Bolton called as witness**

The report drew Democratic demands that the Republican-led Senate, which is conducting a trial on whether to remove Trump from office after his December 18 impeachment by the Democratic-led House of Representatives, call Bolton as a witness.

Democrats have said they are eager to hear testimony by Bolton, who was involved, as his lawyer previously said, in "many relevant meetings and conversations" involving issues at the heart of Trump's impeachment.

Democrats need to win over at least four Senate Republicans to approve the calling of witnesses. Bolton said this month he was willing to testify in the trial if a Senate subpoena was issued.

Lawyers for Trump are scheduled on Monday to resume their defence in the impeachment trial stemming from his dealings with Ukraine. A showdown vote on calling witnesses could loom later in the week.

(Source: al Jazeera)

## Palestinians reiterate rejection of U.S. 'deal of the century'



They have also called for a boycott of American goods.

The Palestinian Authority has warned that Trump's deal would ignite mass protests in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Officials have also hinted that the Palestinian leadership may quit all agreements signed with Israel and suspend "security coordination" between the Palestinians and Israel in the West Bank.

Secretary General of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) Saeb Erekat said Sunday that the Palestinians would withdraw from key provisions of the Oslo Accords in case Trump unveiled his initiative.

The initiative, he said, would turn Israel's "temporary occupation (of Palestinian territories) into a permanent occupation."



■ **'Plot of the century'**

The Palestinian Foreign Ministry described the US plan

as "the plot of the century," stressing that it aims to "liquidate the Palestinian cause."

Foreign Minister Riyad al-Malki said the Palestinians were discussing "practical steps with the Arab brothers" to respond to the US plan.

■ **Jordanian king reiterates opposition to Trump plan**

The planned release has met unease in the Arab world, with Jordan's King Abdullah II reiterating his opposition to the deal.

"Our position regarding the plan is very clear: we are opposed to it," Abdullah said during a conference in the southern Jordanian city of Aqaba on Sunday.

Jordan and Egypt are the only two Arab states that have diplomatic ties with Israel.

Amman is vexed at Netanyahu's repeated threats to annex the Jordan Valley.

## U.S., Russian forces skirmish in northeast Syria

U.S. forces present in areas controlled by Kurdish militants in northeastern Syria have clashed with Russian troops amid accusations that Washington is stealing Syria's oil.

The confrontation took place at the entrance to Tal Tamr in Syria's northeastern province of Hasakah. The strategic town lies on a highway to the region's key oilfields.

Following the confrontation, Russian and American vehicles headed in two different directions, the Moscow Times reported.

The standoff was followed by Russian helicopters and U.S. warplanes flying over Tal Tamr, it added. Russia has been helping Syrian forces in the ongoing battles across the conflict-plagued Arab country.

The Russian military's assistance began in September 2015 at the official request of the Syrian government, while the U.S. deployed troops and equipment to Syria in 2014 without any authorization from Damascus or a UN mandate.

The Saturday confrontation is reportedly the

fourth of its kind in less than two weeks, Turkey's Daily Sabah newspaper reported Sunday.

Last week, U.S. forces claimed they had prevented Russian troops from approaching the oilfields in Hasakah.

The skirmishes took place amid an ongoing dispute between the U.S. and Russia over Rumeylan oilfield, which lies in Hasakah.

The latest developments come as the U.S. has dispatched new deployments to the Syrian provinces of Hasakah and Dayr

al-Zawr over the past weeks.

