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# Iran can disable RQ-4 drone from remote distance



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## Israeli airstrikes on Damascus suburbs put Iranian flight at risk: Russia

By staff and agencies

Russian Defense Ministry has said that Israeli strikes on Damascus suburbs put an Iranian civilian aircraft carrying 172 passengers in serious danger.

An Airbus A320 flying from Tehran to the Syrian capital was forced to make an emergency landing following an Israeli missile attack, the Russian Defense Ministry said, according to RT.

It added that using civilian aircraft as a "shield" is commonplace for Israeli Air Force pilots.

Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Major General Igor Konashenkov said, "The Israeli general staff's use of passenger jets as a cover for its military operations or as a shield from Syrian missile system fire is becoming a typical trait of Israeli air force." **→2**

## Tehran says ready to help settle Turkey-Syria conflict in Idlib

**TEHRAN** — Iran's ambassador to the United Nations said on Thursday that his country, which is one of the guarantors of the Astana group, is ready to do its best to settle the conflicts between Turkey and Syria in Idlib province in northwestern Syria.

"Iran is ready to do its best to settle differences between Damascus and Anka-

ra over developments in Idlib province," Majid Takht-Ravanchi said as he pointed to Iran's unwavering determination in campaign against terrorism.

"Situation in the region is worrisome, so, we must try to prevent the crisis from being uncontrollable," he said in a meeting at the United Nations Security Council. **→3**

## Iran's steel exports up 25% in 10 months yr/yr

**TEHRAN** — Iran's major steel producers exported 5.884 million tons of steel during the first ten months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2019-January 20, 2020), which was 25 percent higher than the figure of the same period of time in the past year, IRNA reported on Friday.

Also as reported, exports made by the major producers rose 93 percent to hit 674.873 tons during the tenth Iranian calendar month of Dey (December 22, 2019-January 20, 2020).

Iran has defined 16 development

projects in the steel sector which are aimed to boost the country's output of steel products by 17.3 million tons in a course of five years.

These projects are for constructing production units each with the capacity of 600,000 tons, while some other projects have been also defined to set up some units with under 500,000-ton capacity that together with the 600,000-ton capacity units will add 19.1 million tons to the country's annual steel products output. **→4**



### EDITORIAL

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## Has Saudi-sponsored terrorism made Riyadh's allies impatient?

**O**n Monday, the Danish Security and Intelligence Service (PET) announced that it had arrested three senior members of the Arab Struggle Movement for the Liberation of Ahwaz (ASMLA), or the al-Ahwaziyeh terrorist group, on suspicion of spying for Saudi Arabia and planning to conduct terrorist attacks inside Iran.

On the same day, the Netherlands' police separately arrested another member of the mentioned terrorist group on the same charge.

Shortly after the PET's announcement, Danish Minister for Foreign Affairs Jeppe Kofod wrote on his Twitter account that the Saudi Arabia's envoy to Copenhagen will be summoned and called Riyadh's spying operation in his country an unacceptable and dangerous act.

Detention of four senior members of al-Ahwaziyeh terrorist group in Denmark and the Netherlands on spying for Saudi Arabia and planning to conduct terrorist attacks in Iran was an awful scandal for Riyadh's regime as it proved practical connection of the regime with the mentioned terrorist group in spite of Saudi officials' denial of such connections.

Al-Ahwaziyeh staged a bloody terrorist attack on a military parade in the southeastern city of Ahwaz in September 2018 killing at least 25 people, including children, and injured many more.

Saudi Arabia, however, denied any connection with the Al-Ahwaziyeh terrorists but the Saudi-backed news network of Iran International immediately conducted an interview with the ring-leader of the terrorist group.

Iran filed a complaint before the relevant bodies against the news network though it had no desirable result.

It should be mentioned that Al-Ahwaziyeh was also involved in Iran's November riots, especially in the southern port city of Mahshahr. The terrorist group resorted to armed assaults that apart from turning the popular protest against gas price rise plan into a chaos, it also ended in assassination of a number of innocent people. **→2**

## "Walnut Tree", time to tell our story

By Samaneh Aboutaleb

**TEHRAN** — Young director Mohammad-Hossein Mahdavian is well-known for telling factual political stories in his movies, but his latest film "Walnut Tree", which is competing in the 38th Fajr Film Festival, narrates a different story.

The film tells the true story of Qader Mullanpur, a man who was away when his family was impacted by the chemical attack in a village near Sardasht. His effort to save his pregnant wife and their three children are in vain, and they die one by one from the fatal wounds sustained as a result of the chemical attack. There is nothing he can do for them except for burying them under their favorite walnut tree.

The story of Sardasht is one of the saddest and yet forgotten stories of our land. Iraq bombarded the Iranian town of Sardasht in West Azerbaijan

Province with chemical weapons on June 28, 1987, killing over 1000 and injuring over 8000 civilians, many of whom were permanently disabled due to respiratory problems.

Sardasht was not even considered a military target; the population was both unprotected and unprepared for a chemical weapons assault.

To make "Walnut Tree" more realistic, Mahdavian used 16mm format, which was used during the 1980s, the exact same time period in which the story of his movie is set.

Payman Maadi, the actor of "Camp X-Ray" and "Last Knights" portrays Qader beautifully. His role as an ordinary Kurdish man who is full of love for his family and yet powerless and helpless to do anything to help them at least suffer any less, is believable. Moreover, the makeup and costumes are such as to allow him to play his

role in a more tangible way.

Iranian TV star and director Mehran Modiri also plays a leading role in the film but he doesn't meet expectations.

Although Kurdish music is ear-catching, in some scenes of the film it seems superfluous and burdensome. As the tragedy is so horrific itself, it doesn't need tear-provoking music for an effect on the audience in order to add more emotion to the scenes.

A school teacher who witnessed the whole story does the narration for the film. Although the narration in Mahdavian's acclaimed movie "Standing in the dust" is very helpful, in "Walnut Tree" it seems unnecessary.

"Walnut Tree" might have its own strengths and weaknesses, but as the teacher says at the beginning of the film, it's time to tell our story to the world.

## Netanyahu plans to meet with MbS before March 2 elections

Israeli authorities are reportedly working hard to arrange a meeting between Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in the kingdom, as the Tel Aviv regime is bringing out in the open its relations with several Arab countries after years of clandestine contacts.

The Hebrew-language Israel Defense magazine, citing sources requesting not to be named, reported on Thursday that efforts are underway for such a meeting to happen in the Saudi capital city of Riyadh before Israeli legislative elections, which are set for March 2.

The report added that the expected meeting falls within the Israeli regime's attempts to normalize relations with Arab states, which commenced in Oman and then spread to Morocco and Sudan. The attempts are apparently backed

by the White House.

Israel Defense further highlighted that Washington wants to advance President Donald Trump's so-called deal of the century on the decades-old Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which could greatly help him in the U.S. presidential race.

The magazine went on to say that there is a desire among Israeli officials to promote a round of communications with Arab countries, which may help Netanyahu's election campaign.

The report comes as General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, the head of Sudan's ruling council, and Netanyahu recently met in Entebbe, Uganda. The meeting had reportedly been arranged by the United Arab Emirates.

It was only made public when the Israeli premier took to Twitter to claim that an agreement had been reached with Sudan to "begin cooperation

that will lead to the normalization of relations."

However, the Sovereign Council of Sudan — a joint civilian-military cabinet running state affairs since September 2019 — said the cabinet had not been informed in advance about the meeting and only learned of it through media reports.

Last month, senior Saudi cleric and former justice minister, Sheikh Muhammad bin Abdul Karim bin Abdulaziz al-Issa, paid an official visit to the former Nazi concentration camp, Auschwitz, in Poland. A delegation of American Jewish Committee (AJC) officials was in the company as well.

The CEO of the AJC, David Harris, described Issa's visit to the site as highly significant, claiming that the trip represented "the most senior delegation" of Muslim scholars to visit Auschwitz ever.

(Source: Press TV)



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## Tombs of the martyrs of divine religions showered with flowers

**TEHRAN** — In a ceremony on Thursday at the cemetery of the Christian Armenians in eastern Tehran, the tombs of the martyrs of divine religions were showered with flowers. The event was the fourth of its kind. It was attended by Christian, Jewish, Muslim and Zoroastrian clerics, Tehran governor Anoushirvan Bandpay, and a number of people. The ceremony took place as Iran is marking the 41st anniversary of the Islamic Revolution.



### ARTICLE

**Damir Nazarov**  
Journalist from Russia

## Why does Zionism regularly attack Deir ez-Zor?

**I**n recent years, during the course of the Syrian war, the long-suffering province of Deir ez-Zor has been subjected to an air attack by Zionism. Damascus and its suburbs fell victim to raids by the occupiers. Experts are trying to explain the aggressor's attacks by Zionism's actions "in order to prevent the transfer of weapons from Iraq through Syria to the South of Lebanon." Some associate aggression with a naive attempt to eliminate certain individuals in a multi-structured network of Pro-Iranian forces.

According to the Mossad's plan, such actions will "weaken" the position of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards in Deir ez-Zor. The facts show that Hezbollah has a powerful missile potential for at least 10 years. The creation of networks of Syrian militias at the beginning of the conflict was originally conceived as a project with a view to the future. This is not just a temporary measure. What is the point of periodic raids on the North-East of Syria? The answer is simple: the ideology, or rather the very system of views on the basis of Islamic values that took shape in 1979 in Iran, which was able to impose the struggle on the imperialists in the region.

Zionism is aware of the risks associated with its survival, so it is doing everything to prevent the strengthening of Iranian influence in Syria. Fears and phobias of the occupation regime in Syria are linked to the ideological work of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards. The Arab socialist revival party and secular Palestinian organizations in Syrian refugee camps have never posed a strategic threat to Zionism. The occupiers are able to believe that in the future, the question of the liberation of the Golan Heights will be raised by a military-political organization (such as Hezbollah, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, or factions from Hashad al-Shaabi), but not by the Assad government with its "diplomatic methods" through the UN.

Let's return to Deir al-Zur. What does Iran have to do with it? It is in this city that Tehran conducts a line of "familiarization" with the ideas of the Islamic Revolution. **→7**



## Iran, Pakistan highlight border security cooperation

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Mohammad Ali Hosseini, Iran's ambassador to Islamabad, and Pakistan Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJSC) General Nadeem Raza on Thursday highlighted the importance of close security cooperation in border areas.



According to IRNA, the two sides also called for military cooperation.

Hosseini praised Pakistan's determination to fence border areas. Ambassador Hosseini also met with Pakistan's Interior Minister Ijaz Ahmed Shah on January 30.

"It is unavoidable to boost security in borders to help the sustainable development of the region and also the well-being of the people of the two countries, especially those who reside in border areas," Hosseini said.

Shah said that Islamabad is determined to expand cooperation with Iran in various areas, including border security, fight against terrorism and drug trafficking.

Iran and Pakistan held their 23rd border meeting in the Pakistani province of Baluchistan on January 1.

Ahmad Ali Mohebat, governor of the southeastern border province of Sistan-Baluchestan, said in November 2019 that the Iranian government had decided to withdraw 100 million dollars from the National Development Fund (NDF) to seal borders with Pakistan.

"This amount of money will speed up the work but will not be enough," Mohebat told IRNA.

The provincial governor added, "Iran cannot seal the borders unilaterally and has reached agreements with Pakistan in this respect and this country [Pakistan] has also started sealing the borders."

"Pakistan has sealed 50 kilometers of the borders by constructing barbed wire and fences," he said.

He also said that sealing the borders will not cause any trouble to those residing in the area.

## Velayati calls 'deal of the century' Trump's political suicide

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Ali Akbar Velayati, a top advisor to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, has said that the so-called "deal of the century" is a political suicide for U.S. President Donald Trump.

In an interview with the khamenei.ir published on Thursday, Velayati said Trump's action has boosted the Palestinian unity.

"The Palestinians came to the conclusion that negotiations will reach nowhere and struggle is the path to progress," he said.

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei said on Wednesday that the "deal of the century" will die before Trump's life comes to an end.

Ayatollah Khamenei said that the deal of the century is an "evil, failed and insane" plan.

"The way to counter the plan is keeping courageous resistance by the Palestinian nation and groups as well as the Islamic world's support," the Leader suggested.

The Leader reiterated his previously declared proposal of a general referendum in the occupied lands so that the native inhabitants of Palestine can determine their fate, saying this "can be a basic solution" to the Palestinian issue.

"The Americans think cheerfully that their plan against the Palestinian nation will be successful by selecting a big name for the plan, however the move is insane and evil. The plan from its beginning has been against them," Ayatollah Khamenei went on to say.

"The Americans are trading something with the Zionists that is not their own asset," the Leader said, adding Palestine belongs to the Palestinians who are entitled to decide about their fate.

## Israeli airstrikes on Damascus suburbs put Iranian flight at risk: Russia

**1 →** The aircraft was about to land at Damascus International Airport, but was unable to do so as the Syrian air defense systems engaged the hostile targets. The jet could have found itself in the crossfire if it weren't averted for the Damascus air traffic control, whose "timely actions" averted a possible disaster.



The A320 was landed "at the closest alternative airfield," the ministry stated. It also said the surprise attack took place around 2 a.m. local time, with four Israeli F-16s firing at least eight air-to-surface missiles from outside of Syrian airspace.

According to Press TV, Konashenko said, "Only due to timely actions of the Damascus airport dispatchers and the efficient operation of the automated air traffic control system, the Airbus-320 managed to... successfully land at the closest alternative airfield."

The spokesman stressed that Israel was well aware of civilian flights around Damascus and that such missions demonstrated the regime's reckless disregard for human lives.

Russia had previously warned that Israeli airstrikes against Damascus were endangering civilian jets.

Lebanese officials have also stated that Israeli jets illegally conducting operations against Syria from the country's airspace pose a danger to civilian aircraft in Lebanon.

# Soleimani assassination will end U.S. presence in the region: Zarif

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Thursday that the assassination of Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani on January 3 will put an end to the United States' military presence in the region.

"No person in their right mind would do such a thing. By doing this, Trump puts an end to presence of the United States in the region," Press TV quoted him as saying in an interview with Lebanese al-Mayadeen news network.

He added, "A government, which is not courageous enough to fight a commander [on the battlefield] has to martyr him through a cowardly terrorist operation.... Americans and the Zionist regime always act like this."

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has described the assassination of Soleimani as a "cowardly" act that brought "disgrace" upon the U.S.

Zarif said on January 5 that end of the U.S. "malign presence" in West Asia has begun.

"Whether kicking or screaming, end of U.S. malign presence in West Asia has begun," Zarif said in a tweet.

Majid Takht-Ravanchi, Iran's ambassador to the United Nations, also said in January that the U.S. must leave the region, noting that the U.S. is unwelcome in the region.



Ayatollah Khamenei said on January 8 that the U.S. "corruptive presence" in the region must come to an end.

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

Leader said during a speech in Qom.

On January 5, two days after the U.S. assassination of General Soleimani, the Iraqi parliament voted for a resolution requiring the government to order the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq.

In retaliation to the assassination, the Ira-

## Iran can disable RQ-4 drone from several thousands of kms away: commander

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — The commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps Aerospace Force announced on Thursday that his country enjoys the technology to turn the U.S. modern large-size U.S. RQ-4 drone inefficient even while the aircraft is flying thousands of kilometers away from Iran's borders.

Brigadier General Amir Ali Hajizadeh made the announcement in an interview with the national TV.

On June, 20 2019, the IRGC shot down the U.S. RQ-4 Global Hawk surveillance drone near the Kouh-e Mobarak region in the central district of Jask County after it violated the Iranian airspace.

The RQ-4 Global Hawk unmanned aircraft system (UAS) can fly at high altitudes for more than 30 hours, gathering near-real-time, high-resolution imagery of large areas of land in all types of weather.

In his Thursday remarks, Hajizadeh added that new parts of the downed U.S. drone have been recently discovered in depth of Iran's southern waters.

"We have accessed to the RQ-4 drone's secret codes... We can make the drone inefficient from several thousands of kilometers distance," the commander explained.

According to the IRGC June statement, the Global Hawk had flown from one of the American bases in the southern parts of the Persian Gulf region at 00:14 a.m. local time, with its identification transponders off in breach of all international aviation rules.

It said the drone had stealthily continued on the route from the Strait of Hormuz towards Iran's port city of Chabahar.

While returning towards west of the Strait of Hormuz, the drone violated Iran's territorial airspace and began gathering intelligence and spying, the statement said.

The drone was targeted and shot down by the IRGC at 04: 05 a.m. local time, it added.

The drone was shot by the homegrown air defense missile system called "Khordad-3rd".

An informed IRGC source in Hormozgan province said at the time that the drone had been targeted near



the Kouh-e Mobarak region and fell down in the area of Ras al-Shir in Iran's territorial waters.

He said the downing came after repeated violations of Iran's airspace by U.S. reconnaissance drones in the Persian Gulf region.

### ■ Wreckage of U.S. drone exhibited

For the first time, the IRGC Aerospace Force on Thursday put on display the full wreckage of the American spy drone. The wreckage was broadcast on national TV.

A small part of the drone's wreckage had been put on display a day after the downing.

### ■ New information about attack on U.S. airbase will be released soon

Hajizadeh also said the Aerospace Force will soon release details about Iran's missile attack on the U.S. airbase in western Iraq in response to the assassination of the IRGC Quds Force Commander General Qassem Soleimani.

In Iran's missile attack on the Ain al-Assad airbase on January 8, U.S. President Donald Trump claimed that "no Americans were harmed". However, the Pentagon gradually released reports that certain American service members had suffered traumatic brain injuries (TBI).

"There is a possibility that until sometime later they

would announce that some American military forces have 'died from mild brain injuries,' Hajizadeh said sarcastically.

USA Today reported on Feb. 6 that as it turned out, despite troops huddling in bomb shelters, dozens suffered brain injuries from the explosions when a payload of nearly a ton slammed into their base.

Frank Larkin, a former SEAL and retired sergeant-at-arms for the U.S. Senate, wrote in a letter that Trump's comment "was a hard hit to the gut".

According to USA Today, Larkin wasn't alone in his disappointment. Veterans groups, led by the 1.6 million member Veterans of Foreign Wars, demanded a presidential apology.

Military Times reported on Wednesday that a 2011 Defense Department policy change regarding mild traumatic brain injury may mean nearly 60 U.S. service members are eligible for the Purple Heart following the Jan. 8 Iran ballistic missile attack.

Jonathan Hoffman, the chief Pentagon spokesman, did not confirm to reporters Monday if Purple Hearts would be awarded for troops injured in the Iran strike.

Hoffman said the awarding of the Purple Heart was a question for each of the individual services of the "affected members" to answer due to "standards that they all have with regard to" TBI. Hoffman said he had not received an updated timeline on how that process was playing out.

As of Jan. 30, 64 service members have been diagnosed with mild TBI stemming from the Iranian attack, according to the Pentagon.

Hoffman told reporters Monday that about 60 percent of those service members have returned to duty.

Defense Secretary Mark Esper told reporters recently that he had personally explained to the president the implications of the diagnosis.

"I've had the chance to speak with the president. He is very concerned about the health and welfare of all of our service members — particularly those who were involved in the operations in Iraq," Esper said.

## British ambassador returns from London, says dialogue with Iran is a necessity

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — British Ambassador to Iran Rob Macaire, in a video message released on the embassy's Instagram page on Thursday, highlighted the importance of conducting more dialogue between Tehran and London to hammer out key issues.

The minister made the comments after returning from Britain.

"The existing key issues between the two countries show the necessity of conducting dialogue between Iran and Britain in order to make progress over the issues that are important for both nations," Macaire said while explaining about his meetings with London officials over the ways to handle the issues that seem to be important to both Iran

and Britain.

"I recently came back to Tehran from London. It was an important trip which had been pre-planned. I held several meetings with the British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab and other senior officials in London over ways to improve the issues that are important for both Iran and Britain," he stated.

Macaire underscored that Britain's exit from the European Union will not have any negative impact on London's commitments to the JCPOA and INSTEX, a European mechanism for trade with Iran.

"Regarding the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), we want to cooperate with Iran along with France, Germany, Russia and China to utilize the triggering dispute

mechanism to find a way forward to be capable of settling international concerns over Iran's nuclear program as well as Tehran's concerns over benefiting from the deal's economic concessions," the envoy pointed out.

In mid-January, media sources reported that Macaire had left Tehran. It was announced at the time that the envoy's departure had been previously announced to the relevant bodies.

The ambassador's travel to Britain attracted much attention because he had been temporarily detained on January 11 for participating at a gathering of students in front of Amir Kabir University of Technology, who were protesting the accidental downing of a Ukrainian passenger plane near Tehran.



The Foreign Ministry also summoned him and called his behavior "unlawful", "unprofessional", "suspicious" and a violation of the 1961 Vienna convention.

## Has Saudi-sponsored terrorism made Riyadh's allies impatient?

**1 →** Now that the connection between Al-Ahwaziyeh and Saudi Arabia has been proven, Riyadh's evil involvement in the November riots cannot be rejected by the regime any more.

According to documents, following the U.S.-led aggression on Iraq and deployment of the British army in city of Basra near the border with Iran, Al-Ahwaziyeh's destructive activities were enhanced under the UK army's organizing supports.

Accordingly, disclosures by the Danish and Dutch officials over Saudis' involvement in organizing and providing support for Al-Ahwaziyeh have once more disclosed the Riyadh regime's direct role in a series of terrorist operations in the region, especially against the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The scandal has not only shed light on

the Saudis' terrorist measures but has proven that the regime enjoys a long record of spying operations too. The scandal has also pushed the Saudis into a new nightmare of similar accusations which had been previously denied by Riyadh.

For instance, Crown-Prince Mohammad bin Salman was accused of conducting spying operation against Amazon company a couple of weeks ago. The scandal created vast media coverage worldwide.

The London-printed Guardian, released in a report that months prior to the brutal murder of Jamal Khashoggi in Istanbul in October 2018, a virus-polluted file had been sent via bin Salman's WhatsApp account to the account of the Amazon billionaire Jeff Bezos as well as the Washington Post's account.

Jeff Bezos had his mobile phone "hacked" in 2018 for several months after receiving a WhatsApp message that had apparently been sent from the personal account of the crown prince of Saudi Arabia, sources told the Guardian a couple of weeks ago.

In addition to all these hostile and malicious behaviors by the Saudi regime in the regional and beyond, Riyadh over the past two years has embarked on operationalizing a cyber center dubbed Etedal (moderation) to stage a psychological operations against the public opinion's tranquility to spread violence and wreak havoc among the regional countries. The Saudis' behaviors are blatant evidence of terrorism.

In line with the U.S. "maximum pressure" campaign against the Islamic Republic of Iran,

the Saudi regime has always been claiming that Iran is behaving abnormally and that Tehran interferes in other countries' internal affairs to undermine the regional balance.

But in view of events in the recent weeks, even Saudi Arabia's allies, which have mainly benefited from their economic relations with Riyadh, have expressed their concerns about evil interferences of the Saudis in their affairs. Saudi allies have realized that Riyadh's policies in recent years have brought nothing except insecurity and instability to the region.

The Saudis' support for terrorism and their role in organizing spying networks must come as warnings to the Europeans. If the Europeans fail to respond to the destabilizing behaviors of Riyadh, they should wait for more adventurism by the despots in Riyadh



# Cleric calls for massive turnout in parliamentary polls

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Ayatollah d e s k Mohammad Emami Kashani, a Tehran Friday prayer leader, has called on Iranian people to participate in the upcoming parliamentary elections in massive numbers.

“The greatness of Iran is that people come to the ballot box and the enemy becomes astonished,” Emami Kashani told worshippers in Tehran on Friday.

“The enemy looks at the crowd, [seeing] that the people, with every taste, have come to the ballot box,” he said, according to Mehr.

The cleric said if the Islamic Revolution had not occurred, the United States and Israel would have completely dominated the Muslim world.

Iran itself was under U.S. and Israel dominance in all political, economic, moral and cultural issues, he said.

He also said the anniversary of the Islamic Revolution coincides with the 40th day after the martyrdom of Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani.

“We are indebted to General Soleimani for our security, Emami Kashani said.

U.S. President Donald Trump ordered strikes that martyred General Soleimani, chief of the IRGC Quds Force, and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the second-in-command of Iraq’s Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), on January 3.



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.

Brian Hook, the U.S. special representative for Iran, told the Arabic-language daily Asharq al-Awsat on January 23 that Esmail Ghaani, who is successor of General Soleimani, could also be assassinated.

Responding to the remarks, IRGC Chief Hossein Salami warned the U.S. and Isra-

el 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 Salami said.

■ **‘Deal of century is a scandal for Washington’**

Elsewhere in his sermon, Emami Kashani pointed to Trump’s so-called “deal of the cen-

tury” as a “scandal” for Washington, saying the world will realize that this plan is awful.

“It is quite odd that a handful of thieves and enemies intrude into the homeland of Palestinian people, take their homes and lives, and in the end, they say let’s divide [the land] and the true owners do not have any rights about it,” he said.

“They bill this as the deal of the century, but it is nothing other than a scandal,” the cleric added.

Addressing a pro-Israel audience at the White House with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu by his side, Trump announced the general provisions of the plan late in January.

The White House claimed that the plan is the most serious, realistic, and detailed plan ever presented, one that could make Israelis, Palestinians, and the region safer and more prosperous.

“This Vision is just the first step and provides the basis for historic progress toward peace. The United States hopes this Vision will lead to direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians,” it added.

Following Trump’s announcement, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas said “a thousand no’s to the deal of the century.” Palestinians also took to streets in Gaza and the West Bank to protest the plan.

## Tehran, Damascus discuss bilateral relations

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — An Iranian delegation met on Thursday with Speaker of Syrian People’s Assembly Hammoudeh Sabbagh to discuss ways to strengthen relations between the two countries.

Headed by Hassan Danaeifar, an advisor to Vice President Es’haq Jahangiri, the delegation traveled to Syria to

discuss bilateral ties.

Hammoudeh highlighted the deep Tehran-Damascus ties, saying closer coordination between the two sides will counter hegemonic powers, especially the United States, Mehr reported.

He also pointed to the need to exchange visits aimed

at bolstering joint cooperation, and hoped that the delegation’s visit would contribute to developing bilateral relations.

For his part, Danaeifar underscored the importance of enhancing cooperation between the two countries and developing relations in various fields.

## Tehran says ready to help settle Turkey-Syria conflict in Idlib

➔ Highlighting the Sochi agreement over the situation in Idlib, Takht-Ravanchi said, “The Astana meeting underlined the importance of the Sochi agreement.”

On Thursday, Damascus denounced the near-simultaneous deployment of Turkish military forces to Syria’s Idlib and the recent Israeli air aggression against the Arab country, saying they prove that Ankara works hand in glove with the Tel Aviv regime.

“Turkish forces, in a close collaboration and exposed concurrence and under the cover of the Israeli aggression, infringed upon Syrian borders and were deployed in areas stretching between the towns of Binnish, Ma’arrat Misrin and Taftanaz. Such a step affirms the common interests of Turkish and Israeli regimes regarding the protection of terrorists, particularly Jabhat Fatah al-Sham (formerly known as al-Nusra Front), and to impede the advancement of the Syrian army in Idlib and Aleppo, and to prevent the complete defeat of their proxies in Syria,” an unnamed source at the Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates said in a statement carried by Syria’s official news agency SANA.

The ministry official added that both the Turkish military deployment and the Israeli airstrikes in the early hours of Thursday are a blatant violation of the Syrian sovereignty and international law, and clearly prove to the entire world the parties that support, sponsor and protect terrorism in Syria.

Such incidents, the source added, took the mask off the face of Turkish leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan who used to express hostility towards Israel.

“The Syrian Arab Republic reiterates that acts of aggression, either by the Turkish regime or Israel or both of

them, will not prevent the Syrian army from continuing its campaign against terrorism until the entire Syrian territories are liberated and completely purged from the presence of terror groups,” the source highlighted.

SANA, citing a statement released by the Syrian General Command of the Army and Armed Forces, reported that a Turkish military convoy, including a number of armored vehicles, had passed from the Oglinar area into Syria and deployed along the line linking the towns of Binnish, Ma’arrat Misrin and Taftanaz early on Thursday.

The development took place shortly after Syrian air defense forces intercepted several missiles launched from the occupied Golan Heights and southern Lebanon targeting the al-Kiswa area, Marj al-Sultan, Baghdad Bridge and South of Izra’ around the capital, Damascus.

Meanwhile, Syrian forces have entered the city of Saraqeb in Idlib province.

The so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said in a report corroborated by witnesses that Syrian troops marched through the city, situated 15 kilometers (9.3 miles) east of Idlib city on Thursday following battles with foreign-sponsored Takfiri militants.

According to voanews.com, Syrian government forces continue to whittle away at Turkish-supported rebel forces inside Idlib enclave, gaining more ground along the strategic Damascus-to-Aleppo highway. It said the Syrian army appears poised to capture another strategic town.

Syrian state TV reported Thursday that military advances, beginning with the recent capture of Maarat Naaman and 22 smaller towns, have “sparked a collapse in morale” among Turkish-supported rebel forces in Idlib province.

Turkish military forces, which have



12 observation posts ringing the Idlib enclave, attempted to reinforce rebel positions in a number of strategic locations, including Taftanaz Airport, as well as the towns of Binesh and Maarat Misreen. Syrian forces are now outside the strategic town of Saraqeb and appear poised to take it.

Erdogan said the Syrian government advance had caused an unacceptable “flood of a million [Syrian] refugees” toward Turkish territory in recent days. He demanded that government forces withdraw from areas close to Turkish army observation posts.

He said two of Turkey’s observation posts — established in coordination with Russia in the Sochi accord — are now behind Syrian government lines. He is demanding that Damascus withdraw from these positions by the end of February or else Turkey, he warns, will take military action to force it to do so.

By the Sochi accord, he was referring

to an agreement reached in the Russian resort aimed at demilitarizing Idlib, the last-remaining rebel enclave.

Turkey shelled Syrian government positions during the past several days to avenge the deaths of more than a half dozen of its soldiers in a Syrian government attack this week. Erdogan said Ankara would retaliate “without warning.”

Arab media reported that a Russian military delegation was visiting the Turkish capital, Ankara, Thursday to discuss the recent escalation of violence in Idlib province, in which it acknowledged that both Turkish and Russian military forces have been killed. The Russian Foreign Ministry also issued a statement denouncing what it said were “over a thousand rebel attacks on government forces in the past month.”

Syrian government media showed video of Turkey moving trucks and other military equipment into Idlib province to reinforce its presence there.

## Top judge strongly warns U.S. against escalation

‘Any military measure against Iran will send American forces to bottom of Persian Gulf’

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Judiciary Chief Ebrahim Raisi d e s k has strongly warned the United States that any military measure against Iran will send the American forces to the bottom of the Persian Gulf.



The U.S. forces will suffer defeat if they begin any confrontation with the Iranian armed forces, Raisi said in an address to a gathering of military forces in the southern port city of Bushehr, Tasnim reported on Friday.

He lauded the Iranian armed forces for contributing to regional security, saying Iran’s military will never allow the Americans, the Europeans and the British to come to the region from the other side of the world and threaten regional security.

The powerful presence of the armed forces will not allow the Americans to sleep peacefully at night in the region, the Judiciary chief warned.

Iranian military and political officials have repeatedly warned the enemies against the dire consequences of a military action against the Islamic Republic.

In remarks in April 2018, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said the U.S. is aware of the crushing response it will receive in case of taking military action against Iran.

The era of hit and run is now over, and the U.S. knows that if it gets entangled in a military conflict with Iran, it will receive much harsher blows, Ayatollah Khamenei underlined.

The U.S. is seeking a way to evade the costs of standing against Iran and place them on regional countries, the Leader said, reminding certain regional countries that if they confront Iran, “they will definitely suffer blows and defeat.”

Tensions have spiked between Iran and the United States after the U.S. assassination of Iran’s top anti-terror general Qassem Soleimani on January 3.

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 assassination.

Despite initially claiming that the attack resulted in no casualties, the Trump administration has since gradually announced casualties from the Iranian attack, most recently claiming that 64 U.S. troops have suffered from “traumatic brain injuries”.

Amir Ali Hajizadeh, commander of the Aerospace Force of the IRGC, said on Thursday that Iran will soon disclose new information about its missile attack against the U.S. base.

## Iran able to respond quickly to any threat: Air Force chief

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Chief of the Islamic Republic of d e s k Iran Air Force (IRIAF) Aziz Nasirzadeh said on Friday Iran is capable of responding quickly to any military threat.

“As we are capable of creating security in the region and will respond to any threat quickly, we also have the capability to create peace and stability,” Nasirzadeh said, addressing worshippers in Tehran, Mehr reported.



On January 8, Iran fired dozens of ballistic missiles on a U.S. airbase in Iraq from which the Pentagon had flown drones to assassinate General Qassem Soleimani, the commander of the IRGC Quds Force.

The attack took place immediately after General Soleimani was laid to rest after massive funeral precessions in big cities such as Ahwaz, Mashhad, Tehran, Qom, and Kerman, his birthplace.

Referring to the anniversary of the Islamic Revolution, Nasirzadeh also said the Revolution has had a profound impact on international relations and it has created hope in the hearts of the world’s oppressed people under the leadership of Imam Khomeini and Ayatollah Khamenei.

The Islamic Revolution is the most amazing phenomenon of contemporary history, he remarked.

The Iranian nation toppled the U.S.-backed Pahlavi regime on February 11, 1979, ending 2,500 years of monarchy in the country.

The Revolution, spearheaded by the late Imam Khomeini, established a new political system based on Islamic values and democracy.

On Bahman 22nd, which falls on February 11, Iranian people pour into the streets in their millions to commemorate the great victory of the Islamic Revolution.

In a statement last year, marking the 40th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution, the Leader asked the youth to take “the second great step” for the progress of the revolution.”

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei insisted on “justice and campaign against corruption” in the next stage.

The Leader also pushed for promotion of science and research; economy; spiritually and ethics; independence, freedom, and national dignity; foreign relations; and lifestyle.

## Tehran: Washington’s anti-Iran hostilities proved futile

**TEHRAN (FNA)** — Iranian President’s Chief of Staff Mahmoud Vaezi said that the U.S. call for direct talks with no-preconditions prove that Washington’s hostile campaign against Tehran has failed, reminding that the White House set 12 prerequisites for talks in 2018 and is now begging for negotiations with no prior demands.

Vaezi referred to efforts of U.S. President Donald Trump for holding direct talks with Iran, and said that the U.S. is begging for negotiation with Iran as its hostile actions have been fruitless.

It seems that the United States and its president have nothing to do except controlling Iran, and they seek to limit our economic relations with other countries by any means, he said, adding that they only use 400 people in the U.S. Department of the Treasury to control sanctions against Iran.

The Iranian government and nation won’t come back to the negotiating table under pressure and the other side has no choice but to change its wrong decision and undoubtedly, the future is bright, Vaezi said.

The U.S. initially set 12 preconditions for negotiations at the outset of its embargo and pressure on Iran, he added, saying



that the U.S. now is begging for negotiation with Iran with no precondition as its hostile actions have proved fruitless.

On Tuesday, Iranian Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani underlined the need for more attention to internal capacities

to improve the country, describing sanctions as a driving force to increase power.

“Despite the fact that most of the country’s needs were supplied through imports in the past, the focus for supplying goods is on indigenized products after sanctions,” Larijani said, addressing a ceremony in the Southwestern province of Khuzestan.

He noted that the internal and knowledge-based companies have become more active and strengthened the country after sanctions, and continued, “This will improve the economic conditions next year.”

“Iran has for years stood on its feet and played an important role in the region which is a great job and a source of honor for the country,” Larijani said.

Washington’s unilateral sanctions against Tehran began in November 2018, five months after U.S. President Donald Trump withdrew from an international deal on Iran’s nuclear program.

Claiming that the bans were working properly, Trump tightened them in May, only to see that Iran was finding new solutions to recoup the losses.



STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	445894.1
IFX	5654.00

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	46,188 rials
GBP	54,538 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$54.57/b
WTI	\$50.54/b
OPEC Basket	\$54.99/b
Gold	\$1,568.00/oz
Silver	\$17.78/oz
Platinum	\$974.65/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

Iran’s steel exports up 25% in 10 months yr/yr

**1 →** Iran’s Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Reza Rahmani says the country has achieved a proper self-reliance in steel industry. Steel industry is one of the industries in which some good investment has been made and today it has become a production advantage, according to Rahmani.

Iran’s annual steel production is planned to reach 45 million tons by the Iranian calendar year 1400 (March 2021-March 2022).



The country’s annual crude steel production is planned to rise to 30 million tons in the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 19, 2020) from 25 million tons in the past year.

Last month, the World Steel Association (WSA) announced that Iran’s crude steel production increased by 30 percent in 2019 while the average global growth in this sector stood at 3.5 percent.

Based on the WSA report, Iran produced 31.9 million tons of the mentioned commodity during 2019 compared to the last year’s nearly 24 million tons.

Lagarde says eurozone growth shows signs of stabilization, uncertainties remain

The European Central Bank (ECB) President Christine Lagarde said Thursday that economic growth in the euro area has shown signs of stabilization, but uncertainties surrounding the global economic environment remain elevated.

Meanwhile, the euro area domestic economy remains relatively resilient but global factors weigh on euro area growth, Lagarde told the European Parliament’s Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs in Brussels.



There are tentative signs of stabilization and “slightly more optimistic” results in forward-looking indicators, as shown by the trend in the Purchasing Managers’ Index on manufacturing business expectations, according to Lagarde.

However, uncertainties surrounding the global economic environment remain elevated, she noted. While those related to trade tensions between the United States and China are receding, “other risks, however, are still lingering,” Lagarde said.

In January’s policy meeting, the ECB decided to launch a review of its monetary policy strategy. The process is expected to be concluded by the end of 2020.

Lagarde said Thursday that the world economy has undergone profound changes since the ECB’s last strategy review in 2003, and that the low interest rate and low inflation environment has significantly reduced the scope for the ECB and other central banks worldwide to ease monetary policy in the face of an economic downturn.

Since the ECB cut its deposit rate and announced a new bond-purchase program in September 2019, both Mario Draghi, Lagarde’s predecessor, and Lagarde herself acknowledged on various occasions that the ECB has been closely monitoring the potential side effects of its stimulus measures.

Lagarde said Thursday that while low interest rates do bring benefits for the economy, they appear to have encouraged more borrowing by highly leveraged firms and greater risk-taking by non-banks.

Property markets in a number of euro area countries have seen persistently rising prices, although the low interest rate environment is only one among many factors influencing the choice to borrow for house purchase, Lagarde added.

She suggested authorities continue to use targeted macro-prudential measures to address risks against financial stability.

(Source: china.org.cn)

India considering trade with central Asia through Chabahar

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Indian Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar said on Thursday that his country could enhance trade with the Central Asia via Iran’s Chabahar port, IRNA reported, citing India’s NDTV.

Pointing to the lack of efficient overland connectivity between India and Central Asian countries, Jaishankar said the two regions should examine the viability of establishing air corridors between them to boost trade and economic engagement.

The official proposed using the route passing through the Chabahar Port as a solution to overcome this lack of overland connectivity, saying: “Clearly, a great potential exists in enhancing trade and economic engagement between India and Central Asia. There is the challenge of a lack of efficient overland connectivity. India proposes to overcome this challenge through the Chabahar route.”

“India, Iran, and Afghanistan believe that Chabahar will become the fulcrum



of connectivity for Indian goods to reach Afghanistan and further north to the

Central Asian states,” Jaishankar said in his speech at the India-Central Asia

TEDPIX grows 4% in a week

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE) rose four percent in the past Iranian calendar week (ended on Friday), IRNA reported.

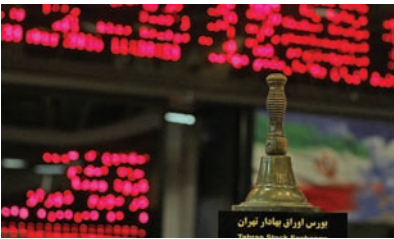
The index ended 18.775 points higher at 445,894 on Wednesday (the last working day of the week).

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

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

As reported, 27,689 billion securities valued at 149.793 trillion rials (about \$3.56 billion) were traded through 2.151 deals at TSE in that week, experiencing growth of 12.9 percent and 33.7 percent in the number and value of traded securities, respectively, while 54.2 percent rise in the number of trades.

Tehran Stock Exchange has been ranked as the second best performer among the members of the World Federation of Exchanges (WFE) in terms of the main index growth during the 12-month period of December 2018-December 2019.



According to the TSE’s office of public relations, TEDPIX registered a growth of 133 percent in the mentioned time span to become the second-best performer after Jamaica Stock Exchange.

Based on the WFE latest report, the TSE was the top performer in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.

A total of about \$66 billion worth of stocks were traded in TSE during 2019, registering a growth of more than 300 percent compared to the value of trades in the previous year.

According to the WFE report, the total value of trades at TSE reached \$320 billion at the end of 2019, while the total market value of WFE members amounted to more than \$74 trillion.

SAIPA, MAPNA ink MOU for mass production of Iran’s 1st electric car

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Iran’s MAPNA Group has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the country’s second biggest auto-maker SAIPA Group for mass production of the country’s first electric vehicle, IRIB reported.

Based on the MOU, SAIPA Group and MAPNA will collaborate on the design, prototyping, testing, commercialization and production of new electric vehicles, SAIPA Group’s news portal reported.

In a visit to SAIPA’s production lines on Wednesday, Abbas Aliabadi, the chairman and member of the board of directors at MAPNA Group, said MAPNA has long been pursuing a program for preparing necessary infrastructure for manufacturing electric cars and in this regard the group plans to design and deliver the country’s first electric car in collaboration with SAIPA Group.

The production of electric cars will be very beneficial for people, in terms of both reducing environmental pollution and energy consumption, Aliabadi said.

The official underlined MAPNA and SAIPA’s cooperation as the first step in the production of electric cars in the country

Business Council at the industry body Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI).

Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan are part of Central Asia.

In the budget presented last week, the Indian government doubled the fund for the Chabahar Port allocating Rs 100 crore (about \$14 million) for fiscal 2020-21.

“It [the budget allocation] shows India’s commitment towards the development of Chabahar and our determination to develop it as a viable connectivity option,” Jaishankar said.

“We should also examine the viability of establishing air corridors between India and the Central Asian states,” he added.

Iran has awarded the development project of this port to India, and the South Asian country committed \$500 million to build two new berths in this port.

In the recent meeting of the India-Iran joint economic commission, Jaishankar and his Iranian counterpart Javad Zarif promised to expand cooperation.



and said: By creating a bond between the two groups, we will use the knowledge and capabilities of both sides as well as new technologies available in this industry.

High cost, an unpredictable market and lack of a supervisory body have been reported to be the main challenges hindering the production of electric cars in Iran, according to a recent study conducted by Majlis Research Center.

Data collected from experts at Iran Khodro Company and SAIPA—Iran’s first and second largest carmakers respectively—show that electric cars would cost two to three times more than ordinary cars.

Despite the growing popularity of hybrids and EVs across the world, they have had a slow take-up in Iran as the needed infrastructures are yet to be developed.

724km added to Iran’s main roads since March 2019

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Some 724 kilometers (km) of new main roads and highways have been added to the country’s roads network since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2019), IRNA reported, quoting the Iranian transport and urban development minister as saying on Thursday.

Speaking in the inauguration ceremony of a highway project in the south-central Fars Province, Mohammad Eslami said the number of the constructed roads will be definitely increased in the remaining months to end of the current Iranian calendar year.

“Despite all the problems that the sanctions have created for the country and despite all the credit constraints and bottlenecks that the government is facing, there are active road construction projects in all parts of the country,” he said.

Earlier this month, Deputy Transport Minister Kheir



rollah Khademi announced that about 400 kilometers of highways were going to be inaugurated throughout Iran during the Ten-Day Dawn (February 1-11, which marks the 41st anniversary of the Islamic Revolution).

“Every year, 1000-1200 kilometers of the country’s roads are turned into highways, which significantly increases the safety of the transportation lines,” Khademi said.

According to the official, currently, more than 7,700 km of highways are under construction across the country.

“This year, 1.2 trillion rials (about \$285.7 million) have been only allocated for the construction of the country’s east-to-southwest corridor,” he said.

In late January, the transport ministry announced that six prioritized freeways projects with a total length of 550 kilometers (KM) were planned to be inaugurated in the country by the Iranian Calendar year of 1400 (starts in March 2021).

Iran’s business environment improves in 3rd quarter

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Iran’s business environment witnessed a slight improvement in the autumn, the third quarter of the current Iranian calendar year (September 23-December 21, 2019), compared with the previous quarter, data released by Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) show.

As reported by the ICCIMA portal, the country’s National Business Environment Index stood at 6.03 points in Q3, registering a decrease of 0.68 percent compared with the preceding quarter and a decrease of 7.09 percent over the same quarter of the last year.

The index calculated by ICCIMA measures business friendliness of Iran’s economy, with 10 indicating the worst grade, meaning that the growth of the index is indicative of a deteriorating business environment.

“Access to energy carriers (electricity, gas and diesel)”, “access to water” and “access to the internet and mobile phone network” have been identified as the three most prominent factors in improving the environment, while “unpredictability and price changes of raw



materials and products”, “difficulty of financing” and “instability of business policies, rules and regulations” were the factors which contributed the most to a high business environment index.

The country’s business index had also improved during the summer which is the second quarter of the current Iranian calendar year (June 22-September 22, 2019) compared with the previous quarter.

The index registered a decrease of 1.6 percent compared with the year’s first quarter and a decrease of 5.17 percent over the same quarter of last year.

Shrimp output doubles to 45,000 tons

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN**— Production of shrimp in Iran has doubled since the beginning of current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2019), compared to the same period of time in the past year, according to a deputy at the country’s Veterinary Organization.

Qasem Rezaeian-Zadeh put the country’s production of shrimp at 45,000 tons during the mentioned time span of this year, IRNA reported on Thursday.

According to the deputy head of Iran’s Fishery Organization (IFO), Hossein Ali Abdolhay, some 12 aquatic species are already bred in the country and the figure is planned to reach 17 by the end of the Sixth Five-Year National Development Plan (March 2021).

Back in November 2019, Isa Golshahi, IFO’s director-general for quality improvement, processing, and market development, said the country’s annual exports of fishery products is anticipated to reach 150,000 tons valued at \$600 million in the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 19, 2020).

The official put the exports of fishery products at 143,000 tons worth \$528 million in the past Iranian year.



Also as announced by the head of IFO last month, new export destinations have welcomed Iran’s high-quality fishery products in the current Iranian calendar year.

New markets including China, South Korea, and the Eurasian Union nations have opened up for Iranian fishery products in the current year, Nabiollah Khoun-Mirzaei said.

Putting Iran’s fishery exports in the past Iranian calendar year at \$528 million, the official said that the country’s trade balance was reported to be \$475 million positive in this sector.



# Iranian oil output not affected by U.S. sanctions

**ENERGY** **TEHRAN** — Iranian Deputy Oil Minister Karim Zobeidi says the U.S. sanctions has not decreased the country's oil production capacity, IRNA reported on Friday.

Mentioning some rumors about NIOC facing a gas shortage for injection into oil wells to maintain oil production, Zobeidi said: "At present, there is no problem in delivering gas to the oilfields as scheduled."

Although since the re-imposition of the U.S. sanctions on Iran's oil industry Iranian oil exports has decreased, the country's production capacity is not negatively

impacted, according to the official.

Domestic gas consumption in Iran has increased drastically in the past few weeks due to the cold weather and that made some rumors emerge regarding the shortage in gas supplies to the country's industrial sectors and also injection into the oil fields to maintain the old fields' recovery factor.

Earlier on Thursday, Deputy Oil Minister for Planning Houshang Falahatian had put the country's oil production as 3.7 million barrels per day.

According to Falahatian, 1.7 million bpd of total production is consumed inside the



country.

As reported by Shana, the official said that Iran is capable of exporting around 2 million barrels of crude oil per day.

The purpose of the unjust sanctions imposed on Iran is to prevent it from exporting its surplus oil output, Falahatian stressed.

## Rationing scheme reduces gasoline consumption in Iran

**ENERGY** **TEHRAN** — Head of the CNG promotion program at National Iranian Oil Product Distribution Company (NIOPDC) says every day 4.5 million cubic meters of compressed natural gas (CNG) is consumed in the country instead of gasoline since the implementation of the fuel consumption management scheme, IRIB reported.

According to Hassan Qolipour, in the past Iranian calendar month of Dey (December 22, 2019-January 20, 2020), 24.5 mcm of CNG was distributed to the country's gas stations to register a 3.5-mcm rise compared to the preceding month.

Underlining the fact that the country's average daily CNG consumption stood at nearly 19 mcm before the rationing scheme, Qolipour said after the implementation of the mentioned scheme CNG consumption has increased significantly.

A total of 734.6 mcm of CNG was consumed in the country during the mentioned month, the official said.

Earlier this month, the National Iranian Oil Refining and Distribution Company (NIORDC) announced that CNG consumption in Iran has increased by 31 percent since the implementation of the gasoline rationing scheme.



In mid-November 2019, the Iranian government started rationing of subsidized gasoline and increased fuel prices as it plans to use the revenue for supporting underprivileged families.

Later that month, the head of NIOPDC's CNG promotion program announced that CNG consumption in the country

had increased by 10 percent only two weeks after the beginning of the program.

According to Hassan Gholipour, there are currently 2,400 CNG stations across Iran and more than 2,478 compressors are installed in the country's CNG stations.

Mohammad Baqer Nobakht, head of the Planning and Budget Organization, said on November 12 that proceeds from the price hikes would be used to fund additional subsidies for 18 million underprivileged families, or about 60 million people.

According to a statement published by National Iranian Oil Products Distribution Company, the price for a liter of regular gasoline was increased to 15,000 rials (nearly 35 cents at the official rate of 42,000 rials per dollar) from 10,000 rials and the monthly ration for each passenger car was set at 60 liters. Additional purchases would cost 30,000 rials per liter.

Due to heavy subsidies and devaluation of its currency, Iran has one of the cheapest fuel prices in the world and the country has been fighting rampant fuel smuggling to neighboring countries.

## Here's why LNG shipping stocks fell as much as 52.1% today

The global market for liquefied natural gas (LNG) grew 11% on a volume basis from 2018 to 2019, but operators of LNG carriers are still struggling to profit from the opportunity.

Investors were spooked by the full-year 2019 earnings report for GasLog (NYSE:GLOG). The business generated record annual revenue last year, but was weighed down by high financing expenses and large impairment costs. As a result, the operator of LNG carriers is focusing on strengthening its balance sheet in 2020. It will begin by slashing its quarterly distribution from \$0.561 per unit to just \$0.125 per unit.

That caused several LNG shipping stocks to tumble. As of 11:37 a.m. EST, shares of GasLog fell as much as 15.3%, shares of GasLog Partners (NYSE:GLOP) fell as much as 45.2%, and shares of Golar LNG Partners (NASDAQ:GMLP) slipped as much as 19.6%.

It takes years and tens of millions of dollars to build a new cargo vessel of any variety, including a new LNG carrier. That has historically resulted in poorly matched supply and demand and downright awful balance sheets in the shipping industry.

Shippers tend to commit to build too many vessels based on today's demand projections, only to wallow in low daily charter rates when tomorrow's reality doesn't line up with those projections. Worse, in an effort to balance the supply of vessels, shippers often have to write off aging vessels before they're truly ready to retire.

All of that is happening in the LNG carrier market. While GasLog generated record annual revenue of \$668 million and healthy operating income of \$123 million in 2019, it reported a net loss of \$115 million for the year. The loss was driven by \$162 million in impairment charges and \$190 million in financing expenses.

GasLog wrote off all six of its steam-powered vessels, five of which are owned by GasLog Partners, after daily charter rates failed to develop as expected. The smaller steam vessels were only built in 2006 and 2007, but were increasingly less competitive

than the larger LNG carriers now entering service across the industry. Case in point: GasLog is expecting to receive seven new LNG carriers in 2020 and 2021.

■ **A master limited partnership**  
The impairment, coupled with sharply reduced distribution payments in 2020, should help GasLog and GasLog Partners strengthen their balance sheets. The partnership stated that it would save \$84 million in distributions this year and divert the cash flow to debt repayment. It's a move that's probably long overdue, but it certainly degrades the main reason to own a master limited partnership -- the ability to collect a high yield.

Meanwhile, investors are assuming that the sour news from GasLog and its partnership means Golar LNG will also be negatively impacted by market headwinds. Golar LNG reported a net loss of \$236 million in the first nine months of 2019. It, too, appears to be well positioned to capitalize on a growing LNG market based on its technical know-how and capabilities, but financing issues and poor operating metrics always seem to weigh on the company's potential.

On one hand, writing off noncompetitive vessels at the end of 2019 should clear the way for smoother operations and a healthier balance sheet for GasLog and GasLog Partners. The duo will soon have a relatively young fleet of LNG carriers operating in a competitive and quickly growing market. On the other hand, investors are probably at least a little fed up with the constant financial shuffling of shippers. These big shocks seem to happen every so many years. Therefore, investors might find LNG exporters to be a better entry into the LNG market, although they face their own unique set of obstacles.

David and Tom just revealed what they believe are the ten best stocks for investors to buy right now ... and Golar LNG Partners Partnership wasn't one of them! That's right -- they think these 10 stocks are even better buys.

(Source: fool.com)

## This massive project in Spain is the latest milestone in Europe's solar power boom

The site in western Spain houses more than 1.4 million solar panels, capable of producing 500 megawatts of installed capacity when fully operational -- enough power to supply clean energy to 250,000 people. Energy harvested from the sun's rays travels to a substation along a network of 2,000 kilometers of electrical cables, to service local homes and businesses.

With construction completed, Spanish power company Ibersola's new solar plant is undergoing testing with grid operator Eléctrica de España (REE), ready for operations to begin in 2020.

Clean energy from the 10 square kilometer site could cut an estimated 215,000 tons of CO2 emissions every year. That's the equivalent of removing around 45,000 cars from Spain's roads.

The project's status as the biggest of its kind in Europe could be short-lived, however, as the solar sector continues its rapid growth.

Research by SolarPower Europe says 2019 was among the best years ever for European solar, with EU countries adding 16.7 gigawatts of capacity -- twice as much as was added in the previous year. Spain was the largest solar market in Europe that year.

Energy prices from renewables like solar power and wind farms are falling fast, as technical advances and efficiency gains increase their competitiveness.

■ **The solar plant in Spain**  
As the subsidies that once characterized European solar projects are largely a thing of the past, cost-conscious developers are increasingly exploiting economies of scale by building bigger and more efficient plants. For example, the Francisco Pizarro project is a 590 megawatt solar plant in Spain, which will be bigger than Núñez de Balboa when completed in 2022.

Solar PV could cover a quarter of global electricity needs by 2050, according to the International Renewable Energy Agency -- with benefits for more than just the planet. The solar industry could employ over 18 million people by that point.

Energy consumption and production contribute to two-thirds of global emissions, and 81% of the global energy system is still based on fossil fuels, the same percentage as 30 years ago. Plus, improvements in the energy intensity of the global economy (the amount of energy used per unit of economic activity) are slowing. In 2018 energy intensity improved by 1.2%, the slowest rate since 2010.

Effective policies, private-sector action and public-private cooperation are needed to create a more inclusive, sustainable, affordable and secure global energy system.

Benchmarking progress is essential to a successful transition. The World Economic Forum's Energy Transition Index, which ranks 115 economies on how well they balance energy security and access with environmental sustainability and affordability, shows that the biggest challenge facing energy transition is the lack of readiness among the world's largest emitters, including US, China, India and Russia. The 10 countries that score the highest in terms of readiness account for only 2.6% of global annual emissions.

■ **Innovative energy investments**  
To future-proof the global energy system, the Forum's Shaping the Future of Energy and Materials Platform is working on initiatives including, Systemic Efficiency, Innovation and Clean Energy and the Global Battery Alliance to encourage and enable innovative energy investments, technologies and solutions.

The growing cost competitiveness of renewables is a vital component in their meteoric take-up, but there is another cost that's growing in significance. As the climate crisis deepens, the environmental cost of burning fossil fuels is adding to the attraction of emissions-free energy from solar power, wind farms and other renewable sources.

But renewables have different characteristics to traditional power sources, like oil or coal, and a rethink of our energy systems is needed to accommodate their growth.

(Source: europeansting.com)

## EU renewables generation reaches record high

By Matthew Farmer

The proportion of electricity generation from renewable sources in the EU reached a record high of 34.6% in 2019, according to estimates by think tank Agora Energiewende.

At the same time, electricity generation in the EU emitted 12% less CO2. The report says this is "likely to be the largest-ever fall."

Both of these changes are said to be mainly down to the decline in coal and lignite use. Between them, generation fell by 149.5 TWh.

The report uses Eurostat data up to 2017. It then estimates 2018 and 2019 figures based on information from the European Network of Transmission System Operators, AG Energiebilanzen and Carbon Brief.

Overall consumption of electricity across the EU fell to 2015 levels, falling by 56 TWh, or 1.7%. Production fell by 44.5 TWh, and CO2 emissions fell by 120.4 Mt.

Since 2010, the greatest increase in electricity need was in Malta, followed by Lithuania and Poland, which needed 19%, 14% and 11% more energy respectively. The UK saw the biggest decrease, falling by 10%.

Solar installation in 2019 grew by 104% over 2018, according to estimates from SolarPower Europe. It estimates installations could total up to 26.8 GW in 2023 in its mid-range forecast.

The UK left the European Union on 31 January. Do you think this will be a positive or a negative for the UK power industry?

The largest market was Spain which installed 4.7 GW of generation capacity, ahead of Germany with 4 GW. It expects 21 GW of installations in 2020.

■ **The second-largest growth**

WindEurope estimates 14 GW of wind generation capacity was added in 2019, the second-largest growth year so far. It expects average annual growth of 12.2 GW until 2023.

A statement says: "Uncertainty towards the end of the five-year period is quite high, particularly in onshore, and we could witness a stagnation of installations if national authorities do not tackle spatial planning and permitting issues."

Renewable generation across the union grew by 1.8% in 2019, as the large growth in wind and solar counteracted the decline in some fuels.



Biomass generation grew by only 1% from the previous year, continuing the trend of slowing growth. Generation declined in 11 countries leaving more than half of all biomass generation in Germany, the UK and Italy.

Hydroelectric generation decreased by 6%, or 21 TWh. This continued downturn is said to be because of drier summers in Western Europe, where the majority of hydro power is based.

Hard coal generation across the union has more than halved since its peak in 2012.

Coal and lignite generation in Germany fell by 58 TWh. Despite this, it carried out almost half of all lignite generation and a quarter of all coal generation in the EU in 2019.

In most areas, gas power made up the shortfall caused by coal decline. Between 2012 and 2019, coal generation fell by 424 TWh, while renewables increased by 335 TWh and gas increased by 116 TWh. Nuclear generation fell in 2019, and is expected to continue falling in 2020 due to plant closures.

Arjay Engineering manufactures sensors and controls to monitor level, interface, and leaks in oil water separators, cooling water systems and sumps in both environmental and process control applications.

The Hydrosense 4410-OCM provides efficient real-time flow-through parts-per-million (ppm) monitoring of both petroleum and non-petroleum oil present in water.

Monitoring oil in water for environmental compliance and cooling water contamination in power plants is made easy using the fluorescence technologies from Arjay Engineering.

With over a century of experience working on all aspects of heavy-duty gas turbine technology, Ansaldo Thomassen (ATH) continues to meet the demand for clean, efficient and reliable power in an environmentally responsible manner.

■ **Structure for the power industry**

Giant Inflatables Industrial is recognized as an international industry leader in the inflatable, portable and temporary structures for the power industry.

GE Steam Power has secured a contract from Japan's Hitachi Zosen Corporation to supply its renewable steam technology for Kamisu biomass power generation plant.

Hitachi Zosen is the engineering, procurement and construction (EPC) contractor for the project.

According to the contract, GE Steam Power will provide an integrated power package and be responsible for design, manufacturing and supply of the power block's key components.

The package will include steam turbine generator, boiler and air quality control systems.

GE Steam Power CEO Michael Keroulle said: "GE Steam Power's involvement in the Kamisu Biomass Power Generation project demonstrates our commitment to applying proven steam power technology to lower carbon uses and supporting the use of more renewable fuel sources like biomass."

"Building on our proven track record of delivering steam power technology and project management capabilities for plants around the world, our integrated offering will help Hitachi Zosen achieve its high-efficiency and reliability performance low-carbon objectives."

The power plant will be equipped with GE's low-NOx circulating fluidized bed (CFB) boiler, a dust-removal fabric filter and a reheat steam turbine with its generator.

Kamisu biomass power plant will be built in Kamisu City, Ibaraki Prefecture, Japan.

The power plant will have the capacity to generate 50MW of electricity using 100% biomass derived from palm kernel shells and wood pellets. The power will be supplied to the national grid.

The plant is expected to begin its commercial operations in July 2023.

In May 2019, GE Steam Power, Polska Grupa Energetyczna (PGE) and a consortium of partners announced the synchronisation of Opole Unit 6 to the grid in Poland.

(Source: power-technology.com)

## Oil rises after Russia supports possible supply cuts as coronavirus spreads

Oil prices climbed on Friday after Russia said it backs a recommendation for OPEC and other producers to deepen output cuts amid falling demand for crude as China battles the coronavirus epidemic that has hit global markets.

Brent crude LCOc1 futures rose 34 cents, or 0.6%, to \$55.27 a barrel by 0250, but were heading for a fifth weekly loss amid lingering fears over the impact of the virus.

U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude CLc1 futures were up 28 cents, or 0.5%, at \$51.23 a barrel, also heading for a fifth consecutive week of losses.

A panel advising the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and allies led by Russia, known as the OPEC+ group, suggested provisionally cutting output by 600,000 barrels per day (bpd), three sources told Reuters on Thursday.

"We support this idea," said Sergei Lavrov, Russia's Foreign Minister, when asked about the proposal at a news conference in Mexico City later in the day.



The OPEC+ group, which pumps more than 40% of the world's oil, has been withholding supply and agreed to deepen the cuts by 500,000 bpd from the start of this year, to 1.7 million bpd, nearly 2% of global demand.

"While there is no firm view on the outbreak's impact on oil demand, OPEC is most likely focused on the status-quo short-term crisis rather than a prolonged one," Eurasia group said, estimating a Chinese demand contraction of as much 3 million bpd in the first quarter from 2019 levels.

Oil prices have fallen by more than a fifth since the outbreak of the virus in the city of Wuhan in China.

Chinese President Xi Jinping declared a "people's war" on the epidemic as China's Hubei Province, where Wuhan is located, reported 69 new deaths, taking the total in the country to more than 600.

The "impact of the coronavirus on the oil market remains largely a Chinese demand story with weakening jet fuel demand and economic run cuts, but demand destruction outside of China has been minimal, for now," RBC Capital Markets analysts said in a note.

(Source: reuters.com)



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## Modern Stadium of Martyrs of Khuzestan Football Club (KSC)



PIC-COLLAGE

## Mega-size gas projects on the verge of operation

# Iran's Gas Production Capacity to Hit 700mcm



Iran's gas production capacity in the capital of energy of the country i.e. South Pars Gas Field will hit 700 million cubic meter (mcm) per day.

Gas industry is considered as a trump card of Iran's economy in sanctions conditions especially after the US imposition of hostile sanctions on Iran. now, gas industry is on the verge of entering into new phase. The gas puzzle of south Pars, as the capital of energy of the country, is on the verge of completion.

This issue is realized at the condition that Iran had a side gap with its age-old rival i.e. Qatar in implementation of the mentioned phases. The 24 phases in South Pars Gas Field were put into operation under the guidance of Iranian Minister of Oil Bijan Namdar Zanganeh one by one. Gradually, platforms of each phase were installed on the platform.

Therefore, the domino of operation hit to the phases 13, 14, 22 and 24 as the last connection rings of this industry.

Presently, final steps are taken in South Pars Gas Field and the remaining platforms are installed after loading at yards on their jackets.

Given the measures and planning made, the latest gas production situation in South Pars Gas Field hits 660

million cubic meters, expandable to 700 million cubic meter/day.

In this line, the satellite deck D14 was installed on Sat. Bahman 12 (Feb. 2, 2020) on its jacket in the 4th gas extraction in development plan of Phase 14.

After the completion of construction operation in SADRA Iran Marine Industrial Company, this giant gas structure was loaded on Barge FLB124 with 98 percent physical progress and left SADRA Shipyard for South Pars Gas Field.

Therefore, after the sustainability of climatic condition of the sea at the end of the last week, the preparatory activities and preparation of jacket started.

According to the news, the installation operation of platform accessories of D14 [including communication bridge and flare, will be installed by SEAPAD Installer Vessel. This will happen at the condition that the capacity of gas extraction from reservoirs situation of Phase 14 of South Pars Gas Field has increased 14.2 million cubic meter, expandable to 56 million cubic meters/day.

Hookup activities, commissioning and operation of D14 platform is considered as the last move in completion



of Offshore Section of Phase 14.

It is expected that this platform will be put into operation before termination of the current year (to end March 20, 2020) at the unsparing support and effort of staff and personnel of the department.

Presently, in offshore section, three platforms of A14, B14 and C14, will be put into operation with the total extraction capacity of 42 million cubic meter gas along with two 32-inch

pipelines and one internal pipeline.

Based on the predetermined objective in designing and developing Phase 14 of South Pars Gas Field, if this project is put into operation, 50 million meter cubic sweet gas will be processed.

In addition, 75,000 barrels of gas condensates, 400 tons of sulfur and one million tons of liquid gas and one million tons of ethane gas will be processed.



Accordingly, 2 billion feet cubic meter of gas /day will be produced from the Block Phase 14. With regards to the Refinery Phase 14, it should be noted that this plan will be put into operation within the one and a half years.

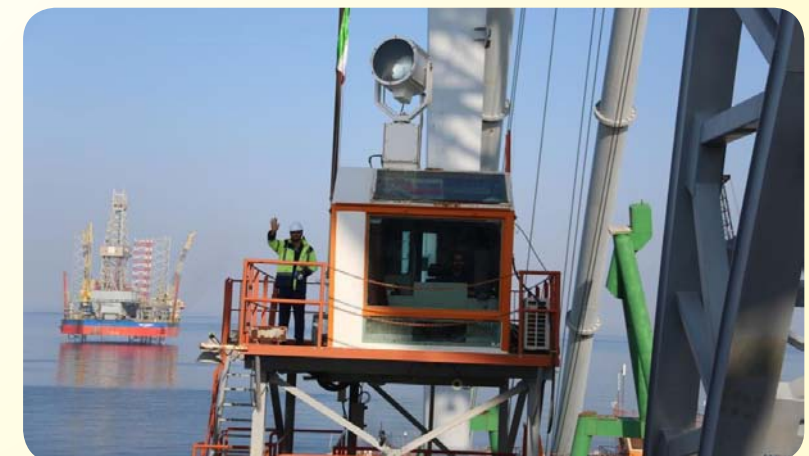
According to the Chief Executive of Pars Oil and Gas Company Mohammad-Reza Meshkinfaam, B24 Platform will be put into operation next week.

According to this report, this project is of paramount importance from two points of view in terms of completion of gas puzzle of South Pars Gas Field as follows: firstly, the international

prestige of this project should be taken into serious consideration. Launch of this project has boosted economy of the country in the regional and international markets, especially in sanctions conditions. Secondly, the high capability and ability of domestic contractors was evaluated through the construction operation of projects related to South Pars.

Finally, this issue has proved that Iranian manufacturers and contractors enjoy high potential in construction of such giant projects in international arenas.

By A.Saeidi





# Trump is wrong. U.S. troops' traumatic brain injuries are incredibly serious

By Starane Shepherd

This week, during an annual luncheon with members of the media at the White House, President Donald Trump reportedly again dismissed the increasing number of traumatic brain injuries incurred by U.S. service members after last month's Iranian missile attack on an Iraqi air base, saying he'd seen worse.

The president previously brushed off the injuries of the service members, who now number 64, at the World Economic Forum in Switzerland. "I heard they had headaches and a couple of other things, but I would say, and I can report, that it is not very serious," Trump said.

But the president is wrong. Traumatic brain injury is incredibly serious.

Traumatic brain injury is a term used to describe many different kinds of brain injury resulting from head trauma. TBI can range from concussion, which is the most under-reported and underdiagnosed from of brain trauma, all the way to devastating injuries that cause coma and even death. However, all forms of TBI can have a long-lasting impact on the health of the individual, as well as society at large. According to the Brain Trauma Foundation, for persons under the age of 45, TBI is the leading cause of death and disability, and the economic impact has been estimated in the United States to be \$76.5 billion.

In the military, TBI is an especially big problem. Since 2000, more than 400,000 members of the military have been victims of TBI, according to the Department of Defense. Of the 64 service members diagnosed with TBI from the Iranian missile attack so far, 39 have returned to duty after being treated,



likely indicating a milder form of TBI, such as a concussion. However, even a mild TBI can result in long-lasting consequences, which must not be diminished.

Post-concussive syndrome is a common condition of mild TBI and can result in headaches, cognitive impairment and psychiatric and mood changes. It is not uncommon for patients to suffer from fatigue and an overall increase in irritability. For members of the military, these "not very serious" symptoms can slow reaction times and lead to sleep deprivation and an inability to perform assigned tasks—all symptoms that are particularly concerning considering the high-risk environments where they work.

Although, according to Joint Chiefs Chairman General Mark Milley, the majority of cases have been deemed mild TBI, the exact condition of the other military service members has not been disclosed. We do know, however, that 21 service members have been sent to

Germany and the U.S. for further treatment, suggesting they may have endured much more significant trauma. Moderate to severe TBI as a result of blast injuries, penetrating head trauma or even blunt trauma can result in skull fractures, bleeding in various parts of the brain that can lead to brain swelling, paralysis, a comatose state and even death, despite the best medical and surgical care.

For victims of moderate to severe TBI, life is undoubtedly changed forever. As a neurologist and critical care doctor, I have seen patients have to relearn to walk, speak and feed themselves. For some, these basic tasks remain a constant struggle and are never regained. In fact, for those more severely affected, it is not uncommon to require life support via a breathing machine and feeding via tubes for months to years. In the United States alone, around 5 million people are estimated to have a long-term disability as a result of TBI, and this number does not even

account for our military service members.

Still, it's not surprising that TBI did not receive the same level of attention from Trump as other combat injuries might have. The long-lasting effects of TBI can be delayed, and its victims can appear unchanged to the eye. Because of this, it is easy to dismiss mild TBI or concussion as a bump to the head, and the victims of TBI are often returned back to the field, the court, work or the battlefield all too soon without the necessary neuropsychological testing and subsequent treatment. They often deal silently with the increased incidence of depression, post-traumatic stress disorder and headaches, which are not typically deemed to be as serious as the injuries of those who have lost an arm or a leg.

However, the consequences of TBI can be just as debilitating and have long-lasting effects on the ability to work and provide for oneself and one's family. The first step in caring for our military personnel and veterans who have been victims of TBI is to recognize its clinical severity and not dismiss the symptoms they experience as a result of it.

In the coming weeks, the number of service personnel diagnosed with TBI is likely to increase as its manifestations become more evident. In fact, more personnel should be screened for TBI to ensure that they are truly fit to return to the battlefield. In order for our service members to remain fit to serve and protect, the severity of TBI should certainly not be dismissed and minimized by the president.

Starane Shepherd, MD, is an assistant professor of neurology at Rush University Medical Center in Chicago, specializing in critical care neurology. He is a Public Voices fellow through the OpEd Project.

(Source: Newsweek)

## Why does Zionism regularly attack Deir ez-Zor?

**1 →** The guards of the Islamic Revolution, in addition to cooperation with local tribes, initiated the creation of a cultural center and lobbied for the appointment of the Governor of the province of the same name - Abdul Majid al-Kawakibi (a descendant of the legendary Syrian public figure). There is no denying the successful geography of the province, which is adjacent to Iraq, another major ally of Tehran. The ongoing concentration of Iraqi and local forces under the control of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards is designed to block any aspirations of Pro-Islamic militants from the Al-Tanf camp (the so-called Kurdish "Democratic forces" and remnants of the Islamic state). Zionist air strikes against the "Pro-Iranian forces" of Deir ez-Zor are in the nature of tacit assistance to the mentioned insurgents in their struggle with official Damascus and its allies. But there is no hope for success from such assistance to separatists and terrorists.



Zionist airstrikes on any part of Syria come from impotence. The occupiers of Palestine can do nothing about strengthening the position of the Islamic Republic of Iran and proceeding with social and ideological work with the population of allied Syria. Zionism justifies its aggression with "strikes" against the "Syrian Hezbollah "or" Iranian base". But the absence of facts makes the occupiers 'claim an object of ridicule, rather than a source of "information for reflection". Moreover, civilians are always killed. An important point: Syria's air terror enjoys unlimited support from the United States and Europe. However, the desired effect of dastardly raids does not bring. The Islamic revolutionary Guard corps continues its activities, and the Syrians are willing to cooperate.

Deir ez-Zor has been a stronghold of the revolutionary Resistance forces since 2017. Representatives of the Iraq muqawama (for example - Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba, Saraya Al-Khorasani, Kataeb Imam Ali, Kataeb al-Sabirun and others), Palestinian factions loyal to Hezbollah and the Islamic revolutionary Guard Corps, Liwa Fatemiyoun, and Liwa Zainebiyoun are present in the province - All this in Alliance with the local self-defense forces (NDF-LDF). Resistance forces become stronger regardless of the regional political situation. Zionism cannot accept the reality. The colonialists are trying to impose a struggle far from occupied Palestine. Deir ez-Zor has already stood up to the terror of the Takfiri, so it will stand up to the provocations of Zionism. The East of Syria has assumed an important function of transformation in ideological terms. Forces located in Deir ez-Zor are waiting in the wings to liberate al-Quds.

\* - In Aleppo, we can observe something similar on the example of the local militia of Liwa al-Baqir, which in addition to military activities, participates in the political processes of Syria. In Damascus, there are organizations loyal to the Islamic Republic of Iran that is engaged in active social work throughout the South of Syria. Therefore, it is logical to assume that in the future, various Pro-Iranian formations and political structures, including those from Deir ez-Zor, will create a symbiosis between them such as Hashad al-Shaabi in Iraq, or may be limited to creating several parties with their own armed wing.

## No need to panic over the outbreak

By Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus

I have already said a lot about the outbreak of novel coronavirus, at the Executive Board yesterday (Tuesday) and at the PBAC meeting last week.

But allow me to underline a few key points.

The latest data we have is that there are 20,471 confirmed cases in China, including 425 deaths.

Outside China there are 176 cases in 24 countries, and one death, in the Philippines.

It's important to underline that 99 percent of the cases are in China, and 97 percent of deaths are in Hubei province. This is still first and foremost an emergency for China.

We continue to work closely with the Chinese government to support its efforts to address this outbreak at the epicenter. That is our best chance of preventing a broader global crisis.

Of course, the risk of it becoming more widespread globally remains high. Now is the moment for all countries to be preparing themselves.

WHO is sending masks, gloves, respirators and almost 18,000 isolation gowns from our warehouses in Dubai and Accra to 24 countries who need support, and we will add more countries.

We're sending 250,000 tests to more

than 70 reference laboratories globally to facilitate faster testing.

We're sending a team of international experts to work with their Chinese counterparts to increase understanding of the outbreak to guide the global response.

We're convening a global research meeting next week to identify research priorities in all areas of the outbreak, from identifying the source of the virus to developing vaccines and therapeutics.

Tomorrow (Thursday), I will brief the Secretary General and the UN senior management team.

Today we held a call with all 150 WHO country offices, to discuss the measures they need to take to be ready. On Thursday we'll have a similar briefing with all resident co-ordinators in the UN system.

We are also increasing our communications capacity to counter the spread of rumors and misinformation, and ensure all people receive the accurate, reliable information they need to protect themselves and their families.

And we plan to hold daily media briefings. Today I have three key requests for Member States:

First, I call on all Member States to share detailed information with WHO – including epidemiological, clinical severity and the results of community studies and investigations.

This is the responsibility of all countries under the International Health Regulations.

Of the 176 cases reported outside China so far, WHO has received complete case report forms for only 38 percent of cases. Some high-income countries are well behind in sharing this vital data with WHO. I don't think it's because they lack capacity.

Without better data, it's very hard for us to assess how the outbreak is evolving, or what impact it could have, and to ensure we are providing the most appropriate recommendations.

Today I am writing to all ministers of health to request an immediate improvement in data sharing.

As I said Tuesday, we can only defeat this outbreak with global solidarity, and that starts with collective participation in global surveillance. The commitment to solidarity starts with sharing information. Solidarity, solidarity, solidarity.

Second, we reiterate our call to all countries not to impose restrictions inconsistent with the International Health Regulations. Such restrictions can have the effect of increasing fear and stigma, with little public health benefit.

So far, 22 countries have reported such restrictions to WHO.

Where such measures have been im-

plemented, we urge that they are short in duration, proportionate to the public health risks, and are reconsidered regularly as the situation evolves.

And third, facilitate rapid collaboration between the public and private sectors to develop the diagnostics, medicines and vaccines we need to bring this outbreak under control.

We have a window of opportunity. While 99 percent of cases are in China, in the rest of the world we only have 176 cases. That doesn't mean that it won't get worse. But for sure we have a window of opportunity to act. Because 176 in the rest of the world is very small, [there is] no reason to panic or fear. Of course, people are worried – they should be.

There is a window of opportunity because of the measures China has used at the epicenter, at the source. Let's not miss this window of opportunity.

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus is director-general of WHO. This is his opening remarks at the technical briefing on 2019 novel coronavirus at the 146th session of the Executive Board on Feb 4.

(Source: China Daily)

## The next Nakba

By Mahir Ali

"He said flat out, don't talk to me about history," Aaron David Miller says of Jared Kushner, the U.S. president's son-in-law and the architect of the 'deal of the century' unveiled last week by Donald Trump.

"He said, I told the Israelis and the Palestinians not to talk to me about history too," recalls Miller, a former 'peace negotiator' who was among the people Kushner consulted in formulating a plan that conforms with Benjamin Netanyahu's wildest dreams.

Its announcement was apparently timed to bolster Netanyahu's chances of securing a majority in next month's Israeli elections, the third within a year after two inconclusive contests. It is also supposed to help Trump maintain his ascendancy with the Christian evangelicals devoted to Israel as a conduit for the end times, when they expect to be raptured away on the stairway to paradise while the rest of us roast in hell.

==Global outrage has been conspicuous by its absence.

The irrepressible Haaretz columnist Gideon Levy has a somewhat different take on the matter. "In a flimsy hospital gown, injured, barefoot and confused, without food or water, with a catheter attached and wearing a diaper, Gaza resident Omar Abu Jeriban was tossed on the side of the road on June 13, 2008 and left to die," he wrote last week in the Israeli newspaper, adding: "The other day, the entire Palestinian people became Abu Jeriban."

He goes on to argue in the same article that the announcement in Washington is tantamount to the third Israeli Nakba, or catastrophe: "After losing most of their land, property and dignity in the first [1948] and their liberty in the second [1967], now comes the third to crush whatever is left of their hope."

The complexities of the past can readily be discounted, of course, if you ignore history, as



Kushner was determined to do.

His plan, obviously devoid of any Palestinian input, envisages the incorporation of all Jewish settlements, illegal under international law, into Israel, plus the annexation of 30pc of the West Bank. In return, if the Palestinians play nice, they will get a bunch of non-contiguous municipalities, linked by bridges or tunnels, with Israel controlling the 'security' aspects of the ghettos and almost everything else.

Furthermore, some of the Palestinians who are now Israeli citizens will be stripped of that dubious privilege and allocated to the proposed 'state'. A capital on the least developed periphery of Jerusalem is a possibility, and they can call it Al Quds if they so desire.

Not surprisingly, Mahmoud Abbas, the lame duck presiding over the so-called Palestinian Authority (PA), has rejected the plan as well as any communications with the Trump White House. He doesn't want Trump to be able to claim that Abbas has been 'consulted', and he has been quoted as saying that he doesn't want to go down in history as the man who sold out Jerusalem.

Let us not forget, though, that Israel and its perennial allies deemed Abbas an appropriate replacement for Yasser Arafat precisely because he was deemed readily malleable, and throughout his tenure the PA has collaborated with Israeli security agencies.

It hardly matters any more that Arab League foreign ministers have endorsed Abbas's view of the unfolding fiasco, given that the League has for years been amplifying its irrelevance. The U.S. and Israel know that some of the richest Arab states are effectively on their side. The UAE, Bahrain and Oman even sent their ambassadors to the distinctly Zionist celebration in the White House. The Saudis stayed away, perhaps only because its crown prince has lately been restrained by his father.

Perhaps the only implementable aspect of Kushner's plan is the annexation part, and there were indications that Netanyahu would proceed almost immediately to achieve that goal, but he appears to have been held back by admonitions from the White House, with even the president's men wary of a hasty step without any quid pro quo.

Broadly speaking, though, global outrage at this travesty has been conspicuous by its absence. That may in part be a measure of how seriously the rest of the world takes the initiative — which is to suggest it has been disregarded on account of its transparent absurdity. The indifference could also be a measure, though, of how little empathy the Palestinian cause attracts, from the Arab and Muslim worlds to Europe.

Of late, France equates anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism, and Germany has outlawed the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement that sets out the kind of approach that proved so effective against South African apartheid.

Let's not forget, though, that for a long time the most powerful western states smiled on the racists in charge of South Africa and looked upon Nelson Mandela as a terrorist, shifting gear only when public pressure piled up. As Kushner is aware, though, it's useful to ignore the past — and there is no telling when, or whether, the tide might turn.

(Source: Dawn)

First Announcement			
Call for public tender (First/Second publish)			
Two-Stages (semi compressed) tender			
Subject of Tender: Casing Pipe 7"			
National Iranian Drilling Company			
* Tender descriptions:			
The Tender holder	Registration No. through national electronic tendering system	Tender No. /Tender No.	Estimated value (Rial/Euro)
National Iranian Drilling Company	3227929	PPP/AZD/98-003 48-222-9822016	78,103,000,000
* Qualitative evaluation of tenderers			
Method			
Based on minimum scoring (50) made in award criteria reflected in the tenderers' pre-qualification forms.			
* Purchasing & Submitting			
Tender Document Distribution by Company	The distribution of the documents will be started one day after the publishing of second advertisement and ended on the following no tenth days thereof		
	Distribution Place		
	Submitting Method		
Documents Receiving Method	Closing date		
	Address		
* Tender Guarantee			
Value of guarantee	3,530,000,000 Rial/ 74,976 Euro		
Type of guarantee	* V Bank guarantees or guarantees issued by non-bank institutions that obtain activity license from the central bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran. * V Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt under account number 400114006376636 (Shaba No. IR350100004001114006376636) in name of "NIDC saving account" by the central bank of Islamic Republic of Iran.		
Duration of credit & quotation	*NIDC saving account" by the central bank of Islamic Republic of Iran. Tender Guarantee and quotation should be valid for 90 days and extendable maximum for one time in initial validity duration		
(Name of department)			
More of this & other tenders are accessible by click on: <a href="http://www.nidc.ir">www.nidc.ir</a> <a href="http://sapp.ir/nidc_pr">http://sapp.ir/nidc_pr</a>			
تهران تایمز نوبت اول ۱۳۹۸/۱۱/۱۹ نوبت دوم ۱۳۹۸/۱۱/۲۰			



## Iranian, German experts to cooperate in Kerman archaeological survey

**HERITAGE d e s k** **TEHRAN** – Experts from German University of Tübingen along with Iranian fellows will commence a joint archaeological survey in Kerman province, southeastern Iran.

Supervised by Iran's Cultural Heritage and Tourism Research Center, the survey is scheduled to kick off on February 20, IRNA reported.



So far, five seasons of archeological research have been conducted in comprehensive and inclusive fields of study in the cities of Jiroft, Anbarabad, Faryab and Kahnooj, which yielded valuable information of human settlements from the Neolithic era onwards, the report added.

The big and sprawling Kerman province has been a cultural melting pot since antiquity, blending Persians with subcontinental tribe dwellers. It is home to myriad historical sites and scenic landscapes such as Bazaar-e Sartasari, Jabalieh Dome, Ganjali Khan Bathhouse, Malek Jameh Mosque and Shahdad Desert to name a few.

## Hamburg launches new online guide showcasing city's historical port venues

'Ahoj 2020!' Event planners can dive into the heart of Hamburg's seafaring heritage with a virtual tour of the city's best maritime venues, brought to life by the team who know the city best – Hamburg Convention Bureau (HCB). HCB's new online homestory showcases unique venues blending seafaring history, industry culture and maritime flair.

The first stop for the team is one of the largest event locations in Hamburg - former dockside shed number 52A (Schuppen 52). Formerly used to store spices, number 52a stands among cranes and ships in the historic Port. Centrally located, it can be reached quickly by both land and sea – including shuttle barges along the River Elbe.

At over 6,000 square meters, number 52a offers space for up to 3,000 guests, and thanks to a modern infrastructure, including IT networking and safety features, it can be transformed into a unique venue for conferences, exhibitions, large parties or gala dinners. For smaller events of up to 200 guests, its sister venue along the Elbe - the Jachthafen marina – fits the bill.

Delegates in Hamburg can walk the plank – literally - by boarding the cargo ship Bleichen. This historic vessel used to transport parcels to Scandinavia via the Baltic Sea and recently reopened as a museum and events space following restoration. Where wood, cocoa beans and peanuts were once stored, there's now a one-of-a-kind event space for up to 200 people.

(Source: Travel Daily News)



## ROUND THE GLOBE

### Island of Goree

The Island of Goree in Senegal testifies to an unprecedented human experience in the history of humanity. Indeed, for the universal conscience, this "memory island" is the symbol of the slave trade with its cortege of suffering, tears and death.

The painful memories of the Atlantic slave trade are crystallized in this small island of 28 hectares lying 3.5 km off the coast from Dakar. Goree owes its singular destiny to the extreme centrality of its geographical position between the North and the South, and to its excellent strategic position offering a safe haven for anchoring ships, hence the name "Good Rade".



Thus, since the 15th century it has been prized by various European nations that have successively used it as a stopover or slave market. First terminus of the "homeoducs" who drained the slaves from the hinterland, Goree was at the center of the rivalry between European nations for control of the slave trade. Until the abolition of the trade in the French colonies, the Island was a warehouse consisting of over a dozen slave houses. Amongst the tangible elements that reflect Goree's universal value are, notably, the Castle, a rocky plateau covered with fortifications which dominate the Island; the Relais de l'Espadon, former residence of the French governor; etc...

The Island of Goree is now a pilgrimage destination for the African diaspora, a foyer for contact between the West and Africa, and a space for exchange and dialogue between cultures through the confrontation of ideals of reconciliation and forgiveness.

(Source: UNESCO)

# Foreign arrivals in Iran hits 8 million in 10 months: tourism minister



Travelers pose for a photo during their visits to the UNESCO-tagged Saint Stepanos Monastery in northwest Iran.

**TOURISM d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Some eight million foreign nationals have visited Iran since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2019) despite [U.S.] sanctions and a sharp decline in flights by some foreign airlines, tourism minister has said.

"Over the past couple of months, [the tourism sector of] Iran has been suffering from sanctions and decrease in the number of flights by foreign airlines, however, the Islamic Republic has played host to some eight million foreign travelers

during the first ten months of the year," Ali-Asghar Mounesan said on Wednesday, IRIB reported.

Mounesan made the remarks in Tehran on the sidelines of a ceremony to inaugurate 472 tourism projects worth 20 trillion rials (about \$510 million) through videoconferencing, the report said.

The projects are estimated to generate 4,200 jobs and add 8,700 beds to the country's hotels, hostels, guesthouses and eco-lodges.

Iran was ranked the third fastest growing tourism destination in the globe in

2019, with 27.9 percent growth year on year, according to the latest statistics released by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO).

In January, Mounesan issued a statement, inviting all travelers and holiday-makers to visit the ancient land, saying that the country-size guesthouse is wholeheartedly ready to receive tourists from around the world.

He emphasized that the Iranian government is trying its best to host incoming tourists by improving tourism infrastructure, offering attractive and

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

Iran welcomed some 7.8 million foreign nationals last year, achieving 52.5 percent increase year on year.

The country expects to reap a bonanza from its numerous tourist spots, including 22 ones that have been placed 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.

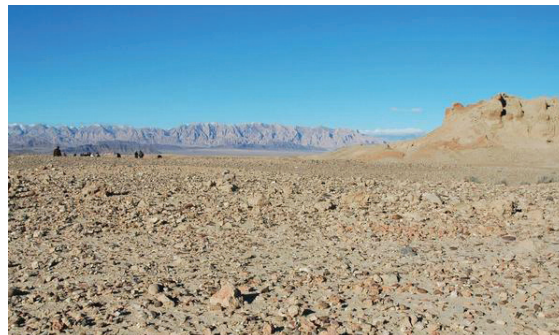
## Iran resumes archaeological exploration at ancient Qumis

**HERITAGE d e s k** **TEHRAN** — A new round of archaeological exploration has been commenced at the ancient Shahr-e Qumis in Damghan, north-central Iran, which was once one of the capital of the Parthian Empire (247 BC – 224 CE).

"This [round of] exploration aims to document archaeological remains of the site by the means of remote sensing and field observations in order to identify the reasons for the formation of the site as a goal of this multi-year project," ILNA reported.

The project is led by Iranian archaeologist Kourosh Roustaei under supervision of Iran's Research Institute of Cultural Heritage and Tourism.

Today, the plain of Shahr-e Qumis is absolutely deserted, but everywhere, one can see the remains of an old city, which was, according to the Greek author



Sherds are nearly found everywhere across the plain of Shahr-e Qumis, north-central Iran.

Appian of Alexandria, founded by the Seleucid king Seleucus I Nicator, according to Livius.org; a website on ancient history written and maintained since 1996 by the Dutch historian Jona Lendering.

Shahr-e Qumis comprises several ancient mounds. Only a few of them have been properly excavated, and the area between them has mostly been ignored. The field of shards at Shahr-e Qumis measures some 7 by 4 kilometers or 28 square kilometers, which suggests that it must have boasted tens of thousands of inhabitants.

Some say that Alexander the Great stopped here in Shahr-e Qumis in the summer of 330 BC and it became part of the Seleucid Empire after his death. Qumis was destroyed by an earthquake in 856 CE, and it was probably abandoned afterwards.

## A glimpse of 11 historical castles, fortresses and citadels in Iran

Since the very beginning of human settlement, the existence of castles and citadels seemed crucial for protecting and defending inhabitants from enemies.

During the history, particularly in prehistoric and early historic times, castles have played an important role in fortifying countries. They were normally maintained by authorities along significant routes or cities and most of them were located in uncovered heights with steep slopes or cliffs. Such locations have always served as a natural defense against enemies and offered a panoramic view over the surrounding lands, so the cities and their surroundings lands could be defended. Most of the castles in Iran had springs or wells, except for those which were already surrounded by water. These structures are considered to represent an important aspect of the country's history and thus, are worth visiting as a tourist historic attraction. So, let's discover some of the most famous castles in Iran together.

### ■ Falak-ol-Aflak castle

This amazing castle, dates back to Sassanid era and is located on top of the Falak-ol-Aflak hill in Khorramabad city in Lorestan province. This gigantic structure covers an area around 5300 square meters and the height of the entire structure, including the hill, reaches to more than 40 meters above its surrounding lands.

### ■ Alamut castle

Although today only ruins of this magnificent fortress have remained, it was once a very glorious structure, located in the mountainous region of Alamut in the southern part of Gilan province near Rudbar. Built around 865 CE, Alamut castle was considered to be impregnable to any attack and was famous for its gardens and libraries where, scientists, theologians and philosophers could debate in intellectual freedom.

### ■ Shush castle

Situated in the ruins of the ancient city of Shush in Khuzestan province in



Travelers visit the ruins of Rayen castle in Iran's Kerman province

the southern Iran, this beautiful castle resembles medieval monuments in France, as it is constructed by French archaeologist Jean-Marie Jacques in the late 1890s. The castle is relatively well-preserved and is a great example of the pre-scientific era.

### ■ Dokhtar castle

Dokhtar Fortress- which literally means girl-, is one of the oldest constructions worldwide and is situated in Firuz-Abad in Fars province. It was built in 209 CE on a mountain slope under the order of Ardeshir I at the end of the Parthian period. According to the name of this castle, it is thought that it was dedicated to Goddess Anahita, to whom the term "Maiden" refers. It is among the most attractive destinations in Fars province.

### ■ Babak fort

This castle is located in one of the most beautiful landscapes in Iran, on top of a mountain in Arasbaran forests, 6 km

southwest of Kalibar city in northwestern Iran. It is also known as immortal or republic castle and is considered to be a national Iranian symbol, as it is the stronghold of Babak Khoramdin who fought the Abbassids. The fort is accessible through a long series of broken steps.

### ■ Izadkhast castle

Located in Fars province, the castle is situated in Izadkhast complex which consists of a castle, a caravanserai and a bridge. The castle dates back to Sassanid era and Iran aims to have it registered in the UNESCO World Heritage list.

### ■ Rudkhan castle

This brick and stone medieval castle of Rudkhan is one of the few castles in Iran which located in an astonishing landscape in forest. Built during the reign of Sassanid, the castle is situated 25 kilometers southwest of Fuman city in Gilan province. This well-preserved

splendid castle is accessible via a mountainous winding route in the middle of a forest with more than 1000 stone steps.

### ■ Bam citadel

Located in Bam city in Kerman province, the Bam citadel (commonly known as Arg-e Bam) is the largest adobe structure in the world which unfortunately, was largely destroyed during the Bam earthquake in 2003. It originally dates back to Achaemenid era and was a significant site on the Silk Road. This enormous citadel has been registered as a UNESCO World heritage site and covers near 180,000 square meters.

### ■ Rayen castle

This is another great monument located 100 kilometers of Kerman province. This medieval adobe castle is similar to Bam castle and represent all the architectural elements of a deserted citadel. This extremely well-preserved castle dates back to more than 1000 years ago and although it was inhabited until 150 years ago, it is believed by some that it has origins in the pre-Islamic Sassanid era.

### ■ Portuguese castle

Also known as Fort of Our Lady of the Conception, this castle is one of the main attractions of Hormuz Island in the south of Iran. This red stone castle is among the last survivals of Portuguese colonial rule in Persian Gulf. It was built in 1507, when Hormuz was an important maritime city and a small kingdom near the entrance to the Persian Gulf.

### ■ Narin Castle

Situated in the beautiful city of Meybod in Yazd province, Narin is a mud-brick fort, dating back to Achaemenid and Sassanid dynasties. The height of the ruins of this castle reach 40 meters and it is possible to watch over 70 kilometers in every direction from the top of the roof. The castle also has a large underground chamber which was possibly a prison.

(Source: surfiran.com)



# End of the line for Iran's bird-watching paradise?

By Faranak Bakhtiari

**TEHRAN** – Miankaleh international wetland has recently witnessed the death of over 13,000 migratory birds. Although veterinary organization announced that the birds have been killed due to the “botulinum toxin”, some environmentalists believe that water pollution and other factors that have not yet been investigated have caused unprecedented bird mortality in the area.

Miankaleh a 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.

The peninsula was designated a Ramsar site in 1975 and called Iran's bird-watching paradise. Major habitats include wetlands, inter-tidal mud with sandy shores, shallow marine waters, forests, peatlands, 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.

Water deficit, mismanagement, unsustainable agricultural practices, and severe depletion of the wells and groundwater resources have exacerbated Miankaleh peninsula's condition.

Overgrazing, illegal hunting, fishing, deforestation and the unplanned spread of villages are some of the challenges posing threat to the region's environment.

■ **Lack of scientific information in wildlife veterinary**

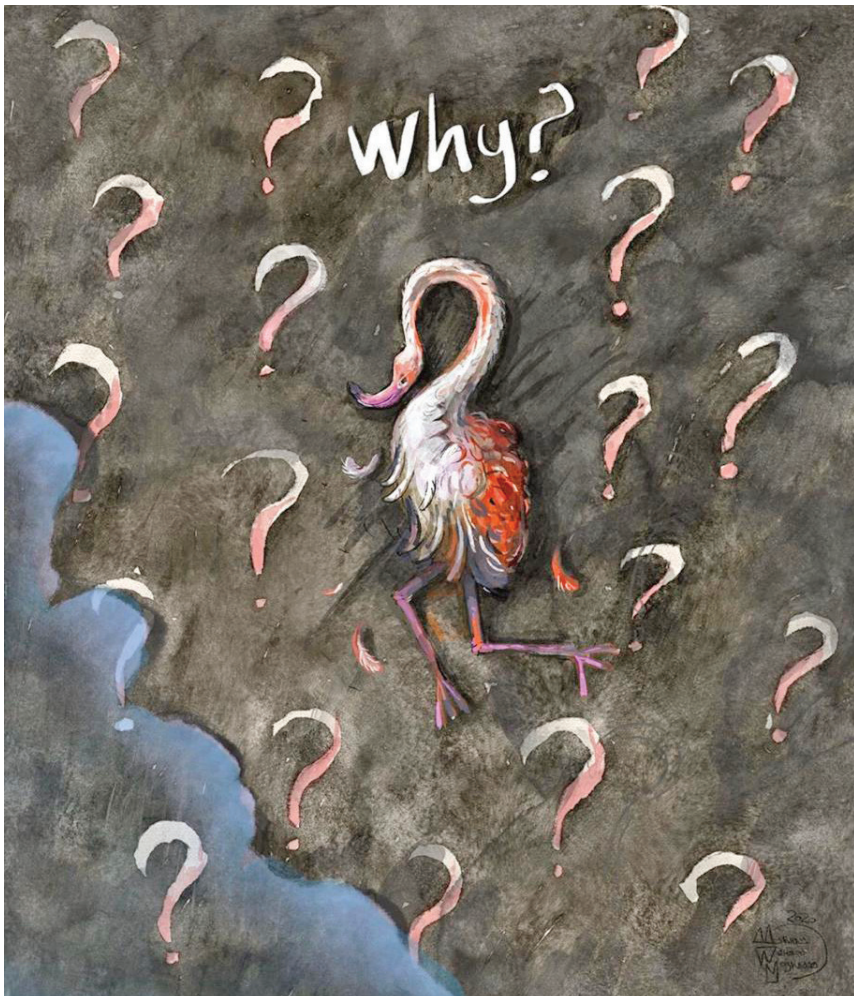
On January 23, mysterious death of migratory birds in Miankaleh were first reported in the media. Two days later, the Department of Environment (DOE) announced that an expert team was being sent to the area to investigate the cause of death.

The veterinary organization also said that tests based on avian influenza and Newcastle disease have been ruled out and further investigations are needed to determine the exact cause.

Three days passed, and the deaths of migratory birds were still in a state of uncertainty, with the death toll increasing day by day.

Iman Memarian, a wildlife veterinarian, told ISNA on Wednesday that unfortunately we have a lack of knowledge in the field of wildlife veterinary medicine; and taking several days to determine the exact cause of bird death is a proof to the fact.

Another evidence of the lack of wildlife veterinary science in the country is that



we raise the issue of Newcastle disease for the purpose of investigating the migratory birds' death, while aquatic birds are highly resistant to the disease, he said.

Even in zoos, aquatic birds do not need to be vaccinated against Newcastle disease, he lamented.

■ **Anxiety signs observed in bird carcasses**

As the number of bird deaths has risen to 10,000 in Miankaleh, experts and NGOs in Mazandaran province claimed that industrial wastewater released into Miankaleh has caused water contamination and could be a cause of death.

Memarian said that the published footage of bird carcasses showed symptoms of nervousness that could reinforce the theory of heavy metal poisoning, and that feeding manually is very dangerous for migratory birds and could cause food poisoning.

The veterinary organization announced last Tuesday that “botulinum poisoning” was the reason behind mass bird mortality.

Botulism is caused by a toxin produced by the bacterium *Clostridium botulinum*, and the birds become infected by the ingestion of plants or animals infected with the toxin and lose their lives.

*Clostridium botulinum* is an anaerobic bacterium that grows in decaying plants and animal material and often occurs in lakes during periods of lack of oxygen and poor water quality.

Esmail Kahrom, an ornithologist, stated that “If we accept the veterinary organization's claim of feeding the birds in a closed and polluted wetland environment, then the question arises whether all the birds at one point, decided to drink water and die together?”

“It is not possible for several thousand birds to drink water and die at once in the wetland where botulinum toxin is, did they commit mass suicide? did birds have symptoms of yellow excrement and yellow liquid outflow from the mouth?”, he lamented.

He further suggested that the death of migratory birds in the wetland might

be deliberate and claims that some fishermen, landowners or hunters may have thrown poison into the water and killed these species.

Kahrom said that the birds are a victim of conflict of interest and emphasizes the need to pursue and punish the main contributors to this environmental phenomenon.

Soheil Oladad, an environmental activist and expert, also said in a report published by the Shahrvand newspaper that “We sent four birds with great difficulty kilometers away from Mazandaran to carry out the necessary tests and investigate the cause of death, but they didn't cooperate under some circumstances.

Memarian had also previously told ISNA that botulinum toxin bacteria were unlikely to grow extensively in the ponds.

■ **Lack of water flow into the wetland produced botulism**

Despite different speculations about the incident, Shahaboddin Montazemi, director of wildlife's conservation office at the DOE, said that “We must admit that if agricultural, industrial and other poisons were directly released into the water, other aquatic species, including fish, would also have been killed, while the large population of the deaths is related to shorebirds.

While Issa Kalantarai, head of DOE, believes that the lack of upstream water in Miankaleh wetland is the reason for the loss of birds.

Montazemi earlier told ISNA that large numbers of migratory birds were killed in shallow areas where oxygen was likely to be unavailable, so it could even be said that lack of water flow to the wetland could create anaerobic conditions and produce botulinum.

■ **Investigation needs to be continued**

According to ISNA, the DOE is reporting that bird deaths in Miankaleh have plummeted, and hopes that this will not happen again in the future, while there are still doubts and questions about the cause of deaths in the area.

Excessive hunting in migratory birds' habitats in the country has made the Convention on Migratory Species to warn some countries about this issue, which has always been a global threat to biodiversity and has attracted international attention.

Now, along with illegal hunting, there are other environmental threats, including water pollution and wastewater flow, lack of provision of wetlands' water right, etc. So, it is expected that the DOE carefully investigate and not allow that the migratory birds habitat management gets out of control more than ever.

## Doctor who warned of coronavirus passes away from the virus

Dr Li Wenliang, one of eight people who tried to warn about the novel coronavirus when it first emerged in Wuhan, now the epidemic center of the disease, but was reprimanded by local police, passed away on Friday from the virus, according to the Central Hospital of Wuhan.

“After emergency treatment, Li Wenliang passed away,” the Central Hospital of Wuhan announced on Weibo, China's version of Twitter. “We deeply regret and mourn Li's death.”

The hospital said Li, 33, died at 2:58 am.

The doctor's death triggered an outpouring of millions of comments on China's social media sites as well as concern from the international community.

“We are deeply saddened by the passing of Dr Li Wenliang,” twitted the World Health Organization (WHO). “We all need to celebrate work that he did on 2019nCoV.”

According to the doctor's post on Weibo, on Dec 30, Li, an ophthalmologist at the Central Hospital of Wuhan, warned in the online chat group WeChat that he had seen a report that showed positive test results of SARS for seven patients.

On Jan 3, Li and the seven others were summoned by Wuhan police for “spreading fake information on the internet”. They were reprimanded but not fined or detained, the police said.

Li continued his normal work at the Wuhan hospital until Jan 10 when he came down with a cough and fever, symptoms of the coronavirus.

“I was finally confirmed as being infected by the novel coronavirus,” Li wrote on Feb 1 on Weibo, adding a dog emoji. The post got more than 1.6 million thumbs-ups and over 400,000 netizens expressed their best wishes to him.

On Thursday evening, several Weibo posts said Li had died from the novel coronavirus and they went viral on social media, sparking immense sorrow and outrage of netizens.

(Source: China Daily)

## ‘Massive relief’: torrential rain douses bushfires across parts of Australia

Torrential rain in New South Wales has reduced the number of active fires in the state by a third, from more than 60 down to 42, but parts of the east coast now face a new threat from flooding, with Sydney facing one of its wettest three-day periods in years.

The commissioner of the NSW Rural Fire Service, Shane Fitzsimmons, said on Friday there had been a “dramatic shift” in the hot, dry and windy conditions that have driven the unprecedented fire season for months.

“This has been an absolute welcome disruption to that weather pattern and a massive reprieve and relief to so many people right across New South Wales,” he said.

“Obviously we don't want to see lots of widespread damage and destruction from flooding, but it is certainly a welcome change to the relentless campaign of hot, dry weather resulting in widespread damaging, destructive fires that we've experienced for too long now.”

The RFS is taking advantage of the conditions to strengthen containment lines and, where possible, conduct back-burning operations.

Fitzsimmons said of the 42 fires still burning in NSW, 17 were uncontained. He said there was optimism that rainfall over the next week would result in many of those being declared contained, and “hopefully going to the status of out”.

The largest effect has been on fires in the north and north-east of the state.

(Source: The Guardian)

## WORDS IN THE NEWS

### Music piracy

(January 23, 2003)

One of Britain's best known pop stars, Robbie Williams, has challenged the view of the music industry by saying that he believes music piracy is a good thing. He said the record companies can do nothing to stop people illegally copying music from the internet. This report from David Bamford:

Robbie Williams is a **phenomenon in the pop music industry**. He's only recently signed a new 120-million-dollar contract with his British-based record company EMI after more than five years of consistent **album hits** and **number one singles**. But neither EMI nor any of its **rival labels** are likely to be impressed by Williams' latest comments that **music piracy** - the phenomenon that they say is costing the industry millions of dollars every year - is in fact a good thing.

He says that before he renegotiated his new contract, he investigated the issue of internet piracy, and he asked each of the record companies, what are they going to do about it? All he got back, he says, was a lot of hot air - they don't know what to do. Those record companies who have helped make Robbie Williams extremely rich have been **fighting a rearguard action in the courts** against on-line **song-swapping** services such as Napster and the growing phenomenon of **domestic compact disc copying**. Artists and companies have been united in their protest that millions of dollars are being taken away from the creative music process. Cynics might say that this hasn't stopped either the artists or the companies becoming very rich indeed from the sale of overpriced compact discs.

■ **Words**  
**phenomenon**: something or someone remarkable, extraordinary and unusual

**the pop music industry**: all the people and the processes that are involved in creating, performing, publicizing and selling modern popular music

**album hits**: an album is a collection of several pieces of music on disc; a hit is an album that sells a lot of copies

**number one singles**: a single is a disc containing only one or two pop songs which has at a particular time sold more copies than any other recording, making it number one in the charts

**rival labels**: brand names used by recording companies which are competitors

**music piracy**: the unauthorized and illegal copying of copyright material - in this case, music

**fighting a rearguard action**: if someone fights a rearguard action they make a determined effort to prevent something happening which they disapprove of although it is probably too late for them to succeed

**in the courts**: in the law courts

**song-swapping**: the exchange of songs; 'to swap' means 'to exchange'

**domestic compact disc copying**: the copying of compact discs in a person's own home

(Source: BBC)

## International environment exhibition to be held in Tehran

ENVIRONMENT  
d e s k

**TEHRAN** – The 19th International Exhibition on the Environment will be held in Tehran on March 4-7, IRNA news agency reported on Wednesday.

At this year's exhibition, various industrial, business and service units will be presenting their environmental achievements, as well as environmental science centers and universities specializing in the environment.

The exhibition will be held under the theme of “environment, social responsibility of 80 million rangers”.

The event is annually held, showcasing the latest innovations and achievements associated with the environment, which is

participated by numerous domestic and international manufacturers presenting their cutting-edge products and technologies in environment sector, namely, clean energies, recycling, air filtration, water and sewage management, pollution monitoring equipment and green cars.

Eliciting public participation in protection of environment, enhancement of natural resources management by creating opportunities and introduction of environmental capabilities in both local and international level, and providing practical solutions to prevent the environment from depletion are among the main goals of the exhibition.



## ENGLISH IN USE

### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → E

## SDSs mitigation plan to take effect next year

Sand and dust storm (SDS) mitigation plan will be implemented in the southeastern province of Sistan-Baluchestan as of the next Iranian calendar year (beginning March 21), Department of Environment (DOE) chief has announced.

A total fund of \$150 million from the National Development Fund has been proposed to counter dust storms in Sistan-Baluchestan province, IRNA quoted Issa Kalantari as saying on Tuesday.

Referring to the SDSs hitting southeastern part of the country causing the residents severe health problems, he noted that the president is pursuing the issue and as long as the fund is provided the plan will go into effect.

## طرح مهار گرد و غبارهای سیستان از اول سال آینده اجرایی می شود

رئیس سازمان حفاظت محیط زیست گفت: طرح مهار گرد و غبارهای منطقه سیستان و بلوچستان از ابتدای سال آینده اجرایی می شود.

عیسی کلانتری روز سه شنبه در گفت و گو با خبرنگار ایرنا اظهار داشت: برای مبارزه با گرد و غبار این منطقه رئیس جمهوری تقاضای ۱۵۰ میلیون دلار اعتبار از صندوق توسعه ملی کرده است.

وی بیان کرد: توفان ها و گرد و غبار مساله جدی در منطقه سیستان است و مردم سالها با این مشکل مواجه و از آن رنج می برند و رئیس جمهوری به شدت پیگیر حل این مساله هستند. طرح مهار گرد و غبارهای منطقه سیستان به محض تأیید منابع مورد نیاز اجرایی می شود.

## PREFIX/SUFFIX

### “-bound”

■ **Meaning**: a word ending shows that something is restricted by or confined to

■ **For example**: **Deskbound** executives can't grasp production problems.

## PHRASAL VERB

### Hammer away

■ **Meaning**: to keep saying something because you want people to understand or accept it

■ **For example**: I keep hammering away at this point because it's important.

## IDIOM

### Bring someone to heel

■ **Explanation**: if you force someone to behave in a disciplined manner, you bring them to heel

■ **For example**: The boy had always behaved badly, but the new headmaster managed to bring him to heel.



## Ayatollah Sistani calls for representative government

Iraq's top Shia Muslim cleric on Friday condemned deadly violence that killed protesters at sit-ins this week in the southern holy city of Najaf and said a new government must have the trust and support of the people.

Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani also called on security forces to protect anti-government demonstrators from any further attacks. His remarks were delivered by a representative during his weekly Friday sermon in the holy city of Kerbala.

"It is the security forces that must take responsibility to keep the peace, protect the protest squares and peaceful demonstrators and identify attackers and rabble rousers," he said.

At least eight people were killed on Wednesday when followers of populist cleric Moqtada al-Sadr stormed an anti-government protest camp in Najaf.

Sadr last week instructed his followers to leave some protest sites where they had supported demonstrators after Sadr and Iran-aligned political blocs reached a deal to name new Prime Minister Mohammed Tawfiq Allawi - a choice protesters reject. (Source: AP)

## Yemen al-Qaeda leader al-Rimi killed in U.S. operation, says Trump

Donald Trump said that U.S. forces have killed Qassim al-Rimi, the leader of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), in an operation inside Yemen.

Al-Rimi claimed responsibility for last year's deadly shooting at U.S. Naval Air Station Pensacola in Florida, where a Saudi aviation trainee killed three U.S. sailors.

The AQAP has long been considered al-Qaeda's most dangerous affiliate for its attempts to carry out attacks on the US mainland. Trump said the U.S. and its allies are safer as a result of his death.



"We will continue to protect the American people by tracking down and eliminating terrorists who seek to do us harm," Trump said on Thursday.

While Trump confirmed reports that al-Rimi had been killed, he did not say when the US operation was conducted or offer any details about how it was carried out. Al-Qaeda has not confirmed his death.

Al Jazeera's Andy Gallacher, reporting from Washington, DC, said the attack that killed the 41-year-old took place last month.

"The CIA and American intelligence officials have been very careful after previous strikes proved that their targets actually survived them," he said.

"Al-Rimi is a significant target for the US authorities. He is one of the few leaders that predates the attacks of September 11," Gallacher said.

"He trained at camps in Afghanistan before going back home to Yemen where he was in prison for five years for plotting the US ambassador there. He broke out of jail in 2006 and is thought to be behind the attack on the US embassy."

In late January, a suspected US drone attack destroyed a building housing al-Qaeda fighters in eastern Yemen.

Also, on February 1, Trump retweeted several other tweets and media reports that seemed to offer confirmation that the attack had killed al-Rimi.

### ■ Shooting

Al-Rimi had said in an 18-minute video that his group was responsible for the December 6 shooting at the naval base in Florida.

He called the attacker, Saudi Air Force officer Mohammed Alshamrani, a "courageous knight" and a "hero".

The attacker opened fire inside a classroom at the base, killing three people and wounding two sheriff's deputies before one of the deputies killed him. Eight others were also hurt.

The attack focused public attention on the presence of foreign students in U.S. military training programmes and exposed shortcomings in the screening of cadets.

In January, the U.S. sent home 21 Saudi military students, saying the trainees had "jihadist or anti-American sentiments" on social media pages or had "contact with child pornography", including in internet chat rooms.

(Source: al Jazeera)

## China will defeat coronavirus, Xi tells Trump, as doctor's death sparks outcry

Chinese President Xi Jinping assured his U.S. counterpart on Friday that China was doing all it can to contain a new coronavirus that has killed almost 640 people, including a doctor who sounded the alarm only to be threatened by police.

China was gradually achieving results and was confident it could defeat the epidemic with no long-term consequences for economic development, Xi told President Donald Trump in a telephone call, according to state television.

The call to the White House, which China has accused of scare-mongering over the epidemic, came as China's central bank vowed to step up support for the economy to cushion the blow of the outbreak.

First-quarter growth in the world's second-biggest economy could slow by 2 percentage points or more, from 6%, in the last quarter, analysts say, but could rebound sharply if the outbreak peaked soon.

Chinese stocks were heading for their worst week since May while elsewhere in Asia, financial markets slipped after several days of gains.

Xi had earlier declared a "people's war" on the virus, saying China had responded with all its strength and "the most thorough and strict prevention and control measures", state media said.

The rallying cry came amid an outpouring of grief and anger on social media over the death of ophthalmologist Li Wenliang.

Li, 34, was one of eight people reprimanded by police in the central city of Wuhan, the epicenter of the contagion, last month for spreading "illegal and false" information about the flu-like virus.

(Source: Xinhua)

# Macron on arms Race: European states 'cannot remain spectators' in an increasingly unstable World

President Emmanuel Macron stated that European countries should act proactively in the face of a nuclear arms race as he laid out France's nuclear weapons strategy.

Speaking to military officers in Paris on Friday, Macron called on EU member states to propose an "international arms control agenda".

He also suggested that Europeans should "not confine themselves to a role of spectators" at a time when the existing non-proliferation treaties are being called into question.

"Europeans must collectively realise that, in the absence of a legal framework, they could quickly face a new conventional or even nuclear arms race on their soil."

Macron has dedicated much of his attention as president to modernising France's and Europe's military strategy. He has proposed a "true European army" to cut reliance on the United States, launched a military space force command and suggested a military intervention force outside of NATO, known as European Intervention Initiative, already joined by 14 European states.

The Macron government also plans to spend €37 billion (\$41bn) to upgrade and maintain its nuclear arsenal over the next seven years — more than 12 percent of the total defence spending for that period.

The French President, who said France had already cut its nuclear arsenal to under 300 warheads, expressed confidence that the focus of Europe's long-term security



should remain on a strong alliance with the US.

However, he added, the EU should also take "autonomous action" and sign off to any new deal that would limit the proliferation of new intermediate-range nuclear weapons.

Macron's speech comes as tensions remain high between military powers and nuclear non-proliferation treaties are in jeopardy.

Last year, the US unilaterally withdrew from the 1987 INF treaty, which banned ballistic and cruise missiles capable of carrying nuclear warheads with the range of 500 to 5,500 kilometres. Russia suspended the deal in response. Prior to the move, both states had accused each other of violating the agreement, although the underlying argument in Trump's criticism of the treaty

was that it constrained America's power and did not include China.

Macron warned that the collapse of the treaty left "France, Germany and the other European countries... threatened by new Russian missiles".

Despite those concerns, Germany and France then both rejected Russia's proposed moratorium on the deployment of medium- and shorter-range missiles in Europe.

The United States has also threatened to quit New START, its last remaining arms control treaty with Russia which expires in February 2021. However, the Trump administration has recently signalled that it was ready to start negotiations on nuclear arms control with Russia. (Source: Sputnik)

## Russians headed to Turkey for talks on Syrian offensive in Idlib

A Russian delegation will arrive in Turkey on Saturday for talks aiming to stop the Syrian government's offensive and halt a humanitarian catastrophe in Syria's northwest Idlib region, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said on Friday.

Cavusoglu repeated Turkey would do whatever is necessary to stop a humanitarian tragedy in Idlib, where on Thursday Russian-led Syrian forces

entered the strategic town of Saraqeb in a push to capture the country's last rebel stronghold.

The fighting has already displaced half a million people since early December, and Turkey fears another wave of refugees heading for its border.

Eight Turkish military personnel were killed on Monday in shelling by Syrian government forces in Idlib province,

where Ankara has sent reinforcements in the last week.

Turkey already had a dozen military observation posts positioned around a 'de-escalation zone' in the region agreed by Turkey, Russia and Iran, but several posts have now been surrounded by advancing Syrian government forces.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a UK-based war monitor, said

that Turkish troops were establishing a new military post east of Idlib city, home to more than one million people, many already displaced from other parts of Syria.

Moscow and Tehran have supported President Bashar al-Assad during Syria's nearly nine-year conflict, while Ankara has backed rebels who sought to topple Assad. (Source: Reuters)

## Two top Sadrist commanders killed in 24 hours in Iraq

Two commanders of Iraqi cleric Muqtada al-Sadr's movement have been killed in separate attacks in the span of 24 hours in what appears to be a plot to create division among Iraqi groups.

One of them was Hazim al-Hilfi, a commander of the Saraya al-Salam militant group, who was killed on Thursday when the vehicle carrying him was targeted by unidentified gunmen on the Muhammad al-Qasim road, west of Basra province.

He suffered fatal injuries and died on the spot, local security sources said. They quoted a Sadr movement's media official in Basra, Saad al-Maliki, as saying that Halfi was one of the leaders of the Peace Corps.

His assassination came less than 24 hours after Abu-Muqada al-Azirjawi, another top commander of the Saraya group, was seriously wounded on Tuesday night after unknown assailants riding motorcycles opened fire on him near his house in Abou Roummaneh district of Maysan governorate.

He later died of his injuries in hospital, Iraqi media reported.

There are speculations that the assassinations are carried out by foreign intelligence services with the aim of pinning the blame on rival Iraqi groups, and reignite a civil war in the volatile country.

Last October, Maysan Governorate witnessed the killing of Wissam al-Alyawi, a prominent leader in the Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq group, following an armed attack on its headquarters.

■ **'U.S. plotting to pit Sadr Movement against Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq'**

Asa'ib leader Qais Khazali has said the U.S. had plotted



to assassinate Muqtada al-Sadr and pin the blame on Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq group in a bid to provoke a civil war in Iraq.

"The first American-Israeli project in Iraq, which they wanted to implement, was to assassinate Muqtada al-Sadr and then accuse Asa'ib of killing him, causing a nationwide slaughter in the country," Khazali said in an interview with al-Ahad.

"Sadr and Iran received the intelligence, and the issue was sorted out. Thank God the plot was failed," he noted, saying the source of the intelligence was top Iranian general Qassem Soleimani, who was assassinated in a U.S. drone attack last month.

Khazali also pointed to the issue of "unknown snipers" who targeted Iraqi protesters at the beginning of the protests in October, and said launching an investigation into the issue and identifying the perpetrators is among the most important demands of Iraqi people.

## After Iowa, Buttigieg likely to be in crosshairs at New Hampshire Democratic presidential debate

After his better-than-expected showing in the Iowa caucuses, Pete Buttigieg is likely to attract the spotlight - and incoming fire from rivals - as Democratic presidential contenders debate on Friday in New Hampshire, just days before the state's pivotal primary.

Buttigieg, the former mayor of South Bend, Indiana, eked out a win over U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders in Iowa, according to the state Democratic Party's complete count, which has been marred by technical and organizational errors.

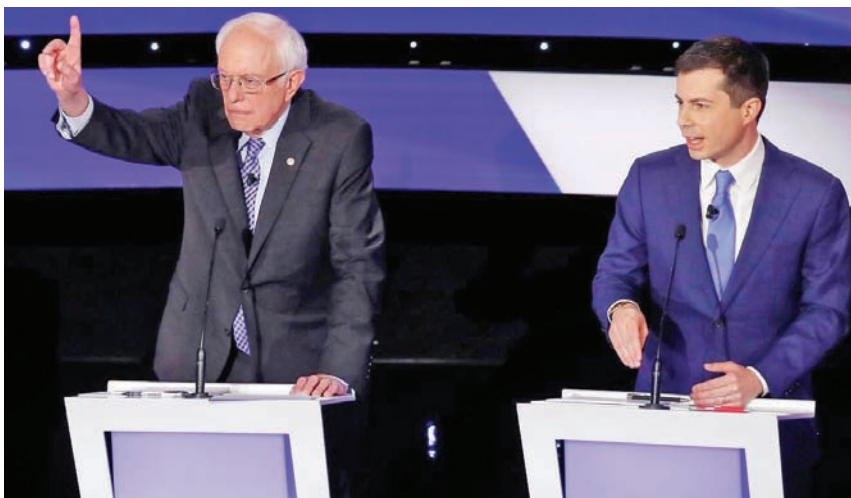
U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren, former Vice President Joe Biden and U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar trailed behind in the nation's first nominating contest.

Historically, candidates who win the Iowa caucuses see a boost in New Hampshire, and two opinion polls released this week showed Buttigieg within striking distance of Sanders, who has consistently been atop the field in the state.

But with controversy surrounding the Iowa results, New Hampshire's primary on Tuesday takes on added importance in the Democratic race for the nomination to face President Donald Trump in the Nov. 3 election.

Democratic National Committee Chairman Tom Perez added to uncertainty surrounding the nominating process on Thursday by calling for an audit of the Iowa caucuses after an array of problems delayed the final count.

Even so, Buttigieg, 38, is likely to bear the brunt of more attacks at the debate



than he has in past events - primarily over his relatively thin track record in public office.

At a campaign event in New Hampshire earlier this week, Biden said there was a risk in the party nominating "someone who's never held an office higher than mayor of a town of 100,000 people in Indiana."

Biden comes into the debate in a more desperate position than his campaign anticipated, having finished far behind both Buttigieg and Sanders in Iowa, a result he called "a gut punch." He still leads in opinion polls nationally, but his margin has been steadily shrinking.

As a result, Biden has turned up the

heat not only on Buttigieg, but on Sanders. On Wednesday, he warned that if the self-described democratic socialist became the nominee, "every Democrat in America up and down the ballot, in blue states, red states, purple states and easy districts and competitive ones" will be branded with the same label.

In his State of the Union address on Tuesday, Trump appeared to make reference to Sanders, who favors a government-run healthcare system, by declaring: "We will never let socialism destroy American healthcare!"

### ■ Can he beat Trump?

For Sanders, who represents the neighboring state of Vermont, the New

Hampshire contest amounts to what can be considered a home game. In 2016, he swamped rival Hillary Clinton in the state by more than 20 percentage points after Clinton, the eventual nominee, defeated him in Iowa.

Now that Sanders has shown himself to be a viable threat for the nomination, he is almost certain to be challenged by Biden and others on the stage about whether his leftist agenda would draw enough voters in November to beat Trump.

The evening is also important for Warren, who finished third in Iowa. If Sanders were not in the race, the senator from neighboring Massachusetts would likely be in a better position in polls ahead of the primary.

Warren has argued at campaign events that she is the most electable candidate in the field, with the capacity to unite progressive and moderate voters.

---Also onstage at St. Anselm College in Manchester will be Klobuchar, California billionaire Tom Steyer, and businessman Andrew Yang, who qualified for the debate after missing the earlier one in Iowa.

Notably absent will be Michael Bloomberg, a billionaire former New York mayor, who is not competing in New Hampshire but has been assembling a formidable campaign operation in later voting states. Although Bloomberg has been ascending in national polls, he failed to meet the criteria for the Friday debate. (Source: Reuters)



# Dragan Skocic: Iran is biggest challenge of my career

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Dragan Skocic says that to coach Iran national football team is the biggest challenge in his career.

He was appointed as Team Melli coach on Thursday and replaced Belgian coach Marc Wilmots.

Team Melli will have four must-win matches in late March and early June in the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 and AFC Asian Cup China 2023.

Skocic followed in the footsteps of Stanko Poklepovic, Tomislav Ivic, Miroslav Blazevic and Branko Ivankovic, all of whom managed the Iranian football team successfully.

"It's certainly an honor that my name is alongside the other great Croatian coaches. Croats are highly respected here so I'm really happy that I've gotten the opportunity to be the coach of Iran, a great football country," says Skocic in an interview with sport.hrt.hr.

Skocic has been working in Iran since 2013 and has led four clubs, Malavan, Foolad, Knooneh be Knooneh and Sanat Naft. "With three of the four teams I led, I made the greatest successes in their history. I think this was one logical sequence and very tangible. To lead Team Melli is actually the biggest challenge of my career," the 51-year-old coach added.

Iran currently sit third in Group C of the second qualifying round with six points from four matches.

Iraq top the table with 11 points from five matches. Bahrain are second with nine points from five as well, with Hong Kong with five points and Cambodia with one point, and both teams also played five matches each.

The winners of all eight groups and the



four best runners-up will secure a place at the third qualifying round.

"There will be a difficult task ahead of us. Matches against Bahrain and Iraq are very important. Both games will be played in Tehran's Azadi 100,000-seater

stadium. The expectations are so high and I hope we advance to the next stage. The match against Iraq will be a key match and interesting because the Iraqi team is headed by my friend Srecko Katanec," he stated.

"Everyone wants us to qualify for the 2022 World Cup, especially after a great performance at the previous edition in Russia, where Team Melli almost achieved a historical feat in the group with Spain, Portugal and Morocco," Skocic concluded.

## Persepolis, Esteghlal share the spoils in Tehran derby

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Persepolis and Esteghlal football teams settled for a breathtaking 2-2 draw here in Iran Professional League (IPL) on Thursday.

In the match held in front of 56,000 spectators at the Azadi Stadium, Arsalan Motahari's deflected strike gave Esteghlal the lead in the 24th minute.

However, the lead lasted just five minutes.

Ali Alipour put the ball into the net after receiving a superb pass from Christian Osaguona.

Motahari made a brace in the 52nd minute. Mehdi Ghaedi picked up the ball on the left flank, setting Esteghlal's second goal and Motahari sent the ball into the roof of the net.

Shortly after, Persepolis put the Blues under pressure and finally leveled the match in the 89th minute.

Anthony Stokes's strike from inside the area was only parried by Esteghlal goalie Hossein Hosseini into the path of substitute Bashar Resan and he equalized the match.

Sepahan also drew 0-0 with Naft Masjed Soleyman in another match.

Persepolis lead the table with 41 points, five points ahead of Sepahan.

Esteghlal are third with 33 points and one game in hand.



## Iranian teams select neutral venues to host Saudi Arabian rivals

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Iranian popular club Persepolis have chosen Dubai, the UAE as the neutral venue to host Saudi Arabian team Al Taawoun at the group stage of the 2020 Asian Football Confederation (AFC) Champions League.

The Reds will face al Taawoun on March 2. The Saudi Arabian side have already chosen Al Kuwait Sports Club Stadium in Kuwait City.

Persepolis's Head of International Relations, Amir Ali Hosseini, said: "Persepolis club have selected Zabeel Stadium to host the Saudi Arabia representative and we have announced it to the Asian Football Confederation (AFC)."

Zabeel Stadium is in Dubai, United Arab Emirates and it is the official home pitch for the UAE League side Al Wasl.

Persepolis have also announced that the



match against Al Taawoun which will be their first home match (at a neutral venue

in Dubai) will kick off at 7 pm local time (6:30 pm Tehran time).

Sepahan, the other representative of Iran in 2020 AFC Champions League, have selected Doha, Qatar to host Al Nassr from Saudi Arabia. The Isfahan-based club selected Grand Hamad Stadium, the current home ground of Al-Arabi team in Duha. The Stadium holds 13000 people.

Esteghlal and Shahr Khodro are also other Iranian teams in the AFC Champions League who have yet to announce neutral zones to host their Saudi Arabian opponents.

The 2020 AFC Champions League group stage will be played from 10 February to 6 May 2020. A total of 32 teams will compete in the group stage to decide the 16 places in the knockout stage of the 2020 AFC Champions League.

Since 2016, matches between clubs from Iran and Saudi Arabia have been played in neutral venues due to political tensions between the two countries.

## Ghaedi among eight stars set to shine at ACL 2020

With the group stage of the 2020 AFC Champions League kicking off on Monday, the-AFC.com has selected eight young stars to look out for in the coming weeks and months.

From Continental champions to scorers of great goals and title-winning startlets – all of whom are 21 or under – there's plenty to get excited about with the talent that will be on display during Asia's biggest club competition.

Mehdi Ghaedi has been in superb form for Esteghlal this season and the diminutive forward is his club's top scorer as the Iranian team aims to close the gap on Iranian Pro League leaders and city rivals Persepolis.

Having returned from representing his country at the AFC U-23 Championship, Ghaedi netted twice in Doha as Esteghlal eased past Al Rayyan to qualify for the AFC

Champions League once more.

Game time was limited for Ghaedi in the 2018-19 campaign but his rise to prominence in recent months has really caught the eye as the 21-year-old has formed a lethal partnership with Malian international Cheick Diabate.

At just 5'5", Ghaedi will be among the smallest players on display in the 2020 AFC Champions League, but should his form continue then he may also be among the biggest stars of the group stage.

Feras Albrikan (Al Nassr), Kim Jin-ya (FC Seoul), Ekanit Panya (Chiangrai United), Azizjon Ganiev (Shabab Al Ahli), Zhu Chenjie (Shanghai Shenhua), Nicholas D'Agostino (Perth Glory) and Yahya Nader (Al Ain) are seven other players in the list. (Source: the-afc)



## I would name it as the best goal I've ever scored: Alireza Jahanbakhsh

Brighton striker Alireza Jahanbakhsh has picked up the January Goal of the Month award for his acrobatic late equalizer against Chelsea.

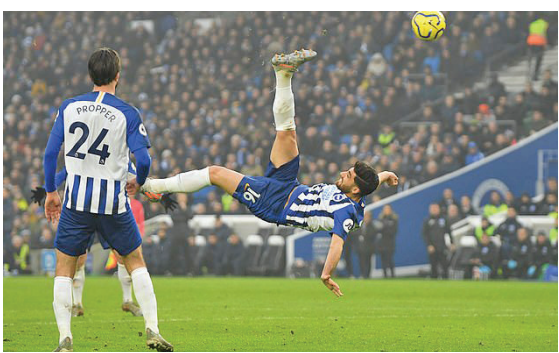
The Iranian forward produced an overhead kick against Frank Lampard's side to salvage a point for Brighton at the AMEX Stadium.

"When I came on, I knew I could help the team," he told the Premier League following the award win.

"I had a feeling the bicycle kick was the only way I could hit the ball. But as you see in my reaction, I didn't expect it to touch the net!"

"I couldn't have asked for any better goal in such a game. I would name it as the best goal I've ever scored."

The 26-year-old's success means he is the first Iranian



player in Premier League history to scoop one of the monthly awards and only the second Brighton player ever to win one.

Earlier in the day, Liverpool boss Jurgen Klopp was named January Manager of the Month while Manchester City striker Sergio Aguerro won the Player of the Month award.

Jahanbakhsh had opened his account as a Brighton player in the game before against Bournemouth but saved his finest work for the visit of Chelsea on New Year's Day.

The last Brighton player to win a Goal of the Month award was Anthony Knockaert in March 2019.

(Source: Daily Mail)

## Dragan Skocic appointed Iran coach

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Croatian coach Dragan Skocic took the reins at Iran national football team on Thursday.

The 51-year-old coach finalized his contract with the Football Federation Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI) but the details of the deal have not been revealed.

Skocic, who parted company with Iranian football club Sanat Naft on Tuesday, replaced Marc Wilmots.

The Belgian coach quit Team Melli in early December.

Skocic, who has already worked in Iranian clubs Malavana and Foolad, is Iran's fifth Croat coach after Stanko Poklepovic, Tomislav Ivic, Miroslav Blazevic and Branko Ivankovic.

Team Melli will have four must-win matches in late March and early June in the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 and AFC Asian Cup China 2023.

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

The Persians will face Bahrain and Iraq on June 4 and 9, respectively in Tehran.

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

## 10-man Tractor escape defeat against Gol Gohar

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Akbar Imani's late goal helped Tractor escape a defeat against Gol Gohar in Iran Professional League (IPL) on Friday.

Nigerian forward Godwin Mensha found the back of the net for Gol Gohar in the 77th minute but with two minutes remaining, Imani drilled a powerful shot into the goal.

Tractor captain Masoud Shojaei was sent off in the 82nd minute after receiving a red card.

Earlier on the day, Zob Ahan edged past Sanat Naft 1-0 in Isfahan.

Rock-bottom Shahin Shahr-dari defeated Nassaji 2-1 in Bushehr and Saipa were held to a 1-1 draw by Pars Jonoubi in Tehran.

Paykan also came from a two goals down to draw 2-2 with machine Sazi in Tabriz.

Persepolis lead the table with 41 points, five points ahead of Sepahan.

Tractor moved up to third place with 33 points.

## Iranian gymnasts granted Australia visa

**Tasnim** — Three Iranian gymnasts have been granted Australia's visa for this month's Gymnastics World Cup.

President of Iran's Gymnastic Federation, Zahra Inche Dargahi, had already accused Australia of "politicizing" the process of issuing visas for three Iranian athletes.

The Gymnastics World Cup 2020 will be held in Melbourne from February 20 to 23.

Three Iranian gymnasts, Abdollah Jamei, Saeed Reza Keekha, and Mehdi Ahmad Kohani, will leave Tehran for the Melbourne World Cup on February 12, hoping to win a share in the 2020 Summer Olympics (July 24, 2020-August 9) in Tokyo, Japan.

## Iran coaching staff introduced

Newly-appointed coach Dragan Skocic has introduced his assistant coaches in Iran national football team.

Goalkeeping coach Mladen Zganjer has already worked as Croatia U-21 national team coach.

Toni Usnik, 46, has also worked in Slovenian national team.

On Thursday, Skocic was named as new head coach of Iran national football team.

Team Melli will host Hong Kong on March 26 in Tehran and meet Cambodia five days later in an away match in the 2022 FIFA World Cup qualification.

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

(Source: sport.hrt.hr)

## Iran invited to Poland's Wagner Memorial

**Tasnim** — Iran national volleyball team have been invited to the 18th edition of "Hubert Wagner" memorial.



The tournament will be held in Krakow, Poland.

Iran have taken part in the competition two times so far.

Team Melli are preparing for the 2020 Olympic Games which will run from July 24 to August 9 in Tokyo.

The Memorial of Hubert Jerzy Wagner is a volleyball competition for national teams, organized by the Hubert Wagner foundation. There are men's competitions, organized only in Poland.

The first Memorial was held in 2003 and since then it has been held every year.



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## GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Morbid and shameful be those faces which are seen only in the time of wickedness and debauchery.

Imam Ali (AS)

## WHAT'S IN ART GALLERIES



### Painting

■ An exhibition of paintings by Sadeq Tabrizi is underway at Sohrab Gallery.

The exhibit named "The Portraitist of Lovers" will run until February 18 at the gallery located at 142 Somayyeh St.

■ Shaqayeq Ahmadian, Ali Ansari, Reza Hedayat, Ebrahim Faraji, Arezu Jabbari and 12 more artists are showcasing their paintings in an exhibition at Negar Gallery.

The exhibit titled "Gaze" runs until February 17 at the gallery located at 33 Delaram Alley, Roshanai St. in the Qeitarieh neighborhood.

■ Paintings by Meysam Nejad-Rasuli are on display in an exhibition at Artibition Gallery.

The exhibit titled "Origami of Freedom" will continue until February 16 at the gallery located at Qandi Alley, Sasanipur St., Golnabi St., off Shariati Ave.

■ Saless Gallery is playing host to an exhibition of paintings by Saeid Mahjubi.

The exhibit entitled "Hidden Layers of Abstraction" runs until February 14 at the gallery that can be found at 148 Karim Khan Ave.

■ A collection of paintings by Ali Golestaneh is currently on view in an exhibition at Hoor Gallery.

The exhibition will be running until February 25 at the gallery located at 12 Naeimi Alley, North Mirza Shirazi St., off Motehahri Ave.

■ Mehdi Reihani is showcasing his latest paintings in an exhibition at Farmanfarma Gallery.

The exhibit named "Slaughtered Identity" will be running until February 14 at the gallery, which can be found at 2nd Araabi St., North Kheradmand St. off Karim Khan Ave.

■ An exhibition of paintings by Ebrahim Ganjan is currently underway at Atbin Gallery.

Entitled "Somnium", the exhibit runs until February 18 at the gallery located at 42 Khakzad Alley, Vali-e Asr Ave. near the Parkway Intersection.

■ Paintings by Ahad Qadiri are on view in an exhibition at Mojdeh Gallery.

The exhibit named "Those Days" will run until February 14 at the gallery located at No. 27, 18th Alley off North Allameh Blvd. in the Saadatabad neighborhood.

### Drawing

■ Elaheh Gallery is playing host to an exhibition of drawings by Ali Nemati.

The exhibit entitled "Convergence" runs until February 17 at the gallery located at 47 Golfam St., off Africa Ave.

### Photo

■ Photos by Ali Omidvar are on display in an exhibition at Golestan Gallery.

The exhibition will be running until February 12 at the gallery located at 34 Kamasai St. in the Darus neighborhood.

■ A collection of photos by Sarvenaz Rafiei is on display in an exhibition at Theme Gallery.

The exhibit named "Asma" will run until February 12 at the gallery that can be found at 10 Zebajad Alley, North Villa St., off Karim Khan Ave.

# Afghan immigrants come into focus in "To Die in the Pure Water"

**A R T** **TEHRAN** — "To Die in the Pure Water", a movie directed by Tehran-based Afghan brothers Navid and Jamshid Mahmudi about Afghan expatriates in Iran was screened during the 38th Fajr Film Festival in Tehran on Thursday.

"We've been immigrants for many years, not only in Iran but also in the world," Navid said during a press conference after the premiere of his film at Mellat Cineplex.

"We know well about the problems and obstacles facing Afghan immigrants and that's why we make films on this subject," he added.

He also stated that there are lots of successful immigrants across Iran and the world but making films about their problems is more dramatic.

"My brother and I are good examples of successful Afghan immigrants in Iran. We are even working on a plot for a TV series about successful immigrants," Mahmudi noted.

"To Die in the Pure Water" is about a young Afghan man who is faced with the dilemma of choosing between converting to Christianity to obtain a European visa or continuing to live as a Muslim with all his problems.

Jamshid, the producer of the film, also expressed his hope that being in the Fajr Film Festival would help to increase the box office receipts of the film.

"We'd really like to screen our films



Director Navid Mahmudi attends a press conference after the premiere of his film "To Die in the Pure Water" during the 38th Fajr Film Festival at Tehran's Mellat Cineplex on February 6, 2020. (Meh/hamid Vakili)

in Afghanistan, but there are only six theaters and they are dedicated to In-

dian movies," he noted.

He also expressed his hope that they

can convince some cultural centers in Afghanistan to screen their films.

## "Good, Bad, Garish 2: The Secret Army" is not political: director Qasemkhani



Director Peyman Qasemkhani attends a press conference after the premiere of his comedy film "Good, Bad, Garish 2: The Secret Army" during the 38th Fajr Film Festival at the Mellat Cineplex on February 5, 2020. (Meh/hamid Asgaripour)

**A R T** **TEHRAN** — Director Peyman Qasemkhani has said that his comedy "Good, Bad, Garish 2: The Secret Army" is not a political movie.

He made the remarks in a press conference at the Mellat Cineplex on Wednesday after the premiere of the film during the 38th Fajr Film Festival.

"I only made use of political topics to develop the story and I did not mean to have any specific orientation in my film," Qasemkhani said.

"I do not make films to be box office hits and I don't even make the slightest changes in the screenplays just to make the audience laugh more," he added.

"We first intended to make a TV series but that was not possible, so then we decided to make a three-episode film, the

third of which has not been written yet," he remarked.

Starring Sam Derakhshani, Pejman Jamshidi, Hamed Komeili and Reyhaneh Parsa, "Good, Bad, Garish 2: The Secret Army" is a sequel to his 2017 comedy film "Good, Bad, Garish" about a film director who has to use two superstars for his new film contrary to his desires.

Qasemkhani also expressed his regrets over cutting several scenes played by actress Setareh Pesyani and added, "I must apologize to Pesyani for cutting some scenes, however, she appears in three scenes and her presence was quite necessary in the film."

He also talked about the jokes uttered in the film, and said that he believes they are clean jokes and can be heard by all family members with no problem.

## Director Behruz Shoeibi says country's ailing economy inspired "Day of Chaos"



Director Behruz Shoeibi attends a press conference after the premiere of his movie "Day of Chaos" during the 38th Fajr Film Festival at Tehran's Mellat Cineplex on February 5, 2020. (ISNA/Hadi Zand)

**CULTURE** **TEHRAN** — Director Behruz Shoeibi has said that Iran's ailing economy over the past few years inspired his latest movie "Day of Chaos".

The film, which premiered at the 38th Fajr Film Festival on Wednesday, tells the story of Emad, a well-known cleric who committed grave errors in his individual and social responsibilities.

"I still believe that clerics are an effective part of our society and we do not intend to generalize the film's topic to all people, but the film is about someone who makes some serious mistakes," Shoeibi said during a press conference at the premiere of his film at Tehran's Mellat Cineplex.

The screenplay has been written by Mehran Kashani who also attended the

press conference.

"I wrote the script about a character that is a cleric, so this factor develops sensitivity, because this community is assumed by the public to be dominant in the country's power structure," Kashani said.

Shoeibi said, "The film mostly calls on us to consider our innermost events rather than the external incidents," and added, "Most of us nowadays are trapped by this ignorance, but we need to launch a revolution in our innermost thoughts."

In an interview published earlier by the Fajr organizers, Shoeibi said, "There are some criticisms [of the current economic situation in the country] in the film," and added, "I hope these criticisms are regarded, and I hope the film will be able to spread the word about how a large segment of the people are facing economic problems."

## Tehran session to review books on Trump and White House

**CULTURE** **TEHRAN** — Persian translations of two books on Trump and the White House will be reviewed during a session at the Central Library of Tehran Park-e Shahr on Sunday.

Persian translations of Bob Woodward's "Fear: Trump in the White House" by Milad Fashtami and Michael Wolff's "Fire and Fury: Inside the Trump White House" by Ali Salami have recently been published in Tehran.

In "Fear: Trump in the White House", American investigative journalist Woodward reveals in unprecedented detail the harrowing life inside President Trump's White House and precisely how

he makes decisions on major foreign and domestic policies.

With extraordinary access to the West Wing, American author and journalist Wolff reveals what happened behind the scenes in the first nine months of the most controversial presidency of the age in "Fire and Fury: Inside the Trump White House".

Translator Fashtami, journalist Samaneh Akvan, analyst Hamidreza Gholamzadeh and scholar Alireza Kuhkan are expected to attend the session.

"Fire and Fury: Inside the Trump White House" has been published by Mehrandish, and "Fear: Trump in the White House" was published by Akhtaran.



Copies of the Persian versions of "Fear: Trump in the White House" and "Fire and Fury: Inside the Trump White House".

## Kirk Douglas, Hollywood's tough guy on screen and off, dead at 103

**NEW YORK (Reuters)** — Kirk Douglas, the cleft-chinned movie star who fought gladiators, cowboys and boxers on the screen and the Hollywood establishment, died on Wednesday at the age of 103, his son Michael Douglas said.

"It is with tremendous sadness that my brothers and I announce that Kirk Douglas left us today at the age of 103," Michael Douglas said in a statement to People magazine and on his Facebook page.

"To the world, he was a legend, an actor from the golden age of movies who lived well into his golden years, a humanitarian

whose commitment to justice and the causes he believed in set a standard for all of us to aspire to," Douglas added.

"Kirk's life was well lived, and he leaves a legacy in film that will endure for generations to come, and a history as a renowned philanthropist who worked to aid the public and bring peace to the planet," Michael added, saying he was "so proud" to be his father's son.

Douglas made more than 90 movies in a career that stretched across seven decades and films such as "Spartacus" and "The Vikings" made him one of the biggest box-office stars of the 1950s and '60s.

He also played a major role in breaking the Hollywood blacklist - actors, directors and writers who were shunned professionally because of links to the communist movement in the 1950s. Douglas said he was more proud of that than any film he made.

Tributes poured in from Hollywood. Actor and director Rob Reiner said on Twitter that Douglas "will always be an icon in the pantheon of Hollywood. He put himself on the line to break the blacklist."

Mitzi Gaynor, who appeared with Douglas in the 1963 movie "For Love or Money," said the film would "always hold a special place

in my heart."

"Thank you for so generously sharing your amazing talent with all of us," Gaynor tweeted.

Danny DeVito called him an "inspirational Scallywag," while Ed Asner tweeted "I will always be in your awe."

A stroke in 1996 at age 80 left Douglas with slurred speech and damaged facial nerves. But two weeks later he showed his spirit by attending the Academy Awards ceremony to receive a Lifetime Achievement Award. He also continued to take small acting roles through 2008 but said the stroke left him suicidal.