

Soleimani, star of 41st birthday of revolution

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EDITORIAL

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Where is the place of Islamic Revolution in world calculations?

Bahman 22nd (February 11) is one of the greatest moments in human history. The victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran not only led to overthrow the tyrannical Pahlavi regime, it also cut the hands of arrogant countries, above all the U.S., out of the country. The Islamic Revolution and the subsequent establishment of the Islamic Republic led to major changes in regional and international developments.

The 1979 Revolution was like a sapling that has become a strong tree over the past 40 years and is still growing.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has confronted and challenged the U.S. and the Zionist regime's imperialist policies in the region and the larger world. And Iran's strategic influence in the region has become the greatest concern of the U.S. and Tel Aviv.

This strategic influence derives from the very nature of the Islamic Revolution that attracts the liberal and oppressed nations of the world. It is a popular revolution originated from pure human nature, which does not accept oppression, aggression and violence.

One of the most important effects of the Islamic Revolution was to disrupt the balance of power between the East and the West. We have seen the collapse of the Eastern bloc led by the Soviet Union, as predicted by Imam Khomeini. Now, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Khamenei has promised the decline of the American domination.

Despite all U.S. military, political, economic investments and soft war in the region, President Donald Trump has admitted that Americans have failed and were not able to carry out their plans. It was the Islamic Revolution that, with strong logic and modern interpretation, presented a new discourse, according to the needs of Islamic communities and the Arab environment. ➔3

Syrian forces retake main Aleppo-Damascus highway

For the first time in more than seven years, Syrian army forces have reportedly managed to wrest control of a key highway connecting the capital Damascus to the second largest city Aleppo.

The so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) reported on Tuesday that Syrian soldiers and their allied fighters had recaptured the M5 highway after liberating an area in Aleppo Province, which was the last militant foothold on the road.

SOHR head Rami Abdel Rahman told AFP that the Damascus government retook Aleppo's Rashideen al-Rabea area, adding, "That means they control the entire M5 for the first time since 2012."

The liberation of the M5 motorway, which links the capital Damascus to the major cities

of Hama, Homs and Aleppo, comes on the back of a months-old operation by the Syrian army to liberate Idlib Province.

Idlib and the area north of Aleppo form part of the only large territory still in the hands of militants. The Syrian military has managed to undo militant gains across the country and bring back almost all of Syrian soil under government control.

In a statement carried by the official SANA news agency on Sunday, Syria's General Command of the Army and Armed Forces announced that troops making territorial gains in the eastern countryside of Idlib had linked up with their counterparts advancing in southern Aleppo at one crossing point, establishing full control over a number of towns and strategic hills and nearly 600 square kilometers of land.

The Syrian government has complained that the terror outfits occupying Idlib and Aleppo countryside use locals as human shields and prevent them from leaving to safe areas through humanitarian corridors.

■ Turkey warns of 'Plan B' amid Syria's anti-terror operation in Idlib

Meanwhile, Turkey says it will change tack in northwestern Syrian province of Idlib, where an intensified anti-terror operation is underway by Syrian army against foreign-backed militant outfits, if the deal reached with Russia is violated.

Turkey's Defense Minister Hulusi Akar said, in an interview with the Hurriyet daily that Ankara has made alternative plans for Idlib province if the agreement reached with Russia continues to be violated. ➔10

NATO willing to expand Iraqi training mission to meet Trump demand

NATO is considering an increase to its training mission in Iraq to relieve the burden on the U.S.-led coalition against Islamic State, senior officials and diplomats said on Tuesday.

NATO and the coalition have non-combat "train-and-advise" missions which aim to develop Iraqi security forces but both are suspended over fears for regional stability after a U.S. drone strike killed a top Iranian commander in Baghdad on Jan. 3.

After the killing, U.S. President Donald Trump called on NATO - founded in 1949 to contain a military threat from the Soviet Union - to do more in the Middle East but he has not specified publicly what that might entail.

NATO defense ministers including U.S. Secretary of State Mark Esper will discuss op-

tions for non-combat operations in the Middle East at a two-day meeting in Brussels starting on Wednesday, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said.

"We are discussing what more NATO can do," he told reporters, adding that the alliance would first seek to restart the training with the Iraqi government's blessing.

U.S. Ambassador to NATO Kay Bailey Hutchison said the alliance was also seeking military advice, both from NATO and Iraq, on how to increase the mission, but gave no details.

"I think it will definitely be the answer to what President Trump has requested," she said.

Established in Baghdad in October 2018, the NATO training mission in Iraq numbers some 500 personnel. It does not deploy alongside Iraqi

forces during their operations.

Two allied diplomats told Reuters the number of NATO trainers in Iraq could rise to as much as 2,000, but it would not be a net increase of Western troops in Iraq because the U.S.-led coalition would simply re-assign trainers.

■ Number of trainers set to rise

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ARTICLE

Bahman Vakhshour
Tehran Times journalist

"Walnut Tree": story of enemies' sustained evil

"Walnut Tree" is Mohammad-Hossein Mahdavian's latest film in the docu-drama genre. The director has already shown his ability and skill in this genre with "The Middyay Event" and "Standing in the Dust".

In this work, like his previous works, Mahdavian represents not only a historical event but a war crime that should not be easily overlooked.

The movie begins with showing a long line of porters (kulbars) and Quran recitation next to Qader's body, and flashes back with spiritless narration by Homa, the village's teacher, to lead audiences to June 1987, when a human tragedy happened.

Payman Maadi, who stars as Qader, is one of the Mahdavian's best choices and has given his best performance in this movie. Maadi does not play an unfriendly and apathetic role, which he usually lands, instead, he demonstrates a completely emotional, sincere and highly influential character.

On the other hand, choosing Mehran Modiri to co-star with Maadi is one of the major weaknesses of Mahdavian. It is also one of Modiri's poor performances.

Simple and believable acting of children, remarkable and detailed set, and great music by Habib Khazaifari, who properly used Kurdish songs, allowed the director to portray emotional scenes and present an acceptable film.

Mina Sadati portrays Homa in a not-so-brilliant performance in the film, narrating Qader's elegy with repetitive sentences and lifeless voice that make the audiences bored, while the pictures are so explicit that there is nothing else need to be said.

At the beginning of the film, the narrator talks about fighter jets, pointing out that they drop the remained bombs at any place on their way back to hanger in order to land safely. The director overlooks this important issue so easily as if he is trying to justify this act.

A fighter jet flies over Sardasht and drops a chemical bomb, and most of the residents become infected with chemicals, including Qader and his family. It is just the beginning of Qader's misery. ➔12



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"A Stranger at Home" scoops awards at Fajr theater festival

By Samaneh Aboutalebi

TEHRAN — Iranian director Seyyed Mohammad Mosavat's play "A Stranger at Home" has scooped the main awards, including the grand prize, at the 38th Fajr International Theater Festival (FITF).

The play also brought Mosavat the awards for best director and playwright during the closing ceremony of the festival held at Tehran's Vahdat Hall on Monday. ➔12

Iranian diplomat says ties with Japan have always been at good level

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** – Iran’s Ambassador to Japan, **d e s k** Morteza Rahmani-Movahed, said on Monday that Iran-Japan ties have always been at good level, describing relations as “friendly”.

“Political ties between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Japan have historical background and have always been at good level,” he said at a ceremony held to mark the 41st anniversary of the Islamic Revolution, which is considered national day in Iran.



He noted that Iran’s foreign policy has been based on “moderation”, “constructive interaction” and “efforts to bridge differences through dialogue and cooperation”.

Deputy Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araghchi said in December that Tehran and Tokyo are resolved to continue their consultations over key international and regional issues more closely than ever.

President Hassan Rouhani visited Japan in December and held talks with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on December 20.

Following his meeting with Abe, Rouhani tweeted, “I welcome any effort that could boost economic exchanges, especially in the energy sector, and increase oil exports.”

■ ‘Iran has strategic view on region’
Rahmani-Movahed also said that Iran has a “strategic view” on the Middle East, especially the Persian Gulf region.

He said that Iran’s Hormuz peace initiative is in line with regional peace, stability and progress.

■ ‘Japan to continue efforts to reduce regional tension’

Japanese Parliamentary Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs Nakatani Shinichi, for his part, said at the ceremony that Japan will continue diplomatic efforts to reduce tension in the Persian Gulf region.

■ Japanese official describes ties as ‘strong’
Akiko Santo, president of the House of Councilors of Japan, said in the ceremony that Iran-Japan ties are “strong” and cannot be harmed.

She also attached great importance to expansion of relations.

At the United Nations summit in New York in late September 2019, Iran formally unveiled the proposal for regional security, officially called the Hormuz Peace Endeavour (HOPE).

“Based upon the historical responsibility of my country in maintaining security, peace, stability and progress in the Persian Gulf region and Strait of Hormuz, I would like to invite all the countries directly affected by the developments in the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz to the ‘Coalition for Hope’, meaning Hormuz Peace Endeavor,” President Hassan Rouhani told the UN delegates.

Zarif has invited all regional states to join Iran’s initiative for securing the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz.

In a tweet in September, Zarif said the initiative entails “dialogue, confidence-building, freedom of navigation, energy security, non-aggression, and non-intervention”.

In a post on his Twitter account on October 15, Zarif renewed Iran’s call to all countries bordering the Persian Gulf to join Tehran’s initiative to “forge a blueprint for peace, security, stability, and prosperity” in the region.

Iran reiterates readiness to mediate between Turkey and Syria

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** – Foreign Minister Mohammad **d e s k** Javad Zarif has said Iran is steadfast in its readiness to mediate between Turkey and Syria which have been engaged in sporadic military conflicts in Syria’s northwest.

“Iran reiterates its readiness to facilitate dialogue among brother neighbors #Turkey & #Syria,” Zarif tweeted on Thursday.

He added, “Escalation of tensions only serves interests of terrorists and their sponsors. Avoidance of bloodshed and respect for sovereignty & territorial integrity is imperative.”

Five Turkish soldiers were killed on Monday in an attack carried out by Syrian government forces in Syria’s northwest.

The Turkish Defense Ministry said Monday’s shelling on a military base in Idlib province wounded a further five troops.

Eight Turkish military personnel were killed in a similar attack on Saraqeb, south of Taftanaz.

Al Jazeera’s Sinem Koseoglu said, “This is seen as the highest escalation that has ever happened between Ankara and Damascus in Syria’s nine-year war.”

Ankara has sent major reinforcements to Idlib, as it tries to stem rapid advances by Syrian government forces.

According to al Jazeera, Turkey’s Defense Ministry said in a statement immediately that it had responded and “neutralized” more than 100 enemy targets.

The most recent attack came as a Russian delegation arrived in Ankara for further talks on fighting in Syria.

Turkey backs some of the opposition groups that have made Idlib their final stronghold.

Zarif’s proposal to mediate between Syria and Turkey came a few days after Majid Takht-Ravanchi, Tehran’s ambassador to the United Nations, said Iran is ready to do its best to settle the conflicts between Turkey and Syria in Idlib province.

“Iran is ready to do its best to settle differences between Damascus and Ankara over developments in Idlib province,” he said in a meeting at the United Nations Security Council.

“Situation in the region is worrisome, so, we must try to prevent the crisis from being uncontrollable,” he said.

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

Soleimani, star of the 41st birthday of the revolution

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** – In a show of national unity, **d e s k** Iranians took to the streets in very large numbers across the country to celebrate the 41st anniversary of the the Islamic Revolution.

This year’s celebrations, known as the Bahman 22nd in the Persian calendar year, fell on Tuesday.

Cold wind snow and rain could not deter people from all walks of the life to participate in the rallies to renew their loyalty to the Islamic Republic system.

The rallies began at 8:30 a.m. local time. National anthems were sung in the streets and helicopters were pouring flowers.

The marchers were waving national flags and the photos of legendary commander General Qassem Soleimani, who was assassinated in a U.S. terror attack in Baghdad on January 3.

The rallies this year were of significant importance both because of the Soleimani assassination and the tightening of sanctions against Iran in line with Donald Trump’s “maximum pressure” strategy against Iran.

More than 6,000 reporters and photographers including 300 foreigners, were covering the nationwide rallies.

In the capital Tehran, the marchers crossed different routes to reach Azadi Square, where President Hassan Rouhani addressed the participants.

The Iranian nation toppled the despotic regime of Pahlavi, which was fully supported by the United States in the winter of 1979. The struggle against the shah regime reached full fruition on February 11, 1979.

By December 1978, millions of Iranians had taken to the streets in protest against the policies of the shah on a regular basis.

Grand Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini returned from exile to Iran on Feb. 1, 1979. He was received by millions of well-wishers after the departure of the shah in mid-January 1979.

The collapse of the shah regime became certain on February 11 when the military renounced its loyalty to the shah and joined the revolutionary forces.

■ Rouhani: Our revolution was a choice
Addressing the marchers in Tehran, President Rouhani said, “Our revolution was a choice”.

President Rouhani went on to say that if the Pahlavi regime allowed the people to decide about the kind of ruling system that they liked there was no need for the revolution.

■ ‘There was no need for revolution if shah gave people the right to choice’

“If the previous corrupt regime gave the right of the choice to people there was no need for the revolution,” the president remarked.

He said the Pahlavi regime did not allow the people to select their own desired constitution and choose “independence” instead of being dependent on the West.

“If the previous regime had accepted a healthy and free election, the revolution would not have happened,” the president added.

“It is natural that U.S. cannot tolerate the Islamic Revolution because it knows Iran’s great power in the West Asian region,” Rouhani remarked.

The U.S. has been dreaming of a return to Iran since 41 years ago, the president added.

Americans had chosen the monarchy for Iran and wanted to preserve it and that is why they are opposing the path the Iranian nation have chosen, Rouhani said.

“The U.S. says that they (Iran) must return to 41 years ago but we say we don’t do so ... therefore, we see hostility of the U.S. has emerged during the past 41 years in various forms.”

He called on the Iranian nation to boost their unity. “If we are united, the U.S. will be defeated and economic growth will happen.”

Rouhani said that both diplomacy and resistance are needed to confront enemies.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Rouhani praised the achievements of the country in the defense field over the past years, saying, “Before the Islamic Revolution, 95% of the required arms were imported to the country, while today all of our needs are fulfilled domestically; this means we have scientific capability and military might.”

■ Vice president: Islamic Revolution not static, but dynamic

First Vice President Es’haq Jahangiri, who had participated in the rallies in Zahedan, the capital of Sistan-Baluchestan province, said the Islamic Revolution is not a historically static event. Rather, he said, a dynamic development and a brand new social movement initiated by the Iranian nation.

Jahangiri said the Islamic Revolution happened not by reliance on any foreign military power but through people’s support.

He added that the rallies on the anniversary of the Islamic Revolution sent an important message to the enemies and showed that the people are supporting the Islamic republic system.

Jahangiri went on to say that the Islamic Revolution is opposed to violence and is not reliant on a special group,



sect, or social class.

It is a multi-sided revolution and people form its core, he pointed out.

■ Zarif: Funeral procession for General Soleimani was a referendum

Participating in the rallies in Tehran, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said the huge participation in the funeral procession for General Soleimani was a referendum.

Millions of people took the street in Tehran on January 6 to pay their respect to General Soleimani. It was the greatest gathering since the victory of the Islamic Revolution.

“The funeral procession of martyr Soleimani was a public referendum in order to announce to the U.S. that it is the U.S. that is terrorist.”

People also took part massively in the funeral processions in Ahwaz, Mashhad, Qom and Kerman, the birthplace of the general.

Zarif went on to say that regional people hate the U.S. for assassinating General Soleimani.

“Our people and regional people have shown over the past 40 days – since the martyrdom of General Soleimani – that the U.S. is detested for the terror attack,” Zarif remarked.

Zarif had already said the U.S. targeted a commander who had fought ISIS (Daesh), al-Qaeda, al-Nusra and other terrorist groups. The chief diplomat had also said only the U.S. and ISIS cheered Soleimani’s death.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of the rallies, Zarif also said the enemies have failed to truly know the people of Iran after 41 years.

“That is why they think that the Iranian people will stop supporting the Islamic Revolution if they keep their pressures.”

■ Parliament speaker: Huge turnout empowers Islamic Revolution

Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani said massive participation of people in the rallies marking the glorious anniversary of the Islamic Revolution has led the Islamic Revolution to gain more power.

“The U.S. should know that it must obey the demands of the Iranian nation,” he told reporters on the fringes of rallies in Tehran.

On the approaching parliamentary election, he said, “Surely, people will participate in the election massively and will thwart conspiracies waged by enemies against the country.”

■ Judiciary chief: Iranians vote for resistance not negotiation

Judiciary Chief Ebrahim Raeisi, who had attended the rallies in the shrine city of Mashhad, told reporters that the Iranians are resolved to resist against enemies’ pressure and rejecting any talks with the foes.

He stated that the U.S. must leave the region. “The region should continue its life without presence of the Americans and arrogant countries.”

Since the assassination of General Soleimani, Iranian political and military officials have said the United States must end its military presence in the region.

In retaliation to the Jan. 3 assassination of General Soleimani, Iran struck a major U.S. military airbase in western Iraq on January 8 with ballistic missiles. New revelations by the Pentagon say that 109 American troops suffered brain injuries in the strike.

However, Iranians are insisting that the retaliatory military strike is not enough and the U.S. must leave the region.

■ Amoli Larijani: Islamic Revolution is on right track

Chairman of Iran’s Expediency Council Sadeq Amoli Lar-

ijani, who was in the shrine city of Qom to participate in the rallies, told reporters, “These rallies carry very clear message to the arrogant powers that the Islamic Revolution is on the right path and heading towards its ideals strongly.”

■ Military chief: No one dares to attack Iran due to its military power

Armed Forces Chief of Staff Major General Mohammad Hossein Baqeri said during the rallies in Tehran that Iran’s defense power has made the enemies to be afraid of even thinking about military aggression against the country.

“Each of us, in any department, should move in line with the Islamic Republic’s path towards strengthening (the establishment),” the commander said.

“(Similar to our activities in military sector) in other sectors, including economy and society, we should achieve enough strength that no one dares to attack the country,” General Baqeri underscored.

■ Army commander: U.S. must leave the region

The commander of Iran’s Army Ground Force, who was in Tehran’s Azadi Square, said that all Iranians want the U.S. to leave the region.

Brigadier General Kiomars Heidar said, “If the Americans do not pay attention to the call, they should expect tough revenge each second.”

■ Intelligence minister condemns deal of the century

Attending the rallies in Tehran, Intelligence Minister Mahmood Alavi censured the controversial plan laid out by U.S. President Donald Trump on the decades-old Israeli-Palestinian conflict, saying the Intelligence Ministry voices its protest against the plan.

“We will announce our opposition to the already failed ‘deal of the century’ by participating in the Bahman 22 rallies alongside the revolutionary people of Iran,” Alavi stated.

He added that during the rallies, “We will renew our allegiance with the late founder of the Islamic Republic Imam Khomeini and commit ourselves to all the freedom-seeking people of the world, promising that we will not stop till we oust the terrorist Americans and occupying Israelis from the region and Palestine.”

■ Hossein Taeb: Influence of revolution stronger than enemies’ infiltration networks

Hossein Taeb, the head of the IRGC intelligence service, who had also attended the rallies in Tehran, said the enemies have established networks to infiltrate the country since the victory of the Islamic Revolution but each time their plots have ended in failure.

The U.S. is concentrating on infiltration projects in its “hybrid war” against Iran, Taeb added.

Americans and Westerners’ investment on infiltration is increasing day by the day, he said, adding that “they seek to affect the people’s understanding and beliefs via establishing such networks.”

He went on to highlight that Iran’s intelligence services have a good command over such projects.

A large number of military, religious and political figures also attended the rallies across the country.

Ali Janati, secretary of the Guardian Council and head of the Assembly of Experts; Brigadier General Hossein Salami, the chief commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC); and Brigadier General Esmaeil Qa’ani, the IRGC Quds Force commander were among the senior officials participating in the rallies and seized the opportunity to express their thanks to the noble nation of Iran who took part in the nationwide rallies.

Zarif says Soleimani assassination is a big loss to the entire region

By staff and agency

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has said that cowardly assassination of Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani by the United States is a big loss to the entire region and all those are seeking peace in the world.

In an interview with Lebanon’s Al-Ahed News published on Monday, Zarif said Soleimani represented Iran’s stance in the entire region.

Soleimani and his comrades were assassinated in a U.S. drone airstrike in Baghdad on January 3.

“All eyes now are on the U.S. destructive policy in the region,” Zarif said, noting that “this must be used to strengthen the axis of resistance as per the Leader of the Revolution has said.”

Zarif also said that the blood of General Soleimani and his comrades is still alive.

He also stressed that those who committed the crime of assassinating them will definitely be confined to the ash heap of history.

“Their martyrdom has made clear that the path of altruism and martyrdom is the right

path to confront the hegemony of the global arrogance.”

■ Zarif: ‘Deal of the century’ related to U.S. and Israel elections

Zarif also said that the so-called “deal of the century” proposed by the Trump administration is related to elections in the U.S. and Israel.

“Both Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Trump are in dire need of an electoral victory to remain in their posts,” the chief diplomat said.

“Perhaps each of them needs the victory of another,” he added.

“Trump needs Netanyahu to win in the elections, and the latter needs Trump to remain in power. This is why it was a good opportunity for them to support one another to fulfill their personal ambitions on the one hand and preserve their supporters at home on the other, in

Zarif says deal of century is in fact “a mere business trade that emphasizes the occupation’s ownership.”

addition to supporting their allies,” the senior diplomat noted.

This is only one reason behind announcing the “deal of the century” at this specific time, Zarif remarked.

He also said that the weak reaction of certain Arab leaders to the plan reveals that the U.S. had been aware that those Arab leaders, who set their destiny at the hands of the U.S. and the Zionist entity, won’t dare and never show any serious reaction had this very ridiculous agreement were announced.

“It is not only unrealistic, but also totally unrelated to politics,” Zarif said, adding that “Those leaders have neglected a legal and political project about the rights of an entire nation by announcing this plot, which is in fact a mere business trade that emphasizes the occupation’s ownership.”

Shamkhani phones Ukrainian counterpart over January plane crash investigations

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) Ali Shamkhani, in a phone conversation on Monday, briefed his Ukrainian counterpart Alexei Danilov over the ongoing investigations into the passenger plane that was mistakenly downed by Iran's air defense on January 8.

Shamkhani pointed to Iran's willingness to fully cooperate with the parties involved in the incident, saying, "There has been close collaboration between Iran and Ukraine since the beginning of the incident and the Ukrainian experts were the first group who arrived in Iran and were provided with necessary access to start their technical and

field investigation without any restrictions."

Insisting on preventing any misunderstanding and interference of other parties in the technical process of the investigation, Shamkhani noted, "This bitter incident was due to human error and we must not allow it to turn into a political controversy with the interference of biased elements."

He invited his Ukrainian counterpart to visit Tehran for the joint investigations regarding the incident by the national security agencies of the two countries. "Achieving a mutual technical assessment can yield the final result on this case in a professional and non-political environment."

On January 11, the Armed Forces



General Staff released a statement saying the Ukrainian passenger plane was mistakenly downed near Tehran's Imam Khomeini Airport.

176 people on board lost their lives. The incident happened a few hours after Iran fired dozens of ballistic missiles at a U.S. airbase inside Iraq in retaliation for the assassination of top Iranian military commander Qassem Soleimani.

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif expressed apologies and condolences to all who have been affected by the tragic crash, saying that "U.S. adventurism" has led to this disaster.

"Preliminary conclusions of internal

investigation by Armed Forces: Human error at time of crisis caused by U.S. adventurism led to disaster," Zarif tweeted on January 8.

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei expressed deep condolences to the bereaved families, urging the military to launch investigations into the incident.

Ayatollah Khamenei ordered the Armed Forces General Staff to probe possible failures and shortcoming that led to such a "painful" incident.

The Leader asked relevant officials to devise a mechanism to prevent such incidents in the future.

More than 100 troops have brain injuries from Iran missile strike, Pentagon says

More than 100 American service members have traumatic brain injuries from Iranian airstrikes on Al Asad Air Base in Iraq in January, the Defense Department said, a number that was more than 50 percent higher than previously disclosed.

Of the 109 troops who have been diagnosed with brain injuries, 76 had returned to duty, officials said Monday.

"We are grateful to the efforts of our medical professionals who have worked diligently to ensure the appropriate level of care for our service members, which has enabled nearly 70 percent of those diagnosed to return to duty," said Alyssa Farah, the Pentagon press secretary.

The latest tally, which has steadily grown since the Jan. 8 strike, drew a sharp contrast with the assertion by the Trump administration in the hours after the attack that no Americans were hurt. The number also underscored the unseen effects of traumatic brain injuries, which sometimes do not manifest symptoms for days or weeks but can have long-term physical or mental effects.

And as the injury toll has mounted, veterans groups and others have levied criticism at the White House, in part because, in January, President Trump dismissed the

injuries as "not very serious."

"I heard that they had headaches and a couple of other things," Trump said at a news conference Jan. 22 in Davos, Switzerland. "I don't consider them very serious injuries relative to other injuries I have seen."

At least a dozen missiles were fired during the attack, which was a retaliation for the killing of a top Iranian general, Qassem Soleimani, by an American drone strike in Baghdad on Jan. 3. The Trump administration at first said there were no injuries, but a week later said several service members were evaluated for possible concussions.

Then, days after Mr. Trump's statements in Davos, the Defense Department said that 34 people had suffered brain injuries. The number was later increased to 50 and then to 64, with military officials saying that the symptoms of traumatic brain injuries could take weeks to appear.

The repeated revisions have drawn outrage from some veterans and senators.

"The number just keeps going up," Paul Rieckhoff, the founder of Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, said on Twitter on Monday. "It's time for Congress to demand a full investigation. The public and our military families

deserve the truth."

Frank Luntz, a longtime Republican strategist, said on Twitter on Monday that a traumatic brain injury "can have debilitating lifelong effects."

"We shouldn't hide our veterans' injuries just to pretend like we're invincible," he said.

Traumatic brain injuries can result from the powerful changes in atmospheric pressure that accompany an explosion like that from a missile warhead. Only in the last several years has the Pentagon made a considerable effort to understand the injuries.

Trump's statements appeared to echo sentiments common in the early years of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, where troops rattled by explosions were visibly uninjured and ushered back to duty, only to have long-term effects from the blasts manifest weeks and months later.

Defense Secretary Mark T. Esper said at a news conference in January that the Pentagon took those types of injuries "very seriously."

The White House did not immediately respond to questions on Monday afternoon.

(Source: The New York Times)

Nuclear chief: U.S. JCPOA move undermining diplomacy

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — The head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) said on Monday that the unilateral pullout of the U.S. from the 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), has dealt a blow to the agreement which proved the toughest international issues could be tackled diplomatically.

"It was a dominant belief that the JCPOA could set a model in this regard.... But, unfortunately, this euphoria didn't last long. With the embedded irrationality in the U.S. administration's mindset, such optimism is fading away so quickly," Ali Akbar Salehi told the "International Conference on Nuclear Security" in Vienna, Austria, Press TV reported.

Salehi urged the European Union, as a main stakeholder of the deal, to play its role in keeping the JCPOA alive by living up to its commitments without paying heed to the Trump administration's "unjust pressures."

"Unfortunately, the U.S. administration has not yet come to its senses in recognizing the reality on grounds and keeps on inflicting harm on our people as well as the people of the entire region while creating and supporting terrorist groups such as ISIS (Daesh)," Salehi added.

The JCPOA, better known as the Iran deal, was signed between Tehran and 5+1 group -- the five permanent members of the UN Security Council - and Germany - in July 2015 and went into effect in January 2016. The UN Security Council also adopted resolution 2231 in July 2015 endorsing the international agreement.

However, U.S. President Donald Trump, a stern critic of the landmark deal, unilaterally pulled Washington out of the agreement



in May 2018, and unleashed the "toughest ever" sanctions in history against the Islamic Republic in defiance of global criticism. The move was intended to strangle the Iranian economy, especially through a total ban on Iran's oil exports.

Under Washington's pressure, the three European signatories to the JCPOA have so far failed to protect Tehran's business interests under the deal against the American bans.

In May 2019, exactly one year after the U.S. quit the deal and imposed sanction on Iran, Tehran began to gradually reduce its commitments under the JCPOA to both retaliate for Washington's departure, and Europeans' failure to honor their commitments.

On January 5, Iran took a fifth and last step in reducing its commitments, and said it would no longer observe any operational limitations on its nuclear industry, whether concerning the capacity and level of uranium enrichment, the volume of stockpiled urani-

um or research and development. However, Iran has insisted if the Europeans honor their obligations it will immediately reverse its decisions.

EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell has said that Europe must ensure Iran's benefits from the nuclear deal if it wants the deal to survive.

"If we want the Iran nuclear deal to survive, we need to ensure that Iran benefits if it returns to full compliance," he wrote in an article in the Project Syndicate published on Saturday.

Borrell visited Iran on Feb. 3. He held talks with Foreign Minister Zarif, President Rouhani and Parliament speaker Ali Larijani.

Elsewhere in his speech, Salehi said as a member state to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), Iran maintains that in line with Article IV of the NPT, nothing "shall be interpreted as affecting the inalienable right of all the parties to the treaty

to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination."

The AEOI chief emphasized that nuclear security and safety measures must be utilized to support such objectives and functions.

Late last month, a group of Iranian lawmakers submitted a motion to the parliament calling for Iran's withdrawal from the NPT after the three European signatories to the JCPOA failed to meet their contractual commitments following the U.S. exit.

A member of the Parliament's Presiding Board, Mahmoud Sadeqi, said that the motion had been prepared after the European trio triggered a dispute mechanism devised in the deal, which could lead to the restoration of UN Security Council sanctions against Iran.

Salehi, a nuclear physicist, further said the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is expected to assist its members "upon their request and on a non-discriminatory basis, in their efforts to enhance a sustainable nuclear security regime based on their national needs and priorities."

Iran believes that "nuclear security activities of the Agency should be funded with no string attached by the donors," he added.

"Iran has taken upon itself to enhance further the mechanisms of its nuclear security throughout the country, through its own resources and also by utilizing the agency (IAEA) and other member states' potentials," the Iranian nuclear chief said.

He emphasized that the Islamic Republic is updating the regulations regarding the security of radioactive sources and the relevant guidance on control and combating illicit trafficking of radioactive and nuclear materials.

Zarif to Trump: Time to abandon your delusions

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — By capitalizing on huge rallies on Tuesday marking the victory of the Islamic Revolution, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif advised U.S. President Donald Trump to abandon his delusions about Iran.

"Iranians turned out in huge numbers to rally on the 41st anniversary of their revolution -- and to honor their fallen heroes," Zarif tweeted. «Millions of Iranians took to the streets across the country on Tuesday despite cold weather to celebrate the 41st anniversary of the Islamic Revolution.

"Message to Trump (+vassals): Time to abandon your delusions." Zarif said the rallies showed that Iranians, despite differences, are undivided in supporting their system.

"With all challenges & differences, in defending country & honor, all 82 million Iranians are ONE," Zarif remarked.

The rallies this year were of significant importance as the United States, in an act of state terrorism, assassinated top Iranian general, Qassem Soleimani, in Baghdad on January 3 and has tightened its economic sanctions line with its "maximum pressure" strategy against Iran.

If redesign of Arak reactor delayed Iran will return to previous one: Salehi

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — The head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization, Ali Akbar Salehi, said on Monday that if China does not help Iran with redesigning its Arak nuclear reactor, Tehran will restore the previous one.

"If the project, due to U.S. disruption and the Europe's shortcoming, is not implemented (by the Chinese contractor) Iran may inevitably return to the previous design of Arak's Khondab heavy water project," Salehi said in a meeting with his Chinese counterpart in Vienna.

Salehi was in Vienna to attend an international nuclear security conference.



They further exchanged views over mutual cooperation, especially over renovation and redesigning of the Khondab reactor.

Salehi added that other signatories to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) should assist more seriously to implement the mentioned project to counter the U.S. unilateralism.

According to the 2015 nuclear deal, known as the JCPOA, Iran is entitled to "redesign and rebuild a modernized heavy water research reactor in Arak, based on an agreed conceptual design, using fuel enriched up to 3.67%, in a form of an international partnership which will certify the final design."

In November 2015, the document on redesigning the heavy water reactor was signed by all parties to the JCPOA.

Iran and the 5+1 group (Russia, China, the U.S., Britain, France and Germany) struck the JCPOA in July 2015 and started to implement it in January 2016.

In May 2018, the U.S. withdrew from the nuclear deal but the remaining parties have sought to preserve it.

Foreign leaders congratulate Iran on Islamic Revolution anniversary

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Top officials from various countries have congratulated Iran on the anniversary of the 1979 Islamic Revolution which fell on Tuesday, February 11.

Rafael Grossi, the new director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, congratulated Ali Akbar Salehi, director of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, on anniversary of the revolution. Grossi congratulated Iran in a ceremony held at the residence of Iran's ambassador to Vienna on Monday night.

In another ceremony held in Iran's embassy in Syria, Syrian Deputy-Foreign Minister Faisal Mekdad congratulated the anniversary of the revolution, saying Islamic revolution changed the international equations.

He also added that Iran's revolution was based on supporting the people's fight for freedom and independence.

In a message to President Hassan Rouhani, Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev congratulated the anniversary of the revolution and wished the Iranian people peace and prosperity.

In separate messages to Rouhani, Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Armenian President Armen Sarkissian, Sultan of Oman Haitham bin Tariq Al Said, Kuwaiti Emir Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Emomali Rahmon, the president of Tajikistan, congratulated anniversary of the revolution.

Iranians celebrated the 41st anniversary of the Islamic Revolution, which toppled the U.S.-backed Pahlavi regime in 1979, on Tuesday.

Where is the place of Islamic Revolution in world calculations?

1 → Before the Islamic Revolution the issue of Palestine was being forgotten, but the Islamic Revolution changed that mindset and the issue was revived. The hasty plan of the Deal of the Century aimed at wiping out Palestine has been proposed because of the widespread Palestinian resistance.

Of course, the Zionist regime and the West tried to tarnish the image of Islam with the terrorist acts of ISIS, al-Qaeda and Al-Nusra Front, but the culture and discourse of the Islamic Revolution still persist and fascinate most oppressed nations.

Today, the Western media outlets have launched a warfare campaign against the Islamic Revolution and pure Islamic ideology, but as the logic of the Islamic Revolution is intrinsic and rational, it is developing day by day. The logic, along with Iran's defensive and security deterrence, has become a nightmare for the world's criminals.

First trial session of Ruhollah Zam held in Tehran



TASNIM — The first trial session of Ruhollah Zam, the head of an anti-Iranian website and Telegram channel, was held on Monday.

The court hearing was held at the branch 15 of Tehran's Revolution Court, presided over by Judge Abolqasem Salavati, Tasnim reported.

At the beginning of the hearing, the prosecutor's representative read out parts of the indictment against the defendant. The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) announced, in a statement back in October, that in a "complicated" operation, it had managed to arrest Zam, the administrator of a website "directed and supported by France's intelligence service."

The IRGC emphasized that Zam had been running extensive psychological warfare in recent years with direct logistical support of foreign intelligence services and counter-revolutionary agents outside the country in order to sow

discord inside Iran, stoke Iranophobia, disseminate lies, foment doubt among the younger generation about religious beliefs, prepare the ground for acts of violence and terror and create chaos and unrest inside the country.

"This evil mercenary element" was busted during a "sophisticated" intelligence operation, according to the IRGC statement.

"Despite being under the guidance of the French intelligence service and the support of the US and Zionist intelligence services..., and being guarded round the clock by various means and covers, he fell into a trap laid by... the IRGC's Intelligence Organization," the statement read.

Amadnews was suspended by the messaging app Telegram in 2018 after Iran accused it of carrying calls for violence during protests that started in late 2017 and continued across the country. But the channel soon reappeared under a new name.

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	447151.9
IFX	5660.00

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	46,006 rials
GBP	54,162 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$54.35/b
WTI	\$50.44/b
OPEC Basket	\$55.11/b
Gold	\$1,570.40/oz
Silver	\$17.80/oz
Platinum	\$967.30/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

Eurozone manufacturing recession although not the eurozone as a whole

By Tim Worstall

In order to invest in something, we've got to decide what to, actually, invest in. Something so simple that it's a tautology, of course. Macroeconomic analysis can't actually tell us what we should invest in, specifically. What it can do is tell us about economies as a whole, even about sectors within them. Because, you know, the "macro" part of the economics there is about whole economies and sectors within them, not about specific companies or opportunities.

Our current macroeconomic numbers tell us that the eurozone manufacturing sector is well into recessionary territory. We'd thus do well to simply avoid this sector.



The eurozone services sector is doing rather better, which is why the entire economy is not in recession. But, while this is true, we should avoid that recessionary sector. Perhaps, switch from holding manufacturing stocks to services, or perhaps, out of the economy as a whole.

Sure, those numbers are higher than they have been. But they're still dismal. Especially when we consider that it's the larger countries, with the larger manufacturing sectors, at the bottom. The Greek and Irish economies are smaller than several European cities.

This does not indicate that we should abandon the eurozone on these macroeconomic grounds, rather that we might want to think about abandoning the manufacturing sector within the eurozone.

■ In the manufacturing sector

It does, though, get worse. For, of course, a PMI is only an estimate, from a survey, of what we think is going to happen. We do have information on what has been happening in that manufacturing sector inside the eurozone.

German industrial production took a beating in December, falling by 3.5% m/m and 6.8% y/y. The seasonally and calendar-adjusted headline reversed all of November's 1.2% m/m increase, meaning in the fourth quarter output fell 1.9% q/q. Energy production picked up by 2% m/m in December.

One of our GDP oddities is that energy is counted as an increase. Yet it's an input, meaning that if we require less because of good weather we're recorded as being poorer - not quite the way most of us think of it. And if we back out that energy increase from industrial production, we get to an even worse number for manufacturing (industrial being manufacturing plus energy and construction and mining).

France's headline industrial production decreased by 2.8% m/m in December after zero growth in November. As a result, seasonally and calendar-adjusted industrial output fell 0.6% q/q in the final quarter of the year.

There simply are not good numbers, from any part of the eurozone industrial or manufacturing economy. Thus, we want to be out of this sector - or at very least, not putting more into it.

■ The merits of the eurozone itself

I've long been dubious about the merits of the eurozone itself, and nothing we're seeing here changes my view. However, that's politics. The investment story here is that we've got this major sector - eurozone manufacturing - that is performing badly, it's in recession, in fact. Therefore, we don't want to be investing in it.

The current advice is, therefore, to steer clear of eurozone manufacturing companies. Things are bad and unlikely to get better anytime soon. There is no policy lever to pull to change this either.

However, we must also recall that markets move up at the first signs of recovery. So, we need to be looking at these numbers and sniffing for the first shoots of growth. Once those are seen, we can expect significant rises in stock prices.

For the moment, the outlook is more of the same - that is, worse. The thing to be looking for is the inflection point, and that'll be the time to buy the sector, eurozone manufacturers.

(Source: seekingalpha.com)

TCCIMA holds meeting to improve production, business

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA)'s committee for "improving the business environment and removing production barriers" held its 15th meeting to discuss production and business related issues.

In the meeting which was attended by senior officials and members of the chamber as well as representatives of some pertaining government entities, ways of improving the country's business environment were explored, TCCIMA website published.

Speaking in the event, the chairman of the committee, Mohammadreza Najafi-Manesh underlined the need for establishing special courts for business-related cases, saying that based on the World Bank reports, business and trade-related cases in Iran take longer time than the global average to be addressed and resolved.

He further emphasized the need for re-



ducing the time for the process of business license registration, saying that establishing

a business in Iran takes nearly 73 days while this time should be normally three days max.

Tehran, Islamabad ink MOU on electronic exchange of customs data

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iran and Pakistan signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) for joint collaboration in electronic exchange of information between the customs of the two countries, Tasnim news agency reported.

The MOU was signed in Islamabad on Monday by Director General of Information Technology and Communication of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) Hayedeh Baqeripour and Chief of International Customs at Pakistan's Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) Fayaz Rasool Maken.

Based on the MOU, the information regarding the two neighbors' trade and customs processes will be exchanged electronically.

This will consequently accelerate and facilitate trade and reduces related costs while eliminating the possibility of counterfeiting and smuggling.

In this signing ceremony, attended by customs authorities of Pakistan and senior diplomats of the two countries, Iranian and Pakistani customs officials emphasized



the need for expansion of economic ties and increase of bilateral trade exchanges.

Given the existing capacities and interests of the two countries to expand their trade and economic cooperation, the volume of trade exchanges between Iran and Pakistan can be higher than the current level, the two sides stressed.

Since Pakistan has recently taken membership in TIR Convention (International Road Transports), suitable opportunities have been provided for increasing cooperation between customs offices of the two countries in the field of international transport and transit of goods.

Iran's 10-month liquidity growth at 28%: fin. min.

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iran's liquidity has grown by 28% in the first 10 months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2019-January 20, 2020), according to the Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Farhad Dejpasand.

As reported by ILNA, Dejpasand noted that the government hasn't resorted to the banking system to meet its budgetary needs.

"Considering the current situation in which the country is under pressure from the unjust U.S. sanctions, the governmental assets should be used as leverage for growth," he stressed.

He further mentioned a program for reforming the country's banking system and said, so far 125 trillion rials (about \$2.9 billion) worth of stocks and 65 trillion rials (about \$1.54 billion) of excess assets have been sold by the country's major banks.

Over 54 percent of the facilities which the country's banking system has provided for the domestic economic sectors have been working capital loans.

In early January 2020, deputy economy



minister for banking and insurance, Abbas Memarnejad announced that Iranian banks had managed to sell 150 trillion rials (about \$3.57 billion) worth of their excess properties following the government plan for pruning the country's banking system.

According to the official, based on the mentioned plan, banks are obliged to sell 400 trillion rials (about \$9.5 billion) of their assets in order to reform the banking sector.

The mentioned assets are highly diverse and include a variety of items like lands, companies, firms, and shares, each group of which is being sold on its own terms and conditions, Memarnejad said.

TPO holds seminar on introducing Vietnam's market

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) held a seminar on introducing the markets of Vietnam on Monday.

The seminar was participated by 80 exporting companies from different sectors including foodstuff, medicine, oil, gas and petrochemicals, technical and engineering services, carpet and mat, TPO website published.

As reported by the Public Relations Department of TPO, the event was participated by Mostafa Mousavi, the head of Iran-Vietnam Joint Chamber of Commerce as well as Vietnamese commercial attaché to Iran and Iran's former commercial attaché to Vietnam.

Introducing and investigating the potentials of Vietnamese market and the strategies to enter this market were reviewed and studied during the seminar in a bid to find the ways for elevating bilateral trade between the two countries.

The Iranian products with export advantage to Vietnam were introduced, challenges that traders are facing for doing business in the Vietnamese market were investigated and Vietnam's trade information sources were introduced during the gathering.

Meanwhile, the services that Iran-Vietnam Joint Chamber of Commerce is offering to the Iranian companies were mentioned.

As announced by the head of Iran-Vietnam Joint Chamber of Commerce, the value of trade between the two countries reached \$352 million in the past Iranian calendar year of 1397 (ended on March 20, 2019), up over 100 percent from

\$172 million in its preceding year.

"According to the official statistics, the worth of trade between the two countries stood at \$352 million in the previous Iranian calendar year [1397], the figure, however, is not approved by the joint chamber, since due to the U.S. sanctions much of the two countries' trade is done through third countries and is estimated to be around \$700 million," Mostafa Mousavi said.

The Asian country is eager for boosting its trade with Iran and considering the banking issues the two countries trade is mostly done through bartering, the official noted.

According to Mousavi, because of the sanctions most of Iran's exports to Vietnam are being done through Turkey and Oman, while Vietnamese goods are imported through the UAE, which has led to not being mentioned in the official statistics of the two countries.

Vietnam is one of the world's major producers of non-oil commodities and its products are of very high quality.

The country was the 45th exporter of goods to Iran during the past Iranian calendar year, mainly exporting coffee, pepper, fish feed, and cellphones to Iran.

During an Iran-Vietnam business forum which was held in Tehran on January 7, the two sides discussed the issue of Iran and Vietnam signing a preferential trade agreement in order to boost the level of trade between the two countries to \$2 billion.

The forum was attended by Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) Deputy Head for

International Affairs Mohammad-Reza Karbasi, Vietnam's Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development Le Quok Dawn, Vietnamese Ambassador in Tehran Nguyen Yen, and Head of Iran-Vietnam Joint Chamber of Commerce Mostafa Mousavi.

Speaking in the event, Karbasi emphasized that both Iranian and Vietnamese government officials are seeking improvement of economic relations along with good political ties.

"Vietnam is a member of ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) and Iran is an ECO (Economic Cooperation Organization) member, while both countries are part of the Eurasian Economic Agreement, so they could help each other entering into the mentioned markets", the official said.

Pointing to the fact that the volume of trade between Iran and Vietnam decreased by 30 percent last year, Karbasi noted that the two sides should take necessary measures to identify and facilitate the development of trade.

The two sides also underlined bartering trade as a good solution for tackling the banking problems between the two countries.

Delivering his speech in the forum, Le Quok Dawn referred to the visits of the two countries' presidents to the other nation and said: "The fact is that there is a high level of political will for expansion of cooperation, so in practice, the current limiting barriers must be removed in order for the volume of trade between the two countries to reach the \$2 billion goal."

Hong Kong stocks lead gains in Asia as investors weigh economic impact of coronavirus

Stocks in Asia Pacific saw gains on Tuesday as investors continued to weigh the economic impact of the ongoing coronavirus outbreak which has already taken more than 1,000 lives.

Hong Kong's Hang Seng index led gains among major markets regionally as it surged 1.26% to close at 27,583.88, with shares of Chinese tech giant Tencent jumping 2.1%. Shares of automobile firm Geely soared 5.69% after the company announced it was in talks to strengthen ties with Volvo.

Mainland Chinese stocks saw gains on the day, with the Shanghai composite up 0.39% to around 2,901.67 and the Shenzhen component advancing 0.37% to 10,768.63. The Shenzhen composite rose marginally to approximately 1,758.02.

The S&P/ASX 200 in Australia finished its trading day 0.61% higher at 7,055.30 as almost all sectors gained. Shares of medical device firm Cochlear, however, tumbled 3.39% after the company reduced its outlook for fiscal year 2020 due to the outbreak's impact in the Greater China region, one of the main markets for the company.

Investors watched for developments on the ongoing coronavirus outbreak in China, where uncertainty remains over when work can resume at factories in China.



The "risk of a larger downgrade in Chinese GDP growth over Q1 20 and 2020 as a whole is gaining momentum," Richard Grace, senior currency strategist and head of international economics at Commonwealth Bank of Australia, wrote in a note.

"With China's economy accounting for some 17% of world GDP, but accounting for a significant contribution to growth in the global economy, the risk of a larger downgrade to global growth is clear," Grace said.

■ Everyone's estimates as guess-timates

Shane Oliver, head of investment strategy and chief economist at AMP Capital Investors, told CNBC on Tuesday that "everyone's estimates are really just guess-timates at the moment."

"I'm assuming that we'll see a gradual let up in the lockdown in China as we get more confidence that the number of cases has peaked. And that within a month or so,

a lot of the restrictions will have been lifted," Oliver told CNBC's "Street Signs" on Tuesday.

Still, he acknowledged that "a lot of uncertainty" remains as there no clear evidence yet that the number of cases has peaked.

The "official numbers would suggest that, but there's a lot of debate about the reliability of ... the data in terms of the number of cases," Oliver said. "'If the data is giving us an accurate picture, it does give us some confidence that the hit to the Chinese economy in the current quarter will be limited.'"

The U.S. GDP could also be hit. A CNBC survey of 11 forecasters over the weekend finds first-quarter GDP estimates averaging just 1.2%, down nearly a point from the fourth quarter. Economists see a bounce back to 2% growth in the second quarter, depending on the severity of the virus both in China and in other countries.

The U.S. dollar index, which tracks the greenback against a basket of its peers, was last at 98.905 after seeing an earlier low of 98.825.

The Japanese yen traded at 109.91 per dollar, off levels below 108.6 seen last week. The Australian dollar changed hands at \$0.6708 after touching an earlier low of \$0.6679.

(Source: cnbc.com)

IMIDRO, NIORDC ink MOU for joint production of needle, sponge coke

ENERGY **TEHRAN** — The National Iranian Oil Refining and Distribution Company (NIORDC) signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO) for joint production of sponge and needle coke in two of the country's refineries.

The MOU was signed in a ceremony on Monday which was attended by senior officials from the two entities and the oil ministry, including the Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh, NIORDC Managing Director Alireza Sadeq-Abadi, the Iranian Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Reza Rahmani, and IMIDRO Head Khodadad Gharibpour, as well as the heads of the two refineries.

The document was signed by NIORDC Managing Director Alireza Sadeq-Abadi and IMIDRO Head Khodadad Gharibpour.

As reported by Shana, the said petcoke are planned to be produced in Bandar Abbas and Imam Khomeini refineries and will make the country self-sufficient in the production of these fuels which are used in the steel industry.

Under the MOU, the Research Institute of Petroleum Industry (RIPI) will cooperate



NIORDC Managing Director Alireza Sadeq-Abadi (R), and IMIDRO Head Khodadad Gharibpour exchanging signed MOU document in Tehran on Monday, as Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh (2nd L) and Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Reza Rahmani (3rd L) look upon.

with IMIDRO to launch a coke production unit in the mentioned refineries and the needle and sponge coke required for the steel production will be produced using these low-sulfur fuel oils.

The pilot plant of the unit will be built at RIPI, and with the signing of this memorandum, industrial-scale coke units will be contracted in the refineries afterward.

This agreement is of great strategic importance for Iran since the U.S. sanctions have impeded the imports of petcoke into the country.

Petroleum coke, abbreviated coke or petcoke, is a final carbon-rich solid material that derives from oil refining and is one type of the group of fuels referred to as cokes.

There are at least four basic types of petroleum coke, namely, needle coke, honeycomb coke, sponge coke and shot coke.

Different types of petroleum coke have different microstructures due to differences in operating variables and the nature of the feedstock. Significant differences are also to be observed in the properties of the different types of coke, particularly ash and volatile matter contents.

SP platforms 13A, 13C loaded at Bushehr yard

ENERGY **TEHRAN** — Platform 13A and 13C of Iran's South Pars gas field (in the Persian Gulf) were both loaded at Sadra yard in the southwestern province of Bushehr on Monday to be shipped toward their designated offshore place, Shana reported.

Payam Motamed, the operator of phase 13 of developing South Pars, put the physical progress of the nearly 2,500-ton structures at more than 98 percent, saying that they both have been designed and built totally by the Iranian experts and the major parts and equipment have been supplied by domestic producers.

According to the official, each platform is going to produce 500 million cubic feet or 14.2 million cubic meters (mcm) of sour gas per day and the offshore operations of the mentioned phase would be completed when these two platforms start

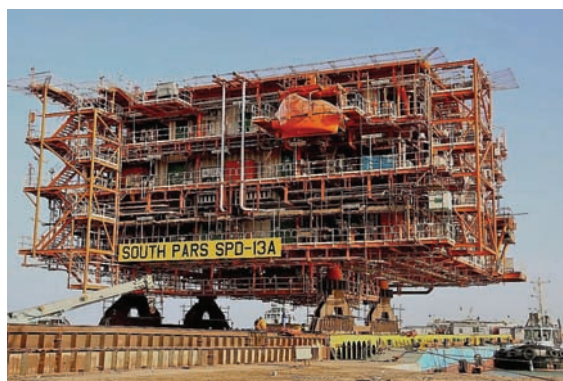
operation, extracting 28.4 mcm of gas per day.

The first platform of the phase 13 was installed on its designated offshore spot in early December 2018.

This phase is aimed at production of 56 mcm of gas, 75,000 barrels of gas condensate and 400 tons of sulfur per day in addition to one million tons of ethane and one million tons of propane and butane per annum.

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

The field is estimated to contain a significant amount of natural gas, accounting for about eight percent of the



world's reserves, and approximately 18 billion barrels of condensate.

Coronavirus will impact global solar supply chain, says Wood Mackenzie

The Chinese government has implemented measures, including restricting movement and extending the Lunar New Year, to help control the spread of the coronavirus, but this will put constraints on the global solar module supply chain, says research and analysis firm Wood Mackenzie.

Wood Mackenzie senior analyst in the energy transition research team Xiaojing Sun said: "It is unclear how soon the travel controls will be lifted. If they remain in place, production from Chinese manufacturers will be reduced."

She noted that although factories on the Chinese mainland will feel the worst of the impact, overseas module assembly factories which rely on imports of items like frames, backsheets and junction boxes will also feel the brunt of the virus' impact.

Sun said: "Module production in south-east Asia and the U.S. usually carry one to two months of supplementary material inventory on-site."

"If the production interruption in mainland China lasts longer than one month, factories in Southeast Asia and the U.S. will start to see supply shortages that will reduce their production output."

China is the largest producer of solar modules globally, and so any potential strain could have an impact farther afield, she said.

"Developers waiting for module delivery from mainland China in March and April will not see the orders delivered on time, while deliveries due late in the second quarter of 2020 are also likely to be delayed, she added.

■ Late module delivery

"Late module delivery will affect project construction schedules around the world, and projects with Q3 and Q4 2020 placed-in-



service dates are likely to be hit particularly hard," the analyst said.

Wood Mackenzie noted that Asian countries including Vietnam, Malaysia and the Philippines have imposed visa restrictions on visitors from China, including workers at solar manufacturing facilities in those countries. This will in turn impact subsidiaries of Chinese module manufacturers in South-east Asia, causing a drop in module output.

Sun said: The "supply interruption also means that potential price inflation may come earlier."

"Wood Mackenzie had forecast that module oversupply would depress prices this year. Delays in China, depending on their duration, would soften any price dip."

"If activity is restored by the end of February, the impact is likely to be short-term."

"However, if restrictions remain in place longer, then the impact on supply in China will be significant, choking the country's output."

The "longer strict public health measures stay in place, the more likely it is that prices will be pushed higher in the second half of 2020."

(Source: smart-energy.com)

As China suspends fuel contracts, Indian firms go bargain hunting

Indian firms are on a hunt for bargains on diverted cargoes of crude oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG), with Chinese energy majors declaring force majeure to avoid taking delivery of some cargoes, said several people aware of the development.

India is the world's third-largest crude oil buyer and the fourth-largest LNG importer. It consumes 145 million standard cubic meters a day (mmscmd) of gas.

A novel coronavirus outbreak in China has caused oil demand to plunge in the world's second-biggest economy, forcing state-run CNOOC, China's biggest LNG importer, to suspend contracts.

Several refineries, including Sinopec, the world's largest refiner, plan to reduce output or shut plants. This has also led shipping rates to fall.

Trade tensions and a slowing global economy also have an overhang on energy markets.

"Indian buyers thus have a window of opportunity to avail distress deals available on sea bound crude and LNG, meant for consumption in China," said Debasish Mishra, partner at Deloitte India.

This comes against the backdrop of oil markets facing a situation called contango wherein the spot price is lower than a futures contract.

Concerned over the situation, the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) may advance its 5-6 March meeting, with its technical panel recommending a provisional cut to the OPEC plus arrangement.

According to S&P Global Platts, "30 to 60 million barrels of oil already purchased and on its way to China will need to be either resold and/or kept in

storage for future use."

India is a key Asian refining hub, with an installed capacity of more than 249.36 million tons per annum (mtpa) through 23 refineries.

■ Large Indian refiners

Large Indian refiners include Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL), Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL), Nayara Energy Ltd (formerly Essar Oil), and Reliance Industries Ltd.

"Sinopec plans to reduce throughput by around 10% of its total 5.89 million b/d capacity in February," S&P Global Platts said.

The state-run Petronet LNG Ltd said the company is not "contracting such cargoes", said its managing director and chief executive Prabhat Singh. "There is anyway a glut in the market and it will reflect in spot buying. While it is not an ethical thing to do, nor is right from the corporate governance point of view, a market will behave like a market," he said.

India is building up its LNG portfolio with local firms having inked long-term LNG contracts totalling 22mtpa. It has also been trying to renegotiate its LNG contracts with companies exploring strategies such as time swap of volumes, destination swaps, and contract on free on board basis to reduce the final fuel price.

An IOC spokesperson declined comment. Queries emailed to the spokespersons of BPCL, HPCL, Nayara Energy Ltd, and RIL late on Friday evening remain unanswered.

(Source: hellenicshippingnews.com)

Oil gains 1% as short-sellers take profit; investors still wary over coronavirus

Oil prices rose more than 1% on Tuesday as recent sharp falls have encouraged investors holding short positions to book profits, but the market remains jittery over the Wuhan virus, which has now killed more than 1,000 in China.

Brent crude LCOc1 rose 79 cents, or nearly 1.5%, to \$54.06 a barrel by 0216 GMT, while U.S. West Texas Intermediate CLc1 was up 63 cents, or about 1.3%, to \$50.20.

"I know volumes are very weak today ... I also would like to point out that we are in a technical support level and that might be encouraging those who are short to take profits," Michael McCarthy, chief market strategist at CMC Markets, told Reuters over the phone.

The number of coronavirus deaths on the mainland have now reached 1,016, China's National Health Commission said, and the number of cases have



topped 42,600.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and its

allies, a grouping known as OPEC+ and including Russia, proposed the additional cuts last week, but Russia

said on Friday it needed more time to decide whether to join in any further output reductions.

The coronavirus outbreak could trim China's full-year economic growth rate by as much as 1 percentage point in 2020, said the Chinese government think tank National Institute for Finance and Development.

The virus has also spread to two dozen other countries, with the head of the World Health Organization (WHO) cautioning on Monday that the cases outside of China could be the "spark that becomes a bigger fire."

While the virus outbreak is hurting China's economy - and others affected such as Japan and Singapore - San Francisco Federal Reserve Bank President Mary Daly, said the coronavirus impact on the U.S. economy has been limited.

(Source: reuters.com)

This delayed megaproject raises questions about Arctic energy

By Simon Watkins

In the context of global liquefied natural gas (LNG) companies, Russia's number two gas producer (after state-owned Gazprom), Novatek, has always been seen as being unusually reliable in terms of delivering its projects on time and on budget. This applied equally to the first three liquefaction and purification facilities (trains) of its \$27 billion flagship Arctic LNG project in the Yamal Peninsula (Yamal LNG) despite the full weight of U.S. sanctions being imposed on Russia in 2014 as a result of its annexation of Crimea.



The announcement last week from Novatek that it has delayed the launch of the fourth train of the Yamal LNG project, then, raises serious questions about the company's ambitious plans for the project and for similar projects being undertaken or considered by Russia in the Arctic.

These questions go to the heart of the Kremlin's commitment to Arctic exploration, as the previously rigorous implementation of the earlier three trains was seen as a sign of how seriously Russia's President Vladimir Putin regarded the Yamal LNG project for three key reasons, according to Moscow-based analysts spoken to by oilprice.com last week.

First, there is the physical expansion of Russian entities into the Arctic region, clearly marking the country's claim to all the resources that the entire area has to offer. Second, for a long time Putin has thought that Russia's status as an energy superpower - and especially a gas one - has not been reflected in its standing in the lucrative LNG sector. And third, LNG is a key part of Russia's ongoing plans to secure as much of the still fast growing Asia segment of the gas market as possible to augment its pipelined gas plans.

■ Independent energy sources

According to various independent energy sources, Asia's robust economic growth over the next 10 years is set to continue, as is its uptake of gas, with China expected to increase the gas share of its energy mix from 6 percent to 15 percent by 2030.

The importance that Novatek is placing on the Asian markets and the magnitude of volumes that are expected to move in the Eastern direction is underlined by the fact that it is moving forward with the trans-shipment LNG facility on the Russian Far East coast in Kamchatka, Anna Belova, senior Russia and FSU oil and gas analyst for GlobalData, in New York, told OilPrice.com. The \$1.5 billion Kamchatka terminal itself allows for substantial cost reductions to be made on shipping LNG to all key buying destinations. Using this route, a fleet of icebreaker tankers can ship gas to Asia for around five months of the year, a route that takes around half the time of the standard route via the Suez Canal and reduces costs by about 25%.

Such was the Kremlin's determination to move ahead with its Arctic projects that various Russian entities were inveigled in and around the time when the U.S. imposed its 2014 sanctions to finance key parts of the Yamal LNG project. The Russian Direct Investment Fund, for example, established a joint investment fund with the state-run Japan Bank for International Cooperation with each contributing half of a total of about JPY100 billion (\$890 million) to it.

The Russian government itself, having bankrolled Yamal LNG from the beginning with money from the state budget, supported it again when sanctions were introduced by selling bonds in Yamal LNG (the program began on 24 November 2015, with a RUB75 billion 15-year issue), and then provided it with another RUB150 billion (\$2.2 billion) of backstop funding from the National Welfare Fund.

■ Novatek becoming self-sufficient

Putin was also determined that U.S. sanctions should not tangentially hamper Yamal LNG's technological development, advocating that Novatek become as self-sufficient as possible in this regard. "Novatek aimed to localize the fabrication and construction of LNG trains and modules to decrease the overall cost of liquefaction and develop a technological base within Russia, and it has made great progress in realizing this," Andrey Polischuk, senior oil and gas analyst for Raffeisenbank, in Moscow, told oilprice.com.

Indeed, Novatek chief executive officer, Leonid Mikhelson, at the time was confident that Novatek could review its overall strategy of reaching 57 million tons per year (mtpy) of LNG production by 2030 as early as 2021. This was based on the progress of Yamal LNG at the time, and the rolling out of the new LNG plant - Arctic LNG 2 - which is intended to have a production capacity of 19.8 million tons per year.

In its most basic terms, then, the current delay to the fourth train of Yamal LNG - able to export just under 1 mtpy of LNG - is likely to be extremely short-lived, given the huge political interests involved. "It is likely to be the result of the pipelines that were initially installed that are used for gas processing not being able to optimally handle the exceptional cold temperatures involved at times, so they will need to be replaced, which is not a major setback," Polischuk told oilprice.com last week. "It does not mean that there is anything wrong in the basic Arctic Cascade design," he added.

Indeed, Arctic Cascade - based on a two-stage liquefaction process that capitalizes on the colder ambient temperature in the Arctic climate to maximize energy efficiency during the liquefaction process - is the first patented liquefaction technology using equipment produced only by Russian manufacturers. The overall goal of Novatek, as the company itself has stated more than once, is to localize the fabrication and construction of LNG trains and modules to decrease the overall cost of liquefaction and develop a technological base within Russia.

This means that these Arctic LNG operations are not subject to the whims of other countries and future sanctions. "I wouldn't expect the changes that need to be taken to the current pipelines in Yamal LNG to take more than a few weeks, so the delay to Novatek's overall schedule will be very small, and there should be no knock-on effect to the launch date of the Obshk LNG plant in 2023," he concluded. Obshk LNG will be Novatek's third large-scale LNG export project, with its 5 mtpy also based on the use of the Arctic Cascade technology. The final investment decision on it is due to be taken in the second half of this year.

(Source: oilprice.com)

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Modern Stadium of
Martyrs of Khuzestan
Football Club (KSC)From Karun to Makran; Development of Oil
Industry Using Iranian Potential and Capability

If the development of West Karun and South Pars Gas Field was turned into the headlines of development news of oil industry, today, the development of downstream and upstream sectors in Makran region has been put at the spotlight of media circles. Every day, planning has been made for industrial development in Makran Coastal Area. In the meantime, Oil Engineering and Development Company (OEDC), as one of the development arms of the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC), plays a leading role in the development processes. Moreover, launching development plan in West Karun, Oil Engineering and Development Company undertakes a major part of national and strategic project for transferring crude oil of Goureh to Jask as well.

Two projects that were determined by the oil minister as the working priorities of the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) in the current year (started March 21, 2019) and study of development performance of this company shows that following these priorities, considerable activities have been taken in these two fields and various working fronts are busy active in each of these two sectors.

A glance at activities and performances carried out in this company is a solid evidence for this claim.

In the beginning of the current year (started March 21, 2019), many provinces of the country were engulfed by raging flood. In the meantime, Khuzestan province as the main cradle of the development of oil did not remain safe from flood. Touraj Dehghani Chief Executive of Oil Engineering and Construction Company (OECD) pointed to the salient measures taken by his company and added, "flood led to the maximum dewatering of Hour al-Azim Marsh and flooding of some joint oil wells of West Karun."

He went on to say that Oil Engineering and Construction Company (OECD) was of the first company which rushed to render quality relief and rescue services in line with fulfilling its organizational social responsibilities. In addition, the company capped some of oil wells with the aim of preserving the environmental necessities and observing safety principles. In general, the company made its utmost efforts to



minimize the environmental pollution as a result of raging flood overshadowed the southern province of Khuzestan."

After raging flood was controlled and production processes returned to the normal condition, the news of installing wellhead pump in Well No. 4 of joint Northern Yaran oil field in West Karun was done successfully. This news was of paramount importance which showed that the company is able to install wellhead pumps in line with the production growth.

He also revealed the news of supplying 20 wellhead pumps and added, "these pumps are gradually installed and commissioned in wells of Northern Yaran oilfield."

Another goods news from West Karun was the registration of more than 100 million barrels of aggregated production of oil in North Azadegan field which was announced in late Iranian month of Day. The first phase of development of this joint oilfield was put into operation in the second half of the 2016. This figure shows nonstop and continuous production of oil since its operation up to the present time.

South Azadegan Oilfield was placed on the fast-paced development track after 2014 and eviction of Chinese Contracting Company. This year, we have witnessed the round-the-clock activity of Iranian experts and engineers. In the field of development performance of the Ministry of Oil in South Azadegan oilfield, managing director of the company pointed

to the fivefold production capacity of this field and added, "relying upon the domestic capacities and capabilities (as compared to the time of delivering plan from Chinese contractor) and increase of share of domestic manufacturing of products [including upstream and downstream before exacerbation of cruel sanctions and implementation of project for deployment of fast constructed processing unit (Skid Mounted)], the company managed to implement project in the toughest sanctions conditions with the investment of foreign sector as joint venture." Of the salient achievements of the company, it should be referred to paying attention to the environmental requirements [maximal production of oil concurrent with the maximal dewatering and ponding of Hour al-Azim marsh], focusing on developing technology, cooperating between industry and university [cooperating with Oil Industry Institute of the Tehran University and registering the promising results on the increase of coefficient of recovering this oilfield], implementation of alternative project of metal pipes with flexible pipe [RTP], realizing the first drilling and deepest directional well at the initiative taken by the National Iranian Drilling Company (NIDC), conclusion of contract for Central Processing Unit of South Azadegan Oilfield, generating employment for native manpower, etc.

Perhaps, realizing the objective of



very close cooperation and interaction between oil and university in this field is the best news about Azadegan oilfield. According to the Oil Industry Institute of Tehran University, the 10 percent increase in Serouk Oil Recovering Coefficient in Azadegan Oilfield will be made possible. Of the other salient achievements of Oil Engineering and Development Company (OEDC), it should be referred to: setting up comprehensive databank of Azadegan oilfield with the capability of fast and easy access to the data of wells and different tanks of this oilfield, improving the production rate with constructing nano-based chemicals, reducing viscosity of semi-heavy oil in Serouk layer, identifying and compiling the porous heterogeneous map and impermeability of various layers of Azadegan oilfield, optimization of distribution of tank specifications and consequently, reducing the drilling of low-yielding and dry wells, etc.

This cooperation is underway with the constructive interaction of Oil Engineering and Development Company as employer and Tehran University as project commissioner.

Elsewhere in his remarks, CEO of OEDC pointed to Yadavaran Joint Oilfield and added, "the company planned for increasing oil production in the oilfield and this plan will be executed after winning necessary licenses relying upon the domestic potentials and capabilities." Yadavaran Oilfield is of the large

oilfields in the country which is located in the operational region of West Karun and its first development phase was put into operation in Nov. 2016 with the daily production capacity of 85,000 barrels of oil. Of course, after the operation of first phase of this field, measures were taken for boosting production in this joint oilfield. Consequently, the production capacity of Yadavaran Oilfield increased more than 115,000 barrels per day (bpd)."

Then, the managing director pointed to Azar Oilfield and added, "Azar Oilfield is a joint oilfield which is located in Anaran Block, at the peak of Zagros mountains and along with Iran and Iraq border (southwest Ilam), between Mehran and Dehloran cities.

The company removed existing obstacles for the provision of main equipment of Azar Oilfield in Sept. 2019, he said, adding, "this plan is on the verge of finalization in the current year (to end March 20, 2020) and it has been predicted that 65,000 barrels of oil per day (bpd) will be produced in Azar Oilfield by the yearend (to end March 20, 2020)."

In addition, Oil Engineering and Development Company undertakes the development projects in Aban, Paydar Gharb, Sepehr and Jofeir oilfields, he said, adding, "development of Aban and Paydar Gharb oilfields is underway by an Iranian-Russian consortium and development of Sepehr and Jofeir oilfields have been put atop agenda of one of Iranian production

and exploration companies.

Then, Dehghani pointed to organizing the first session of Joint Management Committee (JMC) of Sepehr and Jofeir oilfields in 2019 and added, "development plan of Aban and Paydar Gharb oilfields enjoys suitable physical progress and preliminary steps have been taken for increasing production in these field."

The specific and main mission of Iranian Oil Engineering and Development Company (OEDC) for implementation of expansion project of transferring Goureh crude oil to Jask and development of Makran is the most important news, the managing director added.

In recent months, CEO of Iranian Oil Engineering and Development Company visited pipe- and pump manufacturing factories as contract party to the company and was briefed on the latest activities of the industrial and production complex.

For this purpose, a contract was inked between Iranian Oil Engineering and Development Company and Pumpiran Company, valued at €19 million for manufacturing 20 electro-pumps. In addition, OEDC also similar contract with Iranian Industrial Pumps Company and also PETCO, valued at €10 million with the aim of constructing 10 electro pumps. Therefore, the contract for manufacturing and supplying 50 electro pumps needed for oil transfer from Goureh to Jask to the three Iranian pump manufacturing companies.



Swiss channel appears to be more of a publicity matter than a substantive matter: Nephew

By Javad Heirannia

TEHRAN — Richard Nephew, who served as the lead sanctions expert for the US team negotiating with Iran, is of the opinion that “the Swiss channel appears, at this point, to be more of a publicity matter than a substantive matter.”

The fellow at the Center on Global Energy Policy at Columbia University, says that the US is wrong when it says that sanctions are not affecting the Iran's humanitarian trade nonetheless for all the reasons I laid out.

Following is the text of the interview:

■ The Swiss government announced in a statement a few days ago that the first payment through the country's commercial channel with Iran for dispatch of medicines was being tested and would soon be complete. The Swiss Embassy in Tehran also tweeted: “The milestone is the day after the first successful payment for the drug cargo, tentatively, and the preparation of a financial mechanism for delivering humanitarian goods, agricultural supplies, food, pharmaceutical and medical equipment. Given that the channel is licensed by the US government, doesn't that mean that humanitarian trade with Iran is under sanctions, contrary to what the Trump administration claims?”

A: No, not really. The issue is not that humanitarian trade is explicitly under sanctions. It is not. There are clear, well-articulated and longstanding exceptions to sanctions for humanitarian goods.

The problem is that, in the absence banking channels, companies find it difficult to engage in such business. And, banks, for their part, find the absence of other business interests and possibility of being involved in trade involving sanctioned entities -- like the IRGC -- too risky to be worthwhile.



So, what you have is business that is not sanctioned, but the absence of any means to complete it because of sanctions.

That is why mechanisms are needed to manage these consequences.

■ Iran's First Vice President, Isaac Jahangiri, says that the United States says it has not imposed any restrictions on the import of drugs and food into our country, because the billions of dollars of Iranian money we have in various countries when we want to get money from them are inaccurate. Moving dollars to buy medicine and food, the US does not allow. What is your assessment of these statements?

A: That is indeed not true. There are even exceptions to U.S. sanctions -- stated in law -- to permit oil revenues that are held abroad to be used for humanitarian goods. The law explicitly says “The President may not impose sanctions under paragraph (1) with respect to any person for conducting or facilitating a transaction for the sale of agricultural commodities, food, medicine, or medical devices to Iran.”

The problem is that banks are reluctant to engage in this trade, even if they are allowed to do so legally, and governments have been

unable or unwilling to persuade them differently.

■ The launch of the Swiss financial channel seems to be a publicity issue as to why it is allowed to import \$ 2 million through the Swiss financial channel, while the amount of imported medicine to Iran alone was over \$ 5 billion this year. For which money was paid and imports were made. What is your assessment? Can a channel with this limited volume of business meet some of Iran's pharmaceutical needs?

A: I agree that the Swiss channel appears, at this point, to be more of a publicity matter than a substantive matter.

■ In my recent interview with you, You stated that new US sanctions and changing the label of the Iranian Ship Company or changing the label of the sanction of the Central Bank of Iran is a serious obstacle to humanitarian trade with Iran, including medicines, and the US government can no longer claim In particular, humanitarian trade with Iran has not been restricted. Why is it that the US government does not lift restrictions on humanitarian trade with Iran, despite the fact that this is obvious?

A: Again, the issue is not that the trade is restricted per se, but that because it is so difficult to do,

companies and banks are unwilling to use the exceptions that exist.

And, the U.S. government has not done enough to persuade them otherwise. The real problem is that it is easy to have exceptions but to get trade going, the United States would have to encourage banking activity with Iran more generally, as well as other business. This is what the U.S. government is not prepared to do because that would undermine the sanctions strategy it has developed.

■ Iran has financial demands from some countries, and if it had not been for sanctions, Iran could have imported humanitarian items from those countries. Why doesn't the US government, at least under its own supervision, allow these items to be imported to Iran?

A: As I've said, the United States does allow that.

It just doesn't encourage it and the difference between “allowing” and “encouraging” is why you don't see trade taking place.

■ I understand that the drugs themselves and the humanitarian items are not directly sanctions. But changes to labels and other sanctions make it impossible for Iran to buy and pay for them. It is like telling a customer that you have no problem buying from this store and you can buy whatever you like, but you cannot afford to pay. Well, then, whether it be a boycott or not, it paid off. What is your assessment?

A: Yes but that's precisely my point: the sanctions are not on the goods themselves. So, Iran is wrong when it says they are and the US is right when it says they aren't. But the US is wrong when it says that sanctions are not affecting this trade nonetheless for all the reasons I laid out. And the labels and whatnot are not the issue here. It is the fundamental problem that banks won't do the business and companies are not incentivized to find solutions to what problems exist.

A Glance at Activities and Performance of Iranian Oil Terminals Co. (IOTC) in Past Year

Despite existence of bottlenecks and wide-spread challenges, Iranian Oil Terminals Company (IOTC) managed to fulfill its mission in the fields of storing and exporting crude oil and gas condensates. Some of the bottlenecks facing the company are related to the domestic and foreign developments in the oil industry and also main scope of activity of the company.

Relying upon the assistance of the Almighty God and unsparing support of the managing director and Board of Directors of the company, the company managed to materialize most of its objectives in the best form possible.

In this respect, the company managed to observe Quality Health, Safety and Environment (QHSE) standards.

Although international sanctions have threatened activities of the company, suitable opportunities were created for the company to develop scope of its activities and performance. The successes obtained by the company in a recent year is the result of high capability and commitment of staff and personnel of the company.

As an able and competent economic enterprise, it is hoped that the company will be able to materialize most of its objectives in the current year. All activities of the company have been charted in line with its outlook plan which are followed up with considering the predetermined general and specialized objectives.

The general objectives include as follows: increasing quality and sustainable productivity, increasing creativity and sustainable innovation, increasing quality of life (QOL) of staff and personnel while specialized objectives include increasing sustainability, agility and tolerability of the company, gaining satisfaction of beneficiaries of the organization and promoting the system of physical assets as well as consecutive improvement of performance and operational excellence of company.

To learn more about the salient achievements of the company obtained in specialized fields, our reporter has conducted an interview with CEO of Iranian Oil Terminals Co. Abbas Asadrouz.

■ **Export, Main Mission of Iranian Oil Terminals Co.**

He pointed to the main duty of the company in the field of storing, measuring and



exports crude oil of the country and added, “fulfilling this responsibility in the safe and sustainable form and with the least costs are of the main objectives of the company.”

In this line, the company has managed to have a suitable and favorable performance in the field of operations and exports.

He pointed to the most important measures taken by the company in past year (ended March 20, 2019) and added, “export of crude oil and gas condensates according to the policies of NIOC has been one of the main missions of this company.”

In line with increasing sustainability, agility and operational tolerability, the crude oil storage capacity in Kharg increased up by three million barrels of oil per day (bpd).

■ **Discharge of Gas Condensates, a Unique and Unparalleled Move**

Fulfilling discharge operations of gas condensate for the first time in the country is one of the main missions of this company in operations and exports field, he added.



One of the salient achievements of the company, he referred to repairing Marine Breakaways Coupling (MBC) which was damaged by flood and repaired by expert engineers of the company in Assalouyeh Gas Condensate Terminal especially in sanctions period.

■ **Using High-Technology in Repair and Development Projects**

In response to a question on the measures taken by IOTC in repair and development projects, he said, “repairing washing of submarine pipelines in Kharg and Assalouyeh is one of the main measures taken in the field of repair and development department of the company.”

Since crude oil and gas condensate pipelines are located on the seabed, this issue can lead to the outbreak of incident and consequently, it can create serious problem in the operation of environmental accidents.

■ **Sustainability of Operations in Kharg Region**

Elsewhere in his remarks, the managing director of Iranian Oil Terminals Company pointed to the activation of basic repairs of West Kharg Quay, West Quay of Kharg Oil Terminals, which is able to berth the largest oil tankers in the world.

Following up implementation of basis repair projects of oil tanks with the capacity of 1.7 million barrels of oil in Kharg despite problems facing many projects caused by the change of currency rate is one of the other salient measures taken by the company.

With the operation of these tanks, a part of problems was solved in the field of storing crude oil and sustainability of operations.

He emphasized, “repair projects of tanks and servicing the repaired tanks will be economical and all these projects are strictly monitored.”

■ **Specific and Unique Duties of IOTC**

Abbas Asadrouz termed the duties assigned to the Iranian Oil Terminals Company (IOTC) across the country as unique of its kind and added, “this issue requires that, in addition to paying due attention to the dire need of company to world's most modern technology, the company should also concentrate on supplying goods and meeting the demands in relevant issue.”

Fortunately, activities and performance of IOTC has been highly acclaimed by the National Iranian Oil Company, he added.

He added, “domestic production of 309 products (which were previously provided through other country) has been fully carried out in the company in the current year.”

It should be noted that domestic manufacturing of these goods and products has saved about tens of billion toman worth of currency, the most important of which can be referred to the design and construction of electric operators of SNAP.RING for crude oil loading arms.

Turning to the design and domestic manufacturing of electronic cards of metering system for Kharg and Assalouyeh, which were the central part of measuring system, and added, “supply of these cards from overseas is impossible and if these cards are not constructed inside the country, serious problems will be created.”



■ **Designing Manual of Physical Assets Management for Frist Time**

Safeguarding and preserving facilities with timely repair and maintenance is one of the important issues that should be taken into consideration in the field of oil terminals.

Of two salient measures taken in this field, it can be referred to designing Manual of Physical Assets Management for the first time in NIOC and following up necessary measures for implementing it, presenting proposal of merging several important projects such as discharging pipelines leading to the floating scope, inspecting pipelines, etc. These measures have been taken by the expert engineers of the company in

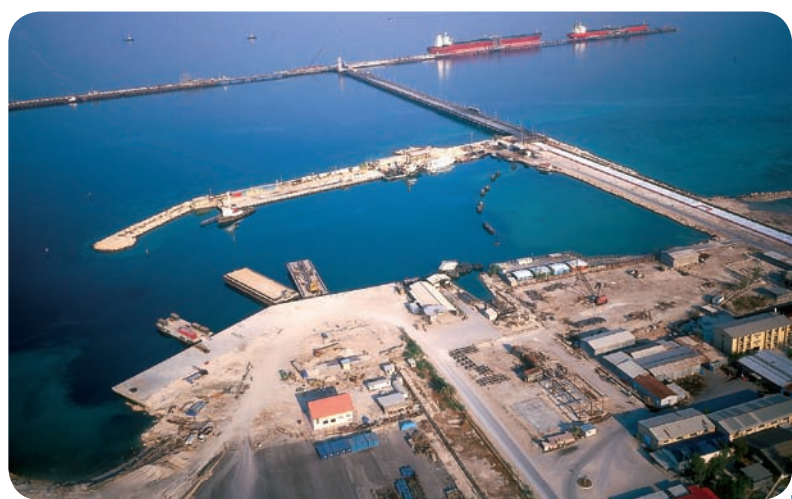
a way that about \$100 million worth of currency has been saved.


Determining the outlets of Physical Assets Management System, compiling the description of duties, fulfilling Corrosion Management Project for the first time as pilot project of NIOC in cooperation with the consolidated planning, following up and activating various projects in line with management of physical assets [including purchasing and installing and commissioning diesel generator], protecting electronic part of Kharg Island, supplying hoses and required accessories, providing required valves, etc., are of the salient measures taken by the company in this field.

■ **Compiling Booklet of Price List for Repairing Onshore and Offshore Installations of Islands in Oil Industry for First Time**

Provision of estimates and financial documents of projects in the field of repair and maintenance of onshore and offshore installations in the oil industry has been one of the key challenges that the company managed to solve this problem at the unsparing and consecutive effort of experts of the company.

For the first time, the Booklet of price list for repairing onshore and offshore installation of islands was compiled for the first time in a way that the way of determination of estimation of price and provision of financial documents has been removed forever.






Second Announcement
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One-Stage (semi compressed) tender

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Subject of Tender: P/F:ELMAGO CURRENT BRAKE AND CHENGDU HONGTIAN DRILLER CONTROL CABIN



National Iranian Drilling Company

Tender descriptions:

The Tender holder	Registration No. through national electronic tendering system	Tender No. /Indent No.	Estimated value (Rial/Euro)
National Iranian Drilling Company	3/228/372	Tender No.:FP/20-98/118 Indent No.: 08-22-9745052	38,600,727,298

• **Qualitative evaluation of tenderers**

Method	Scoring (50) made in award criterion 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 tenth day thereof.
Distribution Place	Hall No.:113, 1 st floor, Foreign Procurement Dept., National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN 061-34148656 -06134148615 Room No. 431, 4 th floor, Oil central building No.8, Yaghma alley, Jomhori Islami st., Tehran - Iran
Submitting Method	• Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt in the amount of 190,000 Iranian Rials under account number 4001114004020491 (Shaba No. IR 520100004001114004020491) in name of "NIDC Incomes Centralized Fund" issued by I.R. of Iran Central Bank. • Submitting format Request for the purpose of receiving Tender Documents.
Closing date	• 14 Days after the last time of Purchasing.
Documents Receiving Method	Address Hall No. 107, 1 st floor, Tender Committee, Operation building, National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN. Tel. +98-61-34148580 +98-61-34148569

• **Tender Guarantee**

Value of guarantee	1,931,000,000 Rial / 15,096 Euro
Type of guarantee	✓ Bank guarantees or guarantees issued by non-bank institutions that obtain activity license from the central bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran. ✓ Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt under account number 4001114006376636 (Shaba No. IR 350100004001114006376636) in name of "NIDC saving account" by the central bank of Islamic Republic of Iran.
Duration of credit & quotation	Tender Guarantee and quotation should be valid for 90 days and extendable maximum for one time in initial validity duration.

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Foreign visits to Aras Free Zone up 74% in 10 months

TOURISM **TEHRAN** — The number of foreign arrivals in Aras Free Zone, northwestern Iran, rose by 74 percent during the first ten months of the [current Iranian calendar] year (started March 21, 2019), IRNA reported.

“Some 529,000 foreign nationals have visited Aras Free Zone in the current year so far, which shows a 74 percent increase year on year,” a local official announced on Monday.



Meanwhile, around 10.3 million visits by domestic travelers were also registered during the ten-month period, up 29 percent year on year, Yousef Dadashzadeh said.

The official noted that overnight stays rose by 25 percent and 47 percent respectively for domestic and foreign travelers during the aforementioned ten months compared with the same period last year.

Moreover, accommodation beds have increased by 23 percent in Aras Free Zone during the past ten months, he said, adding that 15,544 people can now be accommodated in hotels and other guest houses across the zone, he explained.

Last November, regional cultural officials announced they were completing an all-inclusive dossier for the Aras Geopark to be registered on the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization’s Global Geoparks list.

Royal Jordanian increases flying hours allowance for its cabin crew

Royal Jordanian will raise the allowances granted crew members for their flying hours, showing the company’s keenness to improve the wellbeing of the flight attendants and to grant them incentives when they exert further efforts.

The move will reflect positively on the service offered passengers on board RJ flights.

RJ President/CEO Stefan Pichler said that increasing the allowance granted to cabin crew members will happen retroactively, starting with October 1, 2019, and that the increase will be given based on the productivity and the number of hours flown by each crew member.

The decision was taken to bolster support for this vital and dynamic sector of the company, whose members spend the most extended time with travelers, who RJ holds in great esteem and works hard to honor, care for and serve in the best possible way.

The CEO reaffirmed that RJ is fully committed to applying the rules and regulations of the Jordanian Civil Aviation Regulatory Commission and various other international institutions concerned with regulating the work of international airlines, including that of cabin crew personnel.

Pichler also said that the decision was reached following an agreement signed with the General Union for Air Transport and Tourism, which plays a key role in following up on its members’ affairs. He stressed that the two parties have a history of cooperation and coordination aimed at improving the living conditions of RJ employees, especially in view of the key role RJ plays in connecting Jordan with the world and in reflecting a bright image of the country and of the airline itself to the entire world.

(Source: Travel Daily News)



ROUND THE GLOBE

L’viv

The city of L’viv was founded in the late Middle Ages where a settlement had existed since the 5th and 6th centuries. It flourished as an administrative, religious and commercial center due to its favorable geographical position for trade and political development.

Today, the surviving architectural and artistic heritage, which is situated in modern Ukraine, reflects a synthesis of Eastern European traditions influenced by those from Italy and Germany. The property, “L’viv – the Ensemble of the Historic Centre”, consists of two components: the primary



area, encompassing the castle, its surrounding area and the city center, and to the southwest, a smaller area on St. Yuri’s Hill for the ensemble of St. Yuri’s Cathedral.

L’viv’s historic center includes many distinct parts representing different stages in its development. The Vysokyi Zamok (High Castle) and Pidzamche (area around the castle) are the main and oldest part of the town, dating to the 5th century.

It retains its original topography with a hill, on which the castle sits, and lowlands on which a system of streets and squares developed between the 13th and 17th centuries. Evidence of occupation by separate ethnic communities is seen in the surviving buildings, including a mosque, a synagogue and a variety of religious buildings from the Orthodox, Armenian and Catholic churches.

Located on a mountain plateau to the southwest of the medieval city is the Ensemble of St. Yuri. This complex was the heart of Halychyna Church Metropolis and features buildings primarily in Baroque-style with a high artistic value.

(Source: UNESCO)

“Majestic Iran” salutes travel, culture enthusiasts and exhibitgoers



A poster for the 13th Tehran International Tourism Exhibition and the 33rd National Handicrafts Exhibition

By Afshin Majlesi

TEHRAN — The 13th Tehran International Tourism Exhibition opens (this morning / tomorrow morning) with all hopes to well introduce lesser-known destinations, services and travel businesses, yet to offer pocket-friendly travel packages to the visitors.

“Majestic Iran” has been picked as the motto of the exhibit, which this year in an innovative approach is being held concurrent with the 33rd National Handicrafts Exhibition at the Tehran Permanent International Fairground till February 15.

Organizers say the synchronization could help boost synergy among the two sectors as people have chance to visit them maybe a day-long visit!

A total of 12 exhibition halls have been dedicated to the event, divided to hundreds of booths and stands running by travel agencies, airlines, sea or rail companies, entrepreneurs, startups, banks, insurance

brokers, agents or hospitals in charge of health, medical tourism, sports clubs, pilgrimage & eco-tourism companies, representatives of hotels, guesthouses, tourist villages, and free zones to name a few.

Several halls have been dedicated to craft-people, artisans, live performers and tribe-people who are coming together from every corner of the ancient land to promote skills inherited from generations to generations.

Though its main goal of the sales exhibit is to make money and sails of the handicrafts, souvenirs, foodstuff, and various other regional products, it can really be a venue for dialogue between exhibitors and visitors and even visiting officials.

Such face-to-face talks may summon up powers of inspiration and enable artisans to come up with a solution to make more and more novel or applied designs.

Like previous editions, the 33rd National Handicrafts Exhibition will showcase arrays of personal ornamentation, woodwork, il-

luminated manuscript, miniature, textile printing, enamel, leatherwork, handwoven textile, calligraphy, traditional musical instrument, metalwork, and marquetry among tens of others while nomadic culinary arts, live workshops and performances will be gathering own fans every corner.

Handicraft exports from Iran reached \$146 million since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (started March 21, 2019), tourism ministry announced last month.

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).

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 Ali-Asghar Mounesan announced earlier this month.

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

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

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.

The Islamic Republic 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.

Tens of Paleolithic caves, rock shelters identified in southwest Iran

HERITAGE **TEHRAN** — A total of 59 caves and rock shelters, estimated to date from the Paleolithic era, have recently been discovered in an archaeological survey carried out near the city of Izeh, southwestern Khuzestan province.

“59 caves and rock shelters were found in northern and northwestern parts of the Izeh plain during the second season of an archaeological survey, which recently came to an end under supervision of the Research Institute for Cultural Heritage and Tourism,” IRNA quoted Mojgan Jayez, leader of the survey, as saying on Sunday.

Sixty nine sites (caves or rocky shelters) were discovered during the first season last year (ended March 2019), she said, adding, 147 caves or rocky shelters have so far been spotted in the region if the ones founded in the 1380s (2000s) are taken into account.

They have been underwent some preliminary studies

including documentation and collecting samples of shards scattering nearby, the chief archaeologist noted.

The excavations have also yielded stone artifacts and mineral deposits of the hunter-gatherers once lived in the region, she added.

Khuzestan is home to three UNESCO World Heritage sites of Susa, Tchogha Zanbil and Shushtar Historical Hydraulic System yet it is a region of raw beauty where its visitors could spend weeks exploring. The province is also a cradle for handicrafts and arts whose crafters inherited from their preceding generations.

Lying at the head of the Persian Gulf and bordering Iraq on the west, Khuzestan was settled about 6000 BC by a people with affinities to the Sumerians, who came from the Zagros Mountains region. Urban centers appeared there nearly contemporaneously with the first cities in Mesopotamia in the 4th millennium. Khuz-



estan, according to Encyclopedia Britannica, came to constitute the heart of the Elamite kingdom, with Susa as its capital.

How not to get sick while traveling

By Laura M. Holson

Should you wear a mask? Does airplane travel pose a greater risk? Do hand sanitizers work? Health professionals offer some tips.

Wary travelers are donning masks on New York City subways and in San Francisco airports. Panicked consumers are arming themselves with disinfectants. Businesses are suspending operations and airlines are halting flights.

As China grapples with a coronavirus outbreak that has killed hundreds of people and infected tens of thousands more, people across the world have grown anxious about being in crowds or traveling in confined spaces like airplanes.

All of this can be confusing. So we asked health professionals how travelers can stay healthy while on the move.

■ Should I wear a mask?

Philip M. Tierno boarded a flight to Paris not long ago and sat behind a woman who appeared to have a bad cold. She sniffed. She coughed. She didn’t cover her mouth or use a tissue. Dr. Tierno, a professor of microbiology and pathology at N.Y.U. Langone Health in New York City, asked to move. The stewardess said no. Sure enough, within a week, Dr. Tierno was coughing himself.

“It was the only time that I wished I’d had a mask,” he said.

So do masks really work? The answer is yes and no. Dr. Tierno said he had seen people wearing surgical masks on the subway and it was “like having no mask at all.” Air can seep in through the gaps. A cloth mask, too, provides little protection. Sometimes mask wearers cover only their mouths, leaving noses exposed. “For most people, a mask is not necessary,” he said.

When one is needed — mostly in a place where a lot of illnesses have been reported — people should wear an N95 respirator, a heavy-duty mask fitted to the face that filters out 95 percent of smaller air particles. But,



Travelers at Leonardo da Vinci International Airport near Rome, February 2020. (Credit... Telenews/EPA, via Shutterstock)

Dr. Tierno warned, “it is a very tough mask to breathe through.”

Vicki Hertzberg, director of the Center for Nursing Data Science at Emory University, said travelers should be wary about the people they sit next to on airplanes. (Dr. Tierno had a point!) She is an author of a study that found that the travelers most vulnerable were those seated next to a sick person or in the row in front or behind.

■ Please! Wash your hands.

This seems so simple that Trevor Noah recently made a joke about it on “The Daily Show.” Health professionals say washing hands with soap and water is the most effective line of defense against colds, flu and other illnesses.

Just think about where your hands have been in the past 24 hours. Now, think about all the hands that have touched airplane tray tables and seatbelt buckles. If that doesn’t give you pause, consider whether you bite your nails, touch your face or rub your eyes. “The 10 dirtiest things are your fingers,” Dr. Tierno said.

Hand washing can reduce the risk of respiratory infections by 16 percent, according

to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. If soap and water aren’t available, hand sanitizers with more than 60 percent alcohol work. Here’s a tip: Dr. Tierno said to make sure the sanitizer dries on your hands. If it doesn’t, germs can thrive.

■ What about tray tables and seats?

“Don’t eat off the table,” Dr. Tierno said.

A 2015 report by the Government Accountability Office found that crew members had a limited time to clean the cabin before passengers on the next flight boarded. Some of the people the G.A.O. interviewed said employers “did not provide hand-on training to respond to specific disease outbreaks such as Ebola.” And the office cautioned that the United States lacked a comprehensive plan “aimed at preventing and containing the spread of diseases through air travel.” One bright spot: Fourteen airports and three airlines reviewed had such plans.

So, what does that mean for travelers? Some people bring sanitizing wipes and use them to wipe down seats, tray tables, bathroom handles and even air vents. The health care professionals we spoke to said this was not

recommended.

Dr. Hertzberg suggested placing sheets of paper on tray tables so laptops or other items don’t come in contact with the surface. She suggested using a paper towel when opening and closing the bathroom door. Dr. Pietro said not to place food directly on the table. (It should be kept in its container.) And forget about using seat-back holders. A 2014 study from Auburn University in Alabama said some germs could survive a week on a cloth pocket.

■ Is the air safe to breathe?

The risk of contracting an illness from a fellow airline passenger is similar to the risk of getting sick after traveling on a bus or subway, or sitting in a movie theater, according to a 2018 report from the International Air Transport Association.

That said, it offered a qualifier: The risk is probably lower on planes because they use high-efficiency air filters that are comparable to those used in hospital operating rooms. Called HEPA filters, they capture 99 percent of the airborne microbes in recirculated air and are changed at regular intervals, the association said.

What that doesn’t address is the overhead vents themselves, which carry germs transmitted by people’s hands. Health professionals advise moving vents so they blow on hands, not on the mouth, face or nose. The humidity in aircraft cabins is low, too, usually less than 20 percent. (In homes, it is usually above 30 percent.) While this poses no serious health risk, according to the World Health Organization, it can cause discomfort to the nasal passages and the skin.

■ Get your rest.

The healthier your immune system, the better your chance of not getting sick. Sleep six to eight hours a night, Dr. Tierno said. Exercise. Eat fruits and vegetables.

And slow down, Dr. Tierno said: “Stress is the worst thing that can happen to your body.”

(Source: The New York Times)

The living fabrics that can help clean the air

Mushroom, pineapple and algae: it sounds like the topping for a rather unusual pizza. In fact, they could be the crucial ingredients in the wardrobe of the future as growing numbers of designers try to create fashion that doesn't harm the environment.

Examine a garment's care label and you may find that it was made out of pineapple stalks or cactus leaves, or a tote bag was woven with thread made from banana trees. From mushroom leather to algae T-shirts, the search is on for alternative materials with smaller carbon footprints. And the latest result are carbon-negative clothes made with algae that absorb carbon dioxide from the air.

"Fashion is part of the problem but it's also part of the solution," said Nina Marenzi, founder and director of the Sustainable Angle, a not-for-profit organisation which promotes green textiles at its annual Future Fabric Expo. "We begin with materials and making them sustainable, and if fashion supply chains can change, then we start to address that."

The New York designer Charlotte McCurdy has made a see-through bioplastic mac using algae – specifically algae powder used in vegan food products. She worked with glass casters to find a way to heat the algae and cool it in a controlled fashion to make it transparent. The material is carbon-negative because the algae draw carbon out of the atmosphere, meaning the coat acts as a carbon sink.

"Follow the carbon – where did it come from?" she said. "Has it come from carbon taken out of the atmosphere millions of years ago and put in the ground? We talk a lot about what happens to materials after we use them, but not where they come from



Algae being grown in the lab is made into a fabric for the designer Charlotte McCurdy's carbon-negative raincoat, After Ancient Sunlight.

in the first place."

Post Carbon Lab is using the same principle with another algae prototype – clothes that photosynthesise. The start-up in London has created photosynthesis coating, a layer of living algae on the fabric of garments that absorb carbon dioxide and emit oxygen, turning the carbon into sugar. One large T-shirt – nearly a square metre of mate-

rial – generates about as much oxygen as a six-year-old oak tree, according to the co-founder Dian-Jen Lin.

The start-up has been working with designers and industry to translate its photosynthesis coating into a marketable product, and Lin said it could be used in shoes, backpacks, curtains, pillow cases, umbrellas and building canopies.

The care instructions were rather different to normal clothes, she said. Wearing algae was not without its perils. "You can't put it into your dark wardrobe. It needs light and carbon dioxide, so you have to put it in a well-ventilated area, like the back of your chair." Washing machines would harm the algae, so "it's handwash only – you have to be a bit careful. I wouldn't recommend this coating for your underwear but maybe for a windbreaker or a jacket."

Lin and her co-founder Hannes Hulstaert are testing the limits of the coating, which she says can be applied to almost any garments, either as a full coating or a print. "But it might change colour if it's really upset, if it didn't like the light or temperature," Lin said. "Most of the organisms are in the green shade. In the healthy state they are dark brownish green, orangeish green. When it's unhappy it might turn yellow, orange, brown, purple or white or transparent."

However, it seems remarkably resilient. "We've had samples for three years which have come back to life," Lin said.

Other textiles include Piñatex, made from pineapple leaves and used by Hugo Boss and H&M, and Mycotex, a substance grown from mushrooms. Cactus is the next plant-based leather to emerge, the creation of Desserto, a Mexican company that makes leather from leaves.

The challenges facing the fashion industry in its quest to become greener are huge. The UK throws about 300,000 tonnes of clothes into landfill each year, and some studies suggest global textile production creates 1.2bn tonnes of carbon dioxide a year – more than airlines and shipping combined.

Massive hole opens up under Antarctic glacier which could lead to catastrophic sea level rises

A massive hole has been discovered in the Antarctic's so-called doomsday glacier suggesting it may be melting even faster than scientists have long feared.

The massive Thwaites ridge would send sea levels surging by up to two feet if it dissolved completely – enough to submerge major coastal cities across the globe.

Because the UK-sized chunk acts as a barrier protecting the vast West Antarctica, its melting would also destabilise the entire region by exposing it to warmer waters.

Now, scientists say a cavity beneath the glacier is far larger than previously thought – making it far more vulnerable to collapse.

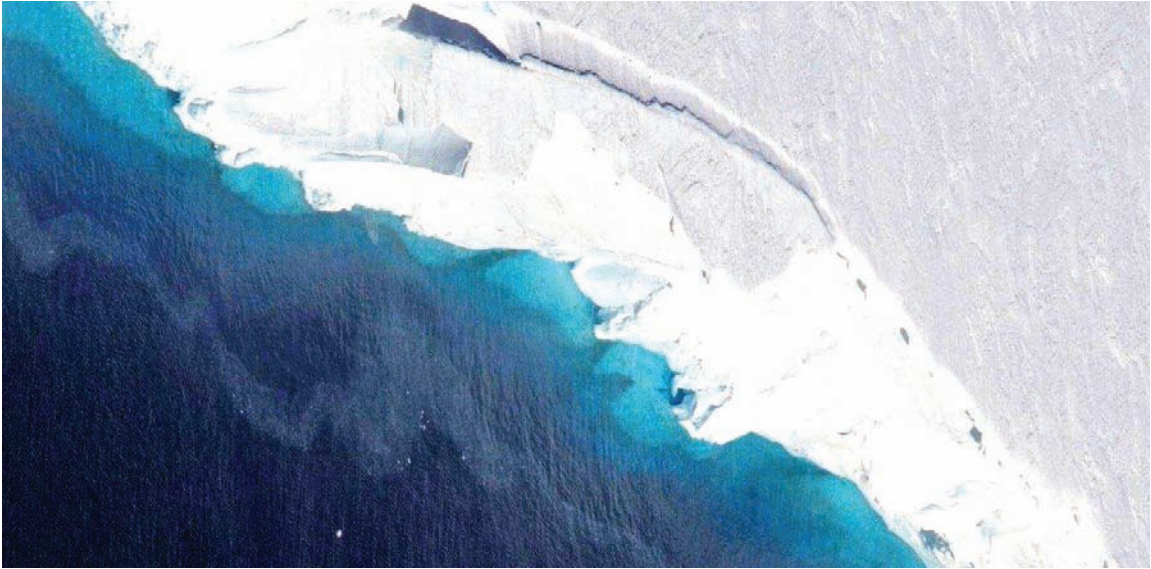
The void, in total, is about six miles long and 1,000 feet deep – representing the loss of some 14 billion tons of ice.

"The size of the cavity is surprising, and, as it melts, it's causing the glacier to retreat," said Pietro Milillo, a NASA radar scientist who led the new research into Thwaites.

He headed a team analysing data collected by Italian and German satellites, as well as NASA's own Operation IceBridge, a program in which aircraft equipped with ice-penetrating radar fly over polar regions.

The researchers expected to see significant loss of ice, but the scale of the void came as a shock, added Mr Milillo.

The findings – published in the journal Science Advances – come as a team of global scientists begin the largest ever research project undertaken about the glacier.



International Thwaites Glacier Collaboration – a five-year, £38m effort led by the UK and US – will seek to understand why the it is changing so rapidly. It will use robots and ocean weather stations, as well

as more than a dozen seals fitted with sensors, to collect data about the ice and the surrounding water.

(Source: The Independent)

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → ج

Wildfire burns 400 ha of protected areas within 3 months

Some 400 hectares of the protected areas turned into ashes due to raging wildfire, since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21), head of the Department of Environment's (DOE) protection unit has stated. He went on to say that so far wildfires broke out in 14 provinces, mostly in areas located near the Zagros foothills, such as of Kohgiluyeh and Boyerahmad, Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari, Lorestan, Fars, northern provinces and Tehran. Provinces of Kalgiluyeh and Boyer Ahmad, Tehran set record highs for the wildfires, IRNA news agency quoted Jamshid Mohabbat Khani as saying on Sunday.

Mohabbat Khani also highlighted that 62 cases of wildfires caused 400 hectares of the protected areas to turn into ashes since past three months, out of which 8 cases sparked by lightning.

While most of the fires were human-caused or ignited due to litter and waste left in the nature by the humans, somehow direct or indirect role of human is the leading cause of such incidents, he added.

وقوع آتش‌سوزی در ۴۰۰ هکتار مناطق محیط‌زیستی از ابتدای امسال

فرمانده یگان حفاظت محیط زیست خبر داد: از ابتدای امسال تاکنون حدود ۴۰۰ هکتار از مناطق تحت مدیریت سازمان حفاظت محیط زیست دچار آتش‌سوزی شده است. جمشید محبت‌خانی روز یکشنبه در گفت‌وگو با خبرنگار علمی ایرنا افزود: در واقع از ابتدای امسال در ۱۴ استان آتش‌سوزی داشتیم که فراوانی مکانی آنها بیشتر در استان‌های زاگرسی مانند کهگیلویه و بویراحمد، چهارمحال و بختیاری، لرستان، فارس، استان‌های شمالی و تهران در مناطق خیر بود که استان کهگیلویه و بویراحمد و تهران به ترتیب بیشترین آتش‌سوزی را داشتند.

محبت‌خانی گفت: بیشترین آتش‌سوزی را به ترتیب استان‌های کهگیلویه و بویراحمد و تهران داشتند. وی اظهار داشت: از ابتدای امسال تاکنون ۶۲ مورد آتش‌سوزی داشتیم که بر اثر آن حدود ۴۰۰ هکتار از مناطق تحت پوشش سازمان حفاظت محیط زیست دچار آتش‌سوزی شده‌اند که علت بروز ۷ تا ۸ مورد از آنها طبیعی مثلاً به علت وقوع رعد و برق بوده است که مجموع به حدود ۲۰ درصد هم نمی‌رسد، بنابراین بالاترین علت درصد به بی‌احتیاطی مردم بر می‌گردد که آنها را نمی‌توان آتش‌سوزی عمدی دانست بلکه خطای انسانی است.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“-ic, -ics”

- **Meaning:** of or pertaining to
- **For example:** Some fruit juices taste a bit **acidic**.

PHRASAL VERB

Hive something off

- **Meaning:** to sell one part of a business
- **For example:** It is part of a growing trend for television contractors to hive off their advertising sales.

IDIOM

Bury your head in the sand

- **Explanation:** to refuse to face the unpleasant reality by pretending that the situation doesn't exist
- **For example:** It's no good burying your head in the sand. We've got a problem on our hands.

Bumblebees face mass extinction amid ‘climate chaos’, scientists warn

A massive decline of bumblebees — the world's most important pollinators — is now underway due to “climate chaos” and other human impacts on the world, scientists have warned.

A new study reveals bumblebees are currently disappearing at rates “consistent with a mass extinction”, and are on course to be wiped out in just a “few decades”.



The research by scientists at the University of Ottawa in Canada found in the course of a single human generation, the likelihood of a bumblebee population surviving in a given place has declined by an average of more than 30 per cent, with the climate crisis largely to blame.

"We have now entered the world's sixth mass extinction event, the biggest and most rapid global biodiversity crisis since a meteor ended the age of the dinosaurs," first author Peter Soroye said.

"We've known for a while that climate change is related to the growing extinction risk that animals are facing around the world ... so, to stop this, we needed to develop tools that tell us where and why these extinctions will occur."

The researchers examined how climate change increases the frequency of extreme weather events such as heatwaves and droughts, which cause what they describe as “climate chaos”, which can be dangerous for animals.

Different species have different tolerances for temperature — what is too hot for some might not be for others.

The researchers examined 66 bumblebee species across North America and Europe, using data collected over a 115-year period (1900-2015).

"We [found] that species' extinctions across two continents are caused by hotter and more frequent extremes in temperatures," said Mr Soroye.

"We were able to predict changes both for individual species and for whole communities of bumblebees with a surprisingly high accuracy."

Dr Tim Newbold of University College London, who also worked on the research, said the team had “created a new way to predict local extinctions that tells us, for each species individually, whether climate change is creating temperatures that exceed what the bumblebees can handle”.

Bumblebees are vital agricultural pollinators, and are more effective than honeybees. Their decline poses a grave risk to the ability of our species to feed itself. Crops including cucumbers, peppers, tomatoes, vegetables, seed crops, strawberries, blueberries, cane berries, melons, and squash, are all pollinated by bumblebees.

Last year, the UN's deputy secretary general Amina Mohamed warned that “the decline and disappearance of bees and wild insects would have drastic consequences for global ecosystems and human well-being”.

The research by the team at Ottawa could provide new methods to help predict extinction risk in other vulnerable species and identify areas where conservation actions are needed, the authors said.

Professor Jeremy Kerr of the University of Ottawa, the study's senior author, said: “This work also holds out hope by implying ways that we might take the sting out of climate change for these and other organisms by maintaining habitats that offer shelter, like trees, shrubs, or slopes, that could let bumblebees get out of the heat.

“Ultimately, we must address climate change itself and every action we take to reduce emissions will help.”

(Source: The Independent)

WORDS IN THE NEWS

Columbia Space Shuttle - the search begins

(February 03, 2003)

All across Texas, in the US, people are searching for pieces of the Columbia Space Shuttle. The shuttle burned up while re-entering the earth's atmosphere on Saturday and any debris will be important in finding out why. This report from David Willis. It's been **likened to a crime scene** with NASA scientists **playing detective**, **gingerly** searching for **debris** across a vast area. They are looking for key pieces of **wreckage**, some said to be as small as a pebble, others virtually the length of a car -- wreckage which could help solve the mystery of what happened to the space shuttle as it re-entered the Earth's atmosphere.

Faced with having to search such a large area and then document each piece of wreckage and guard it from souvenir hunters, the local **sheriff** has appealed for more **manpower** particularly, officers on horseback or in **off-road vehicles**, so **inhospitable** is some of the **terrain**. As a further sign of the challenge confronting officials, a team of divers has now been called in to search a **reservoir** on the Texas-Louisiana border where a large piece of shuttle debris was seen **slamming into** the water.

■ Words

likened to: if you liken one thing to another, you say it is similar.
crime scene: the place where a crime happened
playing detective: taking on the role of detectives
gingerly: very carefully
debris: pieces left after something is destroyed
wreckage: larger pieces of debris
sheriff: In the U.S., an elected law officer
manpower: people to do the job
off-road vehicles: vehicles specially made for driving over difficult ground, e.g. jeeps, land rovers.
inhospitable terrain: countryside where it is very difficult to go
reservoir: a large natural or artificial lake used as a source of water supply
slam into: to collide with someone or something in a very forceful or violent manner

(Source: BBC)

UN report says N. Korea still enhancing missile programme

North Korea continued to enhance its nuclear and ballistic missile programmes last year while also illegally importing refined petroleum, all in breach of UN sanctions, according to a confidential UN report seen by Reuters.

The country also illicitly exported some \$370m worth of coal with the help of Chinese barges, the report added.

The 67-page report to the UN Security Council Sanctions Committee on North Korea, which is due to be made public next month, comes as the United States tries to revive stalled denuclearization talks with North Korea.

“In 2019, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) did not halt its illicit nuclear and ballistic missile programmes, which it continued to enhance, in violation of Security Council resolutions,” the independent UN sanctions monitors wrote.

“Despite its extensive indigenous capability, it uses illicit external procurement for some components and technology.”

Pyongyang also illegally imported luxury cars and alcohol, according to the report, which was conducted by experts responsible for monitoring the application of sanctions.

North Korea has been subjected to UN sanctions since 2006.

In 2017, several sets of international sanctions were further imposed on Pyongyang, limiting its oil imports and banning its exports of coal, fish and textiles, in order to push the country to stop its nuclear and ballistic weapons programmes.

To date, the measures have been unsuccessful.

(Source: al Jazeera)

Deadly bomb blast hits military academy in Afghan capital

A suicide attack targeting a military academy has killed at least six people in Kabul early on Tuesday, in what was the first major assault in the Afghan capital in months.

Along with the six - two civilians and four military personnel - killed, 12 other people, including five civilians, were wounded in the attack, said Nasrat Rahimi, the Ministry of Interior spokesman.

The Ministry of Defense, however, said five people were killed in the attack that took place at the gate of the Marshal Fahim Military Academy at approximately 7am (02:30 GMT), Reuters News Agency reported.

“It was a big explosion that rocked our house. We also heard gunfire afterwards. Ambulances rushed to the area quickly,” resident Samiullah, who goes by one name, told AFP.

A security source speaking on the condition of anonymity told AFP that the attacker was on foot when he targeted a vehicle near a checkpoint as it was entering the academy, known as “Sandhurst in the Sand” in reference to the famous British school.

The military academy has been the scene of several attacks in the past, including an ISIL-claimed assault last May that left six people dead.

(Source: al Jazeera)

Coronavirus may be over soon in China, expert says, as WHO warns of global threat

Coronavirus infections in China may be over by April, its senior medical adviser said on Tuesday, but the death toll passed 1,000 and the World Health Organization warned of a “very grave” global threat.

As the epidemic squeezed the world’s second-biggest economy, Chinese firms struggled to get back to work after the extended Lunar New Year holiday, hundreds of them saying they would need loans running into billions of dollars to stay afloat.

Company layoffs were beginning despite assurances by President Xi Jinping that widespread sackings would be avoided, as supply chains for global firms from car makers to smartphone makers ruptured.

China’s foremost medical adviser on the outbreak, Zhong Nanshan, said numbers of new cases were falling in some places and held out hope the epidemic may peak this month.

“I hope this outbreak or this event may be over in something like April,” added Zhong, 83, an epidemiologist who won fame for his role in combating an outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome in 2003, in an interview with Reuters.

The World Health Organization (WHO) said on Tuesday 1,017 people had died in China where there were 42,708 cases.

World stocks resumed rising towards record highs on Zhong’s comments on Tuesday and the dollar reached a four-month high.

But WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus was less sanguine as he appealed for the sharing of virus samples and speeding up of research into drugs and vaccines.

“With 99% of cases in China, this remains very much an emergency for that country, but one that holds a very grave threat for the rest of the world,” Tedros told researchers gathered in Geneva.

Only 319 cases have been confirmed in 24 other countries and territories outside mainland China, according to WHO and Chinese health officials, with two deaths, one in Hong Kong and the other in the Philippines.

(Source: reuters)

NATO willing to expand Iraqi training mission to meet Trump demand

➔ 1 While symbolic, the coalition is outside NATO structures. Putting more personnel under a NATO flag would solidify training in Iraq and could make it more long-term, also cementing NATO’s presence in the region.

When Trump first raised increasing NATO’s role in the Middle East in 2017, France and Germany resisted, worried that NATO would be caught up in another costly, Afghan-style deployment, anger Arab countries or risk confrontation with Russia in Syria.

But diplomats said Paris and Berlin were now open to an expanded NATO mission in Iraq because it was non-combat, held fewer risks, would not be under a U.S. general’s command and would go some way to mollifying Trump, a sharp critic of NATO.

(Source: Reuters)

Trump effigies hanged prior to PMU Cmdr. Memorial

Members of the Iraqi Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), better known by the Arabic name Hashd al-Sha’abi, have hanged effigies of U.S. President Donald Trump in the capital Baghdad, ahead of a memorial for their commander killed in a U.S. airstrike early last month.

On Monday, mock gallows were erected at the entrances to Sadr City in the eastern flank of Baghdad, in preparation for a ceremony to commemorate 40 days after the deputy head of the PMU, Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, was killed alongside Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, the commander of the Quds Force of Iran’s Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), and their companions in a U.S. drone strike near Baghdad International Airport early on January 3.

Cut-outs of Trump were hanged in nooses, with his tongue protruding and soldiers in U.S. uniforms.

Enormous portraits of Muhandis and General Soleimani were also erected elsewhere in the district.

An official memorial service will be held for the late deputy head of Hashd al-Sha’abi and the top Iranian commander in Baghdad’s high-security Green Zone on Tuesday morning, followed by a public commemoration.

In retaliation for the U.S. airstrike that was authorized by President Donald Trump, the IRGC on January 8 fired a number of ballistic missiles at Ain al-Asad air base in



Iraq’s western province of Andar, which houses American troops.

Trump initially reported that “no Americans were harmed” but subsequent reports revealed that troops were injured in the attack, largely with concussions from the

missile blasts.

U.S. officials speaking on condition of anonymity told Reuters on Monday that the U.S. military is reportedly planning to announce a more than 50-percent rise in the number of cases of traumatic brain

injury (TBI) among its soldiers following Iran’s retaliatory strike.

The officials, who spoke ahead of the announcement, said there were over 100 cases of TBI after the attacks, up from the 64 previously reported last month.

The Pentagon had said on January 31 that a total of 64 U.S. service members had been diagnosed with traumatic brain injuries in the wake of the Iranian missile attack.

Two days after the U.S. attack, Iraqi lawmakers unanimously approved a bill demanding the withdrawal.

Later on January 9, former Iraqi prime minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi called on the United States to dispatch a delegation to Baghdad tasked with formulating a mechanism for the move.

According to a statement released by his office at the time, Abdul-Mahdi “requested that delegates be sent to Iraq to set the mechanisms to implement the parliament’s decision for the secure withdrawal of (foreign) forces from Iraq” in a phone call with U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo.

The 78-year-old politician said that Iraq rejects violation of its sovereignty, particularly the U.S. military’s violation of Iraqi airspace in the airstrike that assassinated General Soleimani, Muhandis and their companions.

The U.S. State Department bluntly rejected the request the following day.

(Source: Press TV)

Philippines ending military agreement with U.S.

The Philippines has sent a notice to the United States of a presidential decision to end a two-decade military agreement with Washington within six months.

President Rodrigo Duterte ordered his foreign minister to sign the Philippines’ notice of termination and send it to Washington, presidential spokesperson Salvador Panelo said on Tuesday.

“It’s about time we rely on ourselves, we will strengthen our own defenses and not rely on any other country,” Panelo told a news briefing, quoting the president.

Secretary of Foreign Affairs Teodoro Locsin, who signed the notice, also said in a tweet that the U.S. Embassy in Manila “has received the notice of termination of the Visiting Forces Agreement.”

He said that “there will be no further factual announcements following this self-explanatory development.”

The formal notice is a requirement for ending the military agreement, which accorded legal status to thousands of U.S. troops in the Philippines for military exercises and humanitarian assistance.

The pact will expire in 180 days after



the receipt of the notice of termination.

The U.S. said on Monday that a bilateral meeting was being scheduled with the Philippines next month to discuss the plan to end the Visiting Forces Agreement.

Duterte, however, reassured he was not changing his decision over the pact. He warned the U.S. last month about the termination of the accord after Washington revoked the visa of a Filipino former police chief.

Manila’s move has concerned Washington about two other bilateral military pacts — a Mutual Defense Treaty and an Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA).

(Source: Daily Star)

Yemeni forces shoot down Saudi-led reconnaissance drone in Najran

Yemeni army forces, supported by allied fighters from the Popular Committees, have intercepted and targeted an unmanned aerial vehicle belonging to the Saudi-led military coalition while flying in the skies over Saudi Arabia’s southwestern border region of Najran.

An unnamed source in the Yemeni air defense forces told the media bureau of the Houthi Ansarullah movement that Yemeni forces and their allies shot down the drone with a surface-to-air missile as it was on a reconnaissance mission over al-Sawh area of the region, situated 844 kilometers (524 miles) south of the capital Riyadh, on Monday evening.

The development came only two days after Yemeni soldiers shot down a Saudi-led drone as it was flying in the skies over Kilo 16 district of Yemen’s western coastal province of Hudaydah.

Separately on Monday, Yemeni troops also destroyed an armored vehicle belonging to Saudi-paid militiamen in Sawh area, killing and injuring several mercenaries in the process.



Saudi mercenaries also sought to infiltrate into the positions of Yemeni army soldiers and their allies in al-Atfin al-Ajashar area of Najran, but they were repelled and suffered losses in terms of personnel and military hardware.

Elsewhere in the al-Tuhayta district of Yemeni province of Hudaydah, Saudi forces and their mercenaries launched

Diab says Lebanon committed to liberate Lebanese territories occupied by Israel

Prime Minister Hassan Diab on Tuesday vowed during a Cabinet confidence vote session to get Lebanon out of its economic and financial crisis, the worst since the end of the 1975-90 civil war, as protesters clashed with security forces outside the Parliament.

He read the 16-page government statement as protesters rallied outside the Parliament and clashed with security forces.

According to a copy, the government’s “emergency rescue plan” includes reforms in the judicial, financial and administrative fields, as well as fighting corruption and fixing the country’s finances.

“Mistaken are those who believe they can evade an economic collapse and people’s anger. We must admit that restoring confidence can only be achieved through deeds and tangible achievements,” Diab said.

“The Policy Statement focuses on an emergency work plan, and we are committed to expedite its implementation. The government will serve Lebanon and will be independent, honest and transparent with direct communication with the people mainly the Movement,” he added.

He assured depositors that “the gov-



ernment will put in place a mechanism to protect depositors.”

■ Resistance against Israel

Diab underscores the right of Lebanon to continue resistance against Israel and said “Lebanon committed to liberate Lebanese territories occupied by Israel.”

He also said that Lebanon is committed to UNSCR 1701.

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1701 is a resolution that was intended to resolve the 2006 Israel-Lebanon conflict.

It was unanimously approved by the United Nations Security Council on 11 August 2006.

Diab added that Lebanon should adopt an independent foreign policy.

(Source: Daily Star)

a barrage of artillery rounds at residential neighborhoods. There were no immediate reports about possible casualties or the extent of damage caused.

Saudi fighter jets also pounded al-Maslub district in the northern Yemeni province of al-Jawf, though no reports of casualties or the extent of damage were quickly available.

Saudi Arabia and a number of its regional allies launched a devastating campaign against Yemen in March 2015, with the goal of bringing the government of former president Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi back to power and crushing the Ansarullah movement.

The U.S.-based Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), a nonprofit conflict-research organization, estimates that the war has claimed more than 100,000 lives over the past nearly five years.

The UN says over 24 million Yemenis are in dire need of humanitarian aid, including 10 million suffering from extreme levels of hunger.

(Source: Press TV)

Modi’s party heads for defeat in key New Delhi election

Followers of an upstart Indian political party danced in the streets Tuesday as the count from a key election in the capital showed they were inflicting a crushing defeat on Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) supporters cavorted to bhangra music and set off fireworks in expectation they would get a landslide victory in the New Delhi regional assembly.

Modi’s right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) had launched an aggressive campaign to win the city of 20 million people from the AAP, using the election to rally support for a controversial nationality law which

opponents say is anti-Muslim.

But the AAP, which swept to power in 2015 after being launched three years earlier by former tax officer Arvind Kejriwal, was poised to retain control.

With a third of votes counted, the AAP -- or common man party -- was on course for at least 60 of the 70 seats on offer.

The BJP won a huge majority in national elections last year, but Delhi adds to six regional elections the Hindu nationalists have lost in the last two years.

Kejriwal fought the election on local issues such as subsidised water and electricity, as well as the safety of women.



“This win has given birth to a new type of politics -- the politics of work,” he told cheering supporters at party headquarters.

“This is the type of politics that will take

the country forward in the 21st century.”

Yogendra Yadav, an academic who was a member of the AAP executive until 2015 and now has his own party, said the result was a clear rejection of Modi and his party’s angry campaign.

“The BJP indulged in one of the most vitriolic, communal hate-mongering campaigns as a desperate electoral gamble,” he told AFP.

“If this succeeded, it would have become a template for everyone else to follow.”

Final official results were not expected until late Tuesday.

(Source: AFP)

Syrian forces retake main Aleppo-Damascus highway

➔ 1 Based on a 2018 deal with Russia, Turkey set up 12 observation posts in Idlib, but Turkish security sources said this week three of them are now being encircled by the Syrian government forces.

«If the agreement continues to be violated, we have Plan B and Plan C,» Akar said, adding that, “We on every occasion say do not force us, otherwise our Plan B and Plan C are ready”.

The Turkish defense minister warned that «If the Syrian forces are not withdrawn by the end of February, we will take action.»

Akar claimed that «Our primary goal is to prevent migration and humanitarian tragedy. We are working to establish a ceasefire as soon as possible and stop the bloodshed.»

Since Friday, Ankara has sent hundreds of military vehicles into Idlib province, after Syrian government forces took

control of a strategic town close to the provincial capital.

The UK-based so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said 1,240 Turkish military vehicles crossed into Idlib in the last week, along with 5,000 soldiers.

Idlib is in the last major enclave of the foreign-backed terrorists fighting against the rule of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

(Source: SANA)

Dragan Skocic officially pens Iran contract

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Dragan Skocic has officially penned his contract with the Football Federation Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI) on Monday.

Skocic, 51, has replaced Marc Wilmots who left Team Melli in early December.

Skocic's first task is to book a place at the 2022 FIFA World Cup qualification third round, where a total of 12 teams will be divided into two groups of six teams.

The first two teams in each group will qualify for the World Cup. The two third-placed teams proceed to the fourth round.

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

"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," Skocic said.

"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," he added.

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.

"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," the Croat went on to say.

ACL 2020: Esteghlal of Iran held by Iraq's Al Shorta



S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iranian football team Esteghlal were held to a 1-1 draw by Iraq's Al Shorta in Group A of the 2020 AFC Champions League on Monday.

The home team went into the game at Franso Hariri Stadium in Erbil dreaming of becoming the first-ever Iraqi side to defeat an Iranian team in the AFC Champions League after seven previous meetings between teams from the two neighboring nations.

Ali Karimi supplied a perfectly-weighted pass for onrushing left-back Milad Zakipour who drilled a cross targeting Amir Ahsan Motahari at the far post. Before the ball could reach Esteghlal's number 72, defender Kadhimi attempted a sliding clearance, but ended up

sending the ball into the net to gift the visitors their opening goal in the 22nd minute.

After the break, Al Shorta returned to the pitch with renewed momentum, and within 50 seconds of the restart they had penetrated the Esteghlal defense, forcing defender Shahin Taherkhani to bring Ali Yousif down inside the box.

Iraqi international center-back Ali Faye stepped up to take the resulting penalty kick and powered it past goalkeeper Hossein Hosseini to equalize for Al Shorta in the 48th minute.

Al Shorta will look to add to their first point when they welcome UAE's Al Wahda to the Franso Hariri Stadium next week, while Esteghlal travel to Kuwait to face Saudi Arabia's Al Ahli on Matchday Two.

ACL 2020: Al Hilal beat Iran's Shahr Khodro



S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Al Hilal of Saudi Arabia defeated Iranian football club Shahr Khodro 2-0 in Group B of the 2020 AFC Champions League on Monday.

In the match held at the Al Wasl Stadium, Andre Carrillo found the back of the net before the interval. The Peruvian controlled and struck on the half-volley. A slight deflection helped Carrillo's shot trick the Iranian goalkeeper and hit the top corner to open the scoring for Al Hilal.

Top scorer of the 2019 AFC Champions League, Bafétimbi Gomis, opened his account in the 2020 campaign in the 69th minute.

Carrillo was the architect, receiving Al Dawsari's pass inside the box, skipping past

his marker and squaring for the Frenchman to tap in from three yards to double Al Hilal's lead.

"There is a big difference between our team and Al Hilal," said Shahr Khodro coach Stefan Cusin in the post-match news conference. "It is not easy to play against such a team like Al Hilal who is the champion of the competition."

"We are playing in the AFC Champions League for the first time and our players gave their best against one of the strongest teams in the competition."

Al Hilal remain in Dubai where they play Shabab Al Ahli Dubai next week, while Shahr Khodro's next adventure sees them travel east to take on FC Pakhtakor in Tashkent.

Asian Paralympic Committee signs MoU with UNICEF

The Asian Paralympic Committee (APC) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to promote the rights of children and youth with disabilities, and to work together for their greater inclusion into society.

The MoU stems from a mutual desire to use sport to empower children and youth with disabilities to reach their full potential and drive social inclusion. It reflects both organization's commitment to promoting the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and achieving UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030.

The MoU outlines several partnership objectives which, in addition to promotion of the CRPD, include support for initiatives that increase provision of assistive devices, scale up provision of accessible infrastructure and use sport to eradicate the stigma and discrimination faced by children and youth with disabilities.

Three areas of co-operation are also identified:

? Public Communication based around the key regional and global high-profile para-sport events,

? Advocacy to lobby for more investment in programs, assistive devices and infrastructure for children and youth with disabilities across government and the private sector.

? Community Engagement to promote positive social and behavioral change through work with media, communities and individuals as well as policy and legislative changes.

"Today is an historic day for the entire family of the Asian Paralympic Committee. We are very proud to be associated with UNICEF whose aims and objectives align so closely with ours. This new association will help us achieve our new Strategic Objectives which also focus on using sport to engage young people with disabilities and promote social inclusion," APC President Mr. Majid Rashed said at the signing ceremony.

"We look forward to implementing the MoU across Asia which is the biggest continent with the highest number of children and youth with disabilities. I am hopeful that all the 44 National Paralympic Committees (NPCs) within the

five Sub regions of Asia will benefit from this association contributing to the growth of the Paralympic Movement in the region and ultimately a more inclusive society."

Mr. Eltayeb Adam, UNICEF Representative in the Persian Gulf Area, who signed the document on behalf of UNICEF, said: "We are excited to partner with the Asian Paralympic Committee in our mission to end discrimination and negative attitudes against some of the most marginalized and excluded children and young people in society. Our partnership with the APC strives to defend the rights of children with disabilities and will help give them a fair chance to fulfil their potential, leaving no one behind."

The MoU will run through to February 2022 and will be regularly reviewed.

It's signing comes after APC President Mr. Rashed attended a meeting and participated at the United Nations' 12th session of Conference of State Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities' at its headquarters in New York, last June.

(Source: Paralympic.org)

Man, 75, aims to be world's oldest pro footballer

An Egyptian man is seeking to become the oldest professional footballer in the world at the age of 75.

Ezzeldin Bahader, who grew up in Cairo and played football at an amateur level from an early age, recently registered successfully with the Egyptian Football Association.

The father of four and grandfather of six worked as a civil engineering consultant before becoming a land cultivation expert, but is now training with third-tier Egyptian club October 6, who accepted the 75-year-old in January after his applications with other teams failed.

Bahader, who lives in New Cairo in a gated community called Rehab City, is also working with a personal trainer to regain

his fitness.

"[Former Egyptian goalkeeper Essam] El-Hadary is as old as my children," Bahader said. "Why do players quit at the age of 35? They could have played so much and trained and fulfilled themselves, and so they do not have the internal need, desire and ambition to do something."

"But I consider myself a junior player. I still have a long way ahead of me ... I did not practice enough [before]. I have not gotten bored of the training. I have not grown tired, my muscles have still not gotten used to certain positions. I am still at the beginning of the road. I will go on."

In order to be recognized as the world's oldest professional player, Bahader needs

to play two 90-minute matches, a task the striker hopes to accomplish in March.

A representative of Guinness World Records will attend the second match to assess Bahader's claim.

"For me, it is not just being the oldest player," he said. "I want to be the oldest player, who also plays well. If I only achieve the title of the oldest player, by entering the [Guinness] World Records, but did not play well, I will not realize my plan. It will be the end of it for me."

The Guinness World Record for the oldest professional footballer is held by Israeli Isaak Hayik, who played in goal last April for Israel's Ironi Or Yehuda, aged 73.

In January, one of the longest careers



in football was extended when 52-year-old striker Kazuyoshi Miura signed a contract with J-League club Yokohama FC.

Miura, who turns 53 on Feb. 26, will enter his 35th season this year.

(Source: ESPN)

Esteghlal coach Majidi not happy with draw against Al Shorta

Esteghlal coach Farhad Majidi is not satisfied with the result against Iraq's Al Shorta.

The Iranian team were held to a 1-1 draw by Al Shorta in Group A of the AFC Champions League at Franso Hariri Stadium in on Monday

"I am not satisfied with the result but I want to thank my players for their effort. We have played four matches in 12 days and our players are exhausted," Majidi said in the post-match news conference.

"Esteghlal have so many good players and we will do our best to win our next matches," he added.

Majidi also criticized the quality of the turf at the Franso Hariri Stadium.

"I think the turf was not good and affected our players' performance," he said.

(Source: the-afc)

Iran to send five athletes to Asia Para Taekwondo C'ships

TASNIM — Iran will send five athletes to the 2020 Asia Para Taekwondo Open Championships.

The sixth edition of the competition will be held in Beirut, Lebanon on March 2 and 3.

Mahdi Pourrahnama in the -75kg K44, Asghar Azizi and Hamed Haghshenas in the +75kg K44, Mahdi Bahrami-Azar in the +75kg K43 and Saeid Sadeghianpour in the -61kg K42 will represent Iran in the competition.

Iran won the title of the fifth edition of the 2019 Asia Para Taekwondo Open Championships in Amman, Jordan.

The Iranian athletes won four gold and two silver medals in the competition.

Iran futsal remain unchanged at world ranking

IRNA — The Iranian national futsal team remained in sixth place in the latest Futsal World Ranking.

Iran are the best Asian team and sixth in the world with 1603 points.

Brazil and Spain are first and second with 1839 and 1787 points, respectively.

Russia remain third with 1654 points.

Portugal and Argentina are fourth and fifth in the table with 1645 and 1644 points, respectively.

Jurgen Klinsmann steps down as Hertha Berlin

Jurgen Klinsmann has stepped down as Hertha Berlin's interim head coach after just 10 weeks in charge.

In November, the former Tottenham, Inter Milan and Bayern Munich striker, 55, was named as the club's boss until the end of the season.

Hertha won just three of Klinsmann's nine league matches in charge and are 14th in the Bundesliga.

But Klinsmann says he cannot live up to his "potential" without the "trust" of those involved with the club.

"We were on a very good path in the relatively short time, and thanks to the support of many people, we are now six points away from the relegation places despite mostly difficult games," Klinsmann wrote on Facebook. "I am firmly convinced that Hertha will achieve the goal - remaining in the league."

"As head coach, however, I also need the trust of the people involved with this task, which has not yet been completed."

"Unity, cohesion and focus on the essential are the most important elements, especially in the relegation battle. If they are not guaranteed, I cannot exploit my potential as a trainer and therefore cannot live up to my responsibility."

Klinsmann will return to his previous role on the club's supervisory board.

(Source: BBC)

Kobe Bryant's wife Vanessa wishes 'this nightmare would be over'

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — Vanessa Bryant said in an Instagram post on Monday that she was both grieving and angry over the loss of her husband, NBA star Kobe Bryant, and 13-year-old Gianna in a helicopter crash last month.

Vanessa Bryant, 37, has made few public appearances since the crash that killed her husband, daughter and seven others and said in the social media post that she had been "reluctant" to put her feelings into words.

"My brain refuses to accept that both Kobe and Gigi are gone," she said, using a nickname for her daughter. "I can't process both at the same time. It's like I'm trying to process Kobe being gone but my body refuses to accept my Gigi will never come back to me."

Bryant said she felt anger at losing both her husband and daughter and has to remind herself to be strong for the couple's three surviving daughters.

"God I wish they were here and this nightmare would be over," she said. "Praying for all of the victims of this horrible tragedy. Please continue to pray for all."

The death of Bryant, an 18-time all-star in the National Basketball Association and one of the world's most admired sports figures, prompted an outpouring of shock and grief from fans and fellow athletes around the globe.

The retired Los Angeles Lakers forward had been on his way to a youth basketball tournament in which he was coaching and his daughter and two other girls aboard the luxury chopper were due to compete.

Federal investigators have not yet determined a cause for the crash in Calabasas, California, outside Los Angeles, but have said the helicopter was flying in dense fog and that there was no evidence of engine failure.

INTERNATIONAL DAILY
www.tehrantimes.com

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» www.eshterak.ir Distributor: Padideh Novin Co.
Tel: 88911433
» Webmaster: webmaster@tehrantimes.com
» Printed at: Jame Jam Barta Borna - 44197737

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P.O. Box: 14155-4843
Zip Code: 1599814713

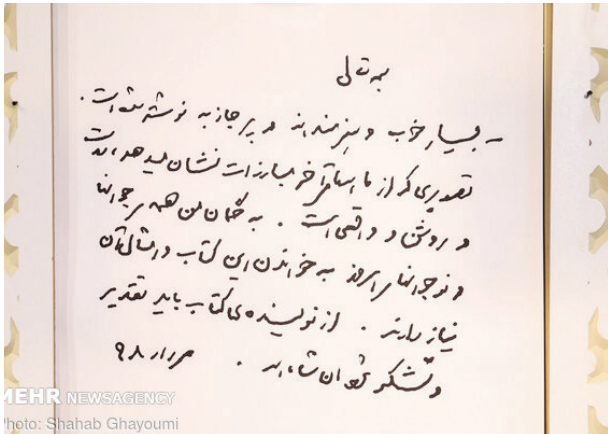
GUIDE TO
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Words are under your control till you utter them,
but the moment they are uttered you are controlled
by them.

Imam Ali (AS)

Leader’s commendation for “That Man Comes with Rain” published

CULTURE **TEHRAN** — The Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, has written a commendation for “That Man Comes with Rain”, a novel about young adults’ involvement in the 1979 Islamic Revolution.



A picture of the commendation Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei wrote for “That Man Comes with Rain”. (Mehr/Shahab Qayyumi)

“It has been written very well and artistically, and is very attractive,” the Leader has written in the recommendation published on Tuesday by his office.

“The images illustrated from the last months of the struggle are quite true, clear and real,” he added.

“In my belief, all the youth and teenagers need to read this novel and other books like this today. The writer must be thanked and honored,” Ayatollah Khamenei stated.

Written by Vajihah Ali-Akbari Samani, the story is about Behzad, a 13-year-old boy who decides to join with people during the Islamic Revolution despite his father’s disagreement.

The book was published by Ketabestan-e Marefat in 2013.

“John Stuart Mill” comes to Iranian bookstores

A R T **TEHRAN** — British writer William Thomas’ 1985 book “John Stuart Mill” has recently been published in Persian by Now Publications in Tehran.

Translated by Khashayar Deihimi, the book is about the life and career of the 19th-century British economist philosopher, civil servant and politician John Stuart Mill.

Mill was a member of the Liberal Party and the author of the early feminist work “The Subjection of Women”. He is considered the most influential English-speaking philosopher of the nineteenth century.

The book has been selected from the Past Masters series published by Oxford University Press.

“Walnut Tree”: story of enemies’ sustained evil

1 → Qader loses his three children, and eventually his wife. It is such a huge disaster as if the director has forgotten about the main incident and gathered all of the personnel and audiences to mourn for Qader.

The question is why should the main incident be forgotten? Why should the tragedy be put aside and instead Qader’s personal life be focused? This is while Qader no longer just thinks about himself and his family, as after 11 years since the incident he goes to the World Court for the sake of the rights of thousands of people who affected by the war crime.

The chemical bombardment of Sardasht was carried out by the Iraqi Air Force on June 28 using chemical bombs in four crowded residential areas of the city of Sardasht (West Azerbaijan province). 110 civilians were killed and 8000 others were exposed and contaminated in the attack.

Today, Europe and the U.S., after 40 years of hostile acts, have resorted to the most aggressive and multilayered war against the Islamic Revolution and the Iranian nation to overthrow the Islamic Revolution. This is while, as the world has seen today, the Iranian nation will continue to move forward with fast and steady steps and will never forget the Western hostility.

“A Stranger at Home” scoops awards at Fajr theater festival

1 → Actor Navid Mohammadzadeh received the special jury award for his role in the play, and cast member Romina Momeni was named best actress for her role in the production.

Accepting the award Mohammadzadeh said that although he has won over 30 awards in cinema, this award is more valuable for him.

“I’ve always said that I am a child of theater, thank you for approving my remarks tonight,” he added.

Alireza Akbarian also received the best sound designer award for his collaboration in the performance.

“A Stranger at Home” is about a man who doubts his wife’s love and loyalty. He connects his wife with a fake identity on the Internet. Little by little, the woman falls in love with this fake new character.

Behfar Kayedi won the best music award for “All Children of Macbeth” directed by Mojtaba Rostamifar, while Fatima Hezbavi and Iman Nakhlestani received the awards for best makeup artist and best lighting designer respectively for their collaboration in the play.

The play also brought Rostamifar the awards for best choreography and best set designer as well as a special mention for directing.

Amir Jadidi was picked as best actor for his role in “Kingfish” directed by Reza Baharvand.

Meqedi Shamirian won the award for best costume designer for his collaboration in “Hey Othello, Only Pet Crabs Nest in Bed



Director Seyyed Mohammad Mosavat (R) receives the grand prize for his play “A Stranger at Home” from actress Ehteram Borumand during the closing ceremony of the 38th Fajr International Theater Festival at Tehran’s Vahdat Hall on February 10, 2020. (Mehr/Behnam Tofiqi)

Sheets” directed by Ebrahim Poshtekuhi and “Marlon Brando” by Mehran Ranjbar.

The international section of the 38th Fajr International Theater Festival, which opened in Tehran on January 30, was non-competitive this year.



Cast members Ruhollah Zamani, Abolfazl Shirzad and Shamila Shirzad, who are the students in a special school for child workers in Tehran, attend a press conference for “The Sun” during the 38th Fajr Film Festival at Mellat Cineplex on February 10, 2020. (Mehr/Majid Asgaripour)

“The Sun” director Majid Majidi says everybody