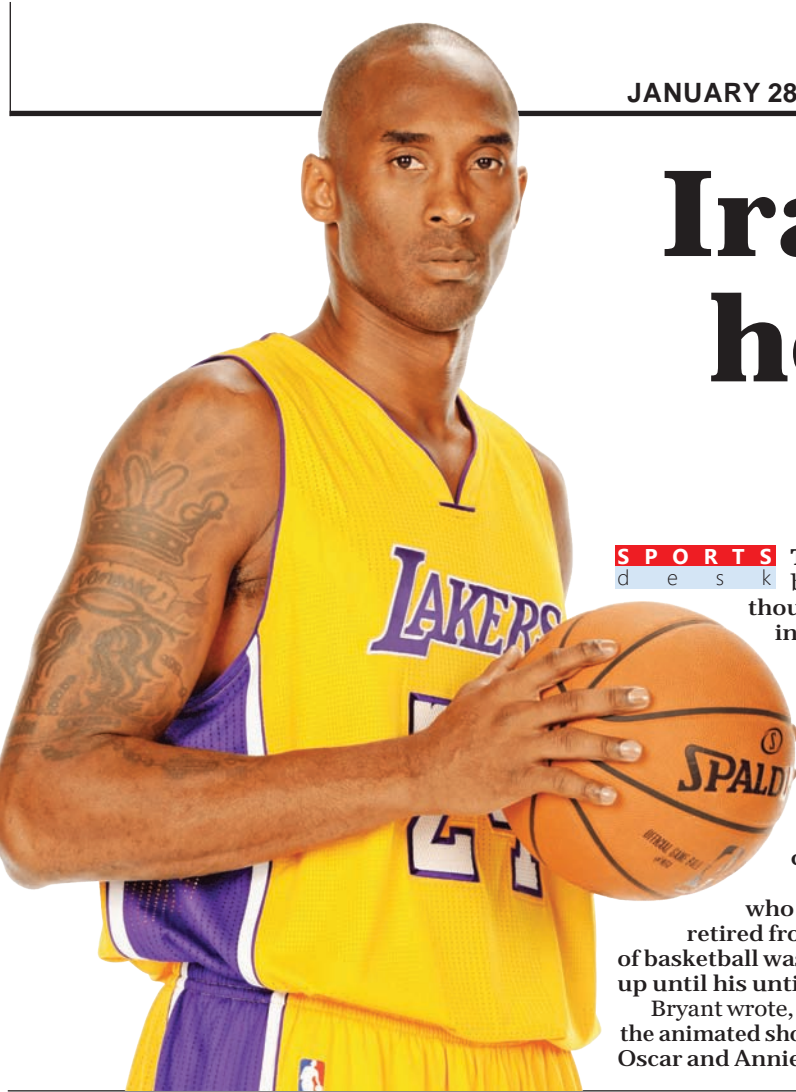
The deployments followed President Donald Trump's October decision to keep hundreds of U.S. troops in Syria to "secure" the country's oilfields which Syrian troops have yet to retake from militants.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov reiterated that U.S. attempts to control Syria's oilfields were "illegal" and amounted to "robbery."

(Source: Press TV)



# Iranian b-ballers heartbroken by loss of Kobe



S P O R T S  
d e s k

**TEHRAN** — Iranian international basketball players have sent their thoughts after Kobe Bryant's death in helicopter crash

Kobe, one of basketball's greatest players and most masterful scorers of all time, was among the passengers who died Sunday in a helicopter crash in Calabasas, California. He was 41.

Bryant's 13-year-old daughter Gianna was also killed in the crash.

The legendary basketball star, who spent 20 years with the Lakers, retired from the NBA in 2016 but the game of basketball was still an important part of his life up until his untimely death.

Bryant wrote, starred in, and executive produced the animated short Dear Basketball, which won the Oscar and Annie for best animated short in 2018.

Bryant was the first African-American filmmaker to win an Oscar in the animated short category.

Team Melli captain Hamed Haddadi paid his respects with a simple post on his Instagram story. "RIP Kobe Bryant," Haddadi wrote.

The 2.18m former Memphis Grizzlies and Phoenix Suns center played in the NBA from 2008 to 2013.

Samad Nikkhab Bahrami is also shocked and saddened to learn of the tragic passing of Kobe.

"Thanks for everything that you gave to this game of basketball," the small forward posted to his Instagram account.

Other Iranian basketball players Mohammad Jamshidi and Mohammad Hassanzadeh paid tribute to the NBA icon.

The Islamic Republic of Iran Basketball Federation has expressed its condolences following the death of basketball star Kobe Bryant.

The Iranian federation extended its heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family of Kobe Bryant in a message.

## Esteghlal coach Majidi worried about players' fatigue

S P O R T S  
d e s k

**TEHRAN** — Esteghlal coach Farhad Majidi is worried about his players fatigue in the AFC Champions League playoff.

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

The Iranian football team traveled to Tehran on Sunday and fled to Doha after several hours.

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.

"There is no direct flight from the UAE to Qatar and I am really surprised why the AFC doesn't know this. Our players had two flights in less than 24 hours, however I believe that they can overcome the obstacles," Majidi said in the pre-match news conference.

"We know that Qatari clubs have progressed in the recent years. We've analyzed Al Rayyan SC well and I have to say they are an organized team but we also are Esteghlal, a team who have won the titles two times," he added.



## Iran's Esteghlal, Shahr Khodro to lock horn with Qatari sides in ACL Play-offs

S P O R T S  
d e s k

**TEHRAN** — The final eight teams in the 2020 AFC Champions League group stage will be confirmed on Tuesday as 16 sides fight for their passage to the Continental tournament in the one-legged Play-off Round.

According to the-AFC.com, four games will take place in the East and a further four in the West, with former Asian champions Kashima Antlers, Al Ain and Esteghlal among those competing to secure a place in the 18th edition of the competition.

In the East zone, Japanese teams Kahsima Antlers and FC Tokyo host Melbourne Victory and Ceres Negros respectively, FC Seoul welcome Malaysia's Kedah in Seoul World Cup Stadium and Buriram United travel to Shanghai to face Shanghai SIPG.

In the West Zone, both Iranian teams Shahr Khodro and Esteghlal will take on Qatari rivals and in other matches Al-Ahli Saudi host Tajikistan champions FC Istiklol and Inaugural AFC Champions League winners Al Ain take on Uzbekistan's Bunyodkor later on Tuesday.



■ **Al Sailiya v Shahr Khodro**

One of the more intriguing clashes of the Play-offs Round sees Qatar's Al Sailiya taking on the Islamic Republic of Iran's Shahr Khodro, with the winners to

make their debut in the AFC Champions League's group stage.

Al Sailiya finished third in the Qatar Stars League last year to move within a game of advancing to the Continental competition

and boast Iranian international Karim Anzarifard within their ranks.

Shahr Khodro, meanwhile, came fourth in the Iranian Pro League and edged past Bahrain's Riffa 2-1 in Preliminary Round 2 on Saturday.

■ **Al Rayyan v Esteghlal**

After overcoming Kuwait SC 3-0 in Preliminary Round 2, Iranian powerhouse Esteghlal must now win away at Qatar's Al Rayyan in order to return to the Continental competition.

Esteghlal currently occupy the fifth spot in the Iran Persian Gulf League table with 29 points from their 16 matches, while they have one game in hand. The Blues, two-time winners of the AFC Champions League, are a spirited team with their new coach Farhad Majidi and hope to repeat their glorious days in Asia.

Al Rayyan, meanwhile, are aiming to qualify for the 10th time although they have never been able to make it beyond the group stage.

The pair last faced off in the 2018 group stage, with the game in Doha ending 2-2 and Esteghlal winning 2-0 in Tehran as the Iranian side advanced and Al Rayyan exited.

## Paralympic community pay tribute to basketball legend Bryant



The world of sports hit pause following the sudden and tragic death of two-time Olympic gold medalist and five-

time NBA champion Kobe Bryant on Sunday (26 January).

Paralympians from around the world poured in emotional tributes on social media as soon as the news broke that sporting great Bryant, 41, died in a helicopter crash in California with his 13-year-old daughter Gianna among nine reported victims.

Bryant, who elevated the game of basketball with his artistic scoring ability (fourth all-time in the NBA), had become an inspiration throughout the sports community across the globe.

In 2018, Bryant joined forces with Rio 2016 wheelchair basketball champion Megan Blunk in the 25th anniversary of Challenged Athletes Foundation, an organization that supports people with physical disabilities through active lifestyles.

Blunk, who is on the US women's wheelchair basketball national team, opened up about the news on Instagram:

"I have been trying to write something that could possibly do any of this justice. That could possibly put any of it into

words that make sense. I have been trying to wrap my mind around the depth of the impact that @kobebryant made on this earth & how much bigger that impact has just become.

Three-time Paralympic snowboard medalist Amy Purdy recalled when Bryant approached her and her husband for a photo.

"He spent at least 15 minutes talking with my husband and I. He was the most kind, humble, genuine person. I can't imagine what his family & loved ones are dealing with."

Australian wheelchair tennis player Dylan Alcott, who is gearing up to defend his Australian Open quad singles title this week, shared a memory when Bryant visited Australia last year for "The Mamba Mentality Experience."

Bryant was nicknamed the Black Mamba, or Mamba, to describe his deadly agility and aggressiveness in the sport. His craft and competitive desire spilled outside the basketball world, especially after winning five titles with the Los Angeles Lakers. He retired after 20 seasons in 2016.

(Source: Paralympic)

## Can Azerbaijan serve as a playground for Iran?

Soccer is among the arenas where international tensions are taking a toll on Iran. Under a temporary ban from hosting international soccer matches, Tehran might need a home away from home for games scheduled in Iran. Its neighbor to the north, Azerbaijan, appears ready to step into the breach.

Citing security concerns, the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) has banned Iranian teams in its championship tournament to host games in Iran.

Iran's soccer authorities have taken issue with the decision, but AFC is not taking its chances: Two of the tournament's preliminary matches have been rescheduled and moved from Iran to the United Arab Emirates.

Iran has four clubs participating in the Asian Champions' League. Some of the clubs and national soccer officials said they would bail out of the games altogether in protest of what they called an "unfair decision," or take the Confederation to international court.

But if they stay in the tournament, Azerbaijan has offered to help.

"Baku has all the conditions to host international games with participation of Iranian teams. This includes modern stadiums, comfortable hotels, road infrastructure," Firuz Garayev, spokesperson for the Association of Football Federations of Azerbaijan, told the Azerbaijani news outlet Haqqin.az.

Oil and gas-rich Azerbaijan has been investing lavishly in glitzy sports infrastructure.

Hosting international sports competitions, from soccer games to mini-Olympics to Formula 1 races, has been part of Baku's policy to gain global prominence.

But Iran and Azerbaijan have a complicated relationship, thanks to Iran's large Azerbaijani ethnic minority. Azerbaijan's growing devout Shia population. Baku, however, did strongly condemn the U.S.'s killing of top Iranian general Qassem Suleimani, which brought Washington and Tehran to the brink of war.

The decision about picking substitute venues for the Asian Champions' League games ultimately rests with the AFC and Iranian football federations, and no one appears yet to have reached out to Baku.

For all its territorial proximity and fancy sports infrastructure, one argument works against Azerbaijan: the country is not part of the Asian Football Confederation. Like other Caucasus countries, Azerbaijan plays in the European tournaments instead.

Befitting Azerbaijan's east-meets-west identity, the Iranian teams' Asian championship games could be interspersed with the games that Baku will host as part of UEFA's Euro 2020 tournament this summer. "Azerbaijan can host games for the Asian league throughout the entire season, with the exception of the days when finals for the UEFA 2020 will be taking place in Baku," Garayev said.

(Source: Eurasianet.org)

## Farhad Ghaemi slowly getting back to games: FIVB

**MNA** — On its Instagram post on Monday, Fédération Internationale de Volleyball (FIVB) said Iran's outside spiker Farhad Ghaemi, who suffered a cracked ankle during training sessions with his club team, is slowly getting back to international games.

"After missing the AVC Men's Tokyo Qualification 2020 due to injury, Iran's Farhad Ghaemi is slowly getting back into the game," it said.

"As for Iran, they have qualified to the Tokyo 2020 Olympics," it added.

Ghaemi who was injured at the start of the 2019 world cup has not been taking part in recent matches of the Iranian national volleyball team.

On January 12, Iran eased past China in straight sets (25-14, 25-22, 25-14) on Sunday at the AVC Men's Tokyo Volleyball Qualification tournament to book a place at the 2020 Olympic Games as the best Asian team.

In addition to hosts Japan, the teams of Iran, Argentina, Brazil, Italy, Poland, France, the US, and Tunisia have qualified so far for Tokyo 2020 through the intercontinental qualification tournaments.

Iran qualified for the Olympics for the second time in a row, as the Persians came fifth in the previous edition held in Rio.

## Regragui takes charge of Al Duhail

Qatar Stars League leaders Al Duhail SC have announced Moroccan Walid Regragui will be in charge of the team as head coach for the remainder of the season.

Regragui, who joins Al Duhail from Moroccan outfit FUS Rabat, replaces Rui Faria with the Portuguese having left three days ago due to personal reasons.

Born in France, Regragui played for several French clubs while he also spent two years in Spain with Racing de Santander before ending his career in Morocco, where he started coaching FUS Rabat in 2014.

The 44-year-old Regragui will be looking to keep Al Duhail at the top of the QSL standing and also chart a successful campaign in the 2020 AFC Champions League with the club drawn in Group C with UAE champions Sharjah, Persepolis FC of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Saudi Arabia's Al Taawoun.

(Source: the-afc)

## Iran to host Asian Ski Champs

**IRNA** — The International Ski Federation announced a new date for holding Asian Youths Ski Championships.

According to the International Ski Federation calendar, the event was supposed to be held within a month, but it was cancelled and postponed.

The competitions will be held on April 13-14.

The event will be held in spiral, speed and compound fields.

## Nadal rides out Kyrgios challenge to reach quarter-finals

Rafa Nadal suffered his first lost set of the tournament but rode out a challenge from a wholly committed Nick Kyrgios to move into the quarter-finals of the Australian Open for the 12th time with a 6-3 3-6 7-6(6) 7-6(4) victory on Monday.

Kyrgios was a match for the 19-times Grand Slam champion in the second set and for much of the third but the muscle-bound Spaniard looked like the most likely winner once he got his nose back in front.



The Australian, however, broke back when Nadal was serving for the match in the fourth set, reigniting the contest and bringing the partisan Rod Laver Arena crowd back into the equation.

The world number one gritted his teeth and went again in the tiebreak and moved through to a last-eight meeting with Austrian Dominic Thiem when Kyrgios netted a forehand after three hours and 38 minutes.

"It was a very tough match, it seemed like I had control at the start, but against Nick you are never in control," said Nadal, who hit 64 winners to Kyrgios's 50.

Kyrgios showed once again he has the skills to be a Grand Slam champion and will console himself at having shown more of the mental fortitude and discipline he will need to win major prizes.

"When he is playing like today with this positive attitude, he gives a lot of positive things to our sport," said Nadal, who has previously criticized Kyrgios's behaviour. "He is one of the best talents we have. I like the Nick Kyrgios of this tournament."

The match was preceded by a ceremony honoring the 50th anniversary of the Grand Slam achieved by Margaret Court, once adored by Australians for her tennis prowess but now a more divisive figure because of her opposition to same-sex marriage.

Kyrgios has proved divisive himself due to his on-court antics, but has earned praise in recent weeks for kickstarting the Tennis Australia bushfire relief appeal which has raised more than A\$5.6 million (\$3.8 million)

There was a more recent tragedy on his mind on Monday and he sported an LA Lakers shirt in the warm-up. A basketball fanatic, Kyrgios appeared to be close to tears as he walked out on court only a few hours after the death of Kobe Bryant.

(Source: Reuters)



INTERNATIONAL DAILY  
www.tehrantimes.com

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» Subscription & Distribution Dept.: Tel: (+98 21) 43051603

» www.eshterak.ir Distributor: Padideh Novin Co.  
Tel: 88911433

» Webmaster: webmaster@tehrantimes.com

» Printed at: Jame Jam Barta Borna - 44197737

Tehrantimes79

Tehrantimesdaily

No. 18, Bimeh Alley, Nejatollahi St., Tehran, Iran

P.O. Box: 14155-4843

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GUIDE TO  
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

The best qualities in women are pride, fear and greed,  
which may be considered the worst in men.

Imam Ali (AS)

## “The Sun’s Daughter” captures Iranian children’s hearts

**CULTURE** **TEHRAN** — The third edition of Sweden-based Afghan writer Mohammad-Hossein Mohammadi’s children’s book “The Sun’s Daughter and the Black Devil” has recently been released by the Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (IIDCY) in Tehran.

Front cover of Afghan writer Mohammad-Hossein Mohammadi’s “The Sun’s Daughter and the Black Devil”.

His short story collection “The Red Figs in Mazar-i-Sharif” won several literary awards, including the Hushang Golshiri Award and Isfahan Literary Award.

## Fajr Film Festival announces jury for official competition

**A R T** **TEHRAN** — The organizers of the 38th Fajr Film Festival announced the jury for the official competition on Monday.

The jury is composed of filmmakers Narges Abyar, Fereidun Jeirani, Mohammad-Mehdi Asgarpur and Maziar Miri.

This combination photo shows the jury of the 38th Fajr Film Festival.

Set and costume designer Abbas Belondi, cinematographer Turaj Aslani, actor Saeid Rad, critic Tahmasb Solhju and cultural manager Reza Purohseini are the other members of the jury.

A lineup of 22 movies including “Abadan Eleven 60” by Mehrdad Khoshbakht, “Atabay” by Niki Karimi, “The Clouds about to Rain” by Majid Barzegar and “Exit” by Ebrahim Hatamikia will go on screen in the official competition of this edition of the festival.

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

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Portugal Triste Para Sempre festival picks 3 Iranian films

**A R T** **TEHRAN** — Three Iranian short films will be screened in the main section of the Triste Para Sempre (Sad Forever) film festival, in Lisbon, Portugal. “Goodbye Olympic” by Mojtaba Purbakhsh, “Like a Wave” by Shora Shayesteh and “Shogoon” by Sara Mokhavat will be competing with movies from France, Brazil, Italy, Spain and many other countries.

The festival, which is dedicated to the films without happy endings, will be held from February 20 to 22.

# Martyr Soleimani’s military life subject of street theater at Fajr

**A R T** **TEHRAN** — Iran’s General Office for Dramatic Arts announced on Monday that it will produce a street play, which will portray the military life of Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani.

Amir-Hossein Shafiei is writing the play named “The Soldier”, which will be performed in three acts during the 38th Fajr International Theater Festival.

The first act is dedicated to his leadership of Iranian forces during the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war.

His role in the victory of the Lebanese in the Israeli 33-Day War of 2006 will be spotlighted in the second stage.

The last act of the drama will focus on the key role he played in the defeat of the ISIS terrorists in Syria and Iraq.

Members of the theater troupe Shahrashub and actors from the Iran Art Workshop will join together to perform the play, which will be directed by Pejman Shahverdi.

Shahverdi himself, Mehdi Jadaki, Masud Kordi, Siavash Moqaddasi, Alireza Hosseini, Mobin Kabudvand, Aref Kavand, Arash Fallahifard, Ali Dehrizi and Meisan Kordi are the members of the cast for the play, which has no dialogue.

The play will be performed at the courtyard of Tehran’s City Theater complex for five days beginning on February 5.

Quds Force chief Soleimani was assassinated in a U.S. airstrike in Baghdad on January 3.

Quds Force chief Qassem Soleimani uses a walkie-talkie at the frontlines during offensive operations against the ISIS terrorists in Salahuddin province, Iraq, in 2015.

## IIDCYA photo contest on Arbaeen pilgrimage selects winners

Arbaeen pilgrims in Iraq. (Tasnim/Hassan Zarifmanesh)

**A R T** **TEHRAN** — Iran’s Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (IIDCYA) announced the winners of a photo contest on the annual pilgrimage of Arbaeen on Monday.

The contest organized by the IIDCYA put its spotlight on children who attended the large gathering of Shia Muslims in Iraq, the institute announced in a press release.

The contest was held in two sections, one with participants aged 12 to 18 and the other adults above 18.

Photos by Amirhossein Ghiaszadeh, Zeinab Azizi and Mahsa Shavandi were honored in the young adult section. Fatemeh Peymanpak, Mehdi Jafari and Mahnaz

Nurian won the awards in the adults’ section.

A jury composed of Alireza Karimi-Saremi, Mohammad Sattari and Mamak Yahyapur selected the winning photos from about 5000 submissions.

The IIDCYA plans to showcase a selection of the top works in an exhibition.

Hundreds of thousands of Iranians embark on a journey to the Iraqi city of Karbala to observe the holy day of Arbaeen at the holy shrines of Imam Hussein (AS), the third Imam of the Shia, and his brother, Hazrat Abbas (AS).

Arbaeen marks the end of the 40-day mourning period following the martyrdom of the Imam and his loyal companions on Ashura.

## Iranian cineastes launch campaign to support flood-stricken children in Sistan-Baluchestan

**A R T** **TEHRAN** — The Iranian House of Cinema, which is the official guild of Iranian cineastes, has launched a campaign to support children in the flood-stricken region of Sistan-Baluchestan.

In the campaign named “Royesh\_Sib”, the cineastes will travel across Iran to collect people’s donations to provide relief for the flood victims, the house announced in a press release published on Monday.

They also will help reconstruct the educational centers destroyed as a result of the flood and lift up their spirits after the disastrous accident.

The house is organizing the campaign in collaboration with the Hami Association and the Iranian Short Film Association.

They also plan to publish videos on social networks to raise people’s awareness of the effect of natural disasters on children.

Flood-stricken children in Sistan-Baluchestan Province attend an open-air performance staged by cultural organizations on January 21 arranged to help lift up their spirits. (Mehr/Mohsen Roshandeh)

## “Bad Boys”, “1917” best “The Gentleman” at box office

**PARK CITY, Utah (AP)** — “Boys” trumped “Gentlemen” in movie theaters over the weekend as Will Smith and Martin Lawrence’s “Bad Boys for Life” easily remained the top ticket seller over newcomer “The Gentlemen”.

The third “Bad Boys” film, coming 17 years after “Bad Boys II”, sold \$34 million in tickets in its second weekend, according to studio estimates Sunday. The R-rated action comedy from Sony Pictures, which cost about \$90 million to make, has grossed \$120.6 million in two weeks domestically.

Second place went to Sam Mendes’ “1917”, which added theaters in its fifth week of release to keep pace with its Academy Awards momentum. The film

grossed \$15.8 million over the weekend to bring its North American total to \$103.9 million. Worldwide, it’s taken in \$200.5 million.

It was a good weekend for “1917”. On Saturday night, Mendes took the top prize at the Directors Guild Awards, solidifying the World War I tale as the clear Oscar frontrunner and Mendes as the favorite for best director. The film earlier triumphed at the highly predictive Producers Guild Awards. And its venerated cinematographer, Roger Deakins, also won the American Society of Cinematographers award on Saturday.

The weekend’s top new release was Guy Ritchie’s star-studded gangster film “The

This image released by Sony Pictures shows Martin Lawrence, right, and Will Smith in a scene from “Bad Boys for Life.” (Ben Rothstein/Columbia Pictures-Sony via AP)

Gentlemen”. The STXfilms release came in on the high side of expectations with \$11 million in ticket sales. The film, a return to the criminal underworld for Ritchie (“Aladdin,” “Lock Stock and Two Smoking Barrels”), stars Matthew McConaughey as an American expat with a London marijuana empire under threat. Reviews were fairly strong for “The Gentlemen” (72% fresh on Rotten Tomatoes) though many critics saw traces of racism in the film’s depictions.

The Universal horror film “The Turning”, a modern adaptation of Henry James’ “The Turn of the Screw” that drew terrible reviews, collected \$7.3 million in its debut weekend.

## Billie Eilish sweeps Grammy Awards with top four prizes

**LOS ANGELES (Reuters)** — Teen sensation Billie Eilish swept the Grammy Awards on Sunday, winning all four top prizes - album, song, record of the year and best new artist - in a rare feat at the music industry’s highest honors.

Eilish, an 18-year-old newcomer with a unique sound, won for her debut studio album “When We All Fall Asleep, Where Do We Go?” while her hit single “Bad Guy” was named record of the year and song of the year. In all, she took home five awards.

She is only the second person, and the youngest, to win all four top Grammys on the same night.

Eilish, distinguished by her green hair and baggy clothes, recorded the album with her brother Finneas in their Los Angeles home. Finneas also won the Grammy for non classical producer of the year.

They seemed taken aback by their Grammy haul, which saw them triumph over established stars including Taylor Swift, Ariana Grande and rapper Post Malone.

“We didn’t make this album to win a Grammy. We wrote about depression and suicidal thoughts and environmental change,” Finneas said as the pair accepted the awards. “We stand up here confused and grateful.”

Asked backstage what she would do next, Eilish said, “Being in this moment is all I’m thinking about... I’m gonna do whatever I feel.”

The Grammy Awards show opened with a dedication to basketball star Kobe Bryant, who died in a helicopter accident

Billie Eilish poses backstage with her awards at the 62nd Grammy Awards to include Song of the Year for “Bad Guy”, Best New Artist, and Album of the Year for “When We All Fall Asleep, Where Do We Go?” January 26, 2020. (Reuters/Monica Almeida)

earlier in the day and whose Los Angeles Lakers team has its home at the city’s Staples Center and Grammy venue.

“We are literally standing here heartbroken in the house that Kobe Bryant built,” said Grammy host Alicia Keys. “We never imagined in a million years we’d have to start the show like this.”

R&B star Lizzo won three of her eight nominations, while black country rapper Lil Nas X took two for his viral “Old Town Road” collaboration with Billy Ray Cyrus.

Lil Nas X, 20, wearing a cowboy hat and silver lure suit, and country singer Billy Ray Cyrus dazzled the house with a kitschy performance of their viral collaboration “Old Town Road,” with contributions from stars ranging from K-Pop band BTS to young yodeler Mason Ramsey.

Grande performed a medley of hits from her break-up album “Thank u, Next,” including “7 Rings” and “Imagine” but won none of the five Grammys for which she was nominated.

Slain rapper Nipsey Huse, 33, who was gunned down in his Los Angeles neighborhood last year, won two Grammys and was honored in a tribute by John Legend, DJ Khaled and rapper Meek Mill.

Blake Shelton and his fiancée Gwen Stefani held hands as they debuted their new romantic duet “Nobody But You,” while Camila Cabello sang her recent single “First Man” to her tearful father in the audience. Demi Lovato won a standing ovation in her first performance at a major awards show since a drugs overdose in 2018.

The Grammy winners are chosen by members of the Recording Academy, which is currently embroiled in a dispute over the departure of its new chief executive Deborah Dugan and her allegations of conflicts of interest in the nominations process. The Recording Academy has denied the allegations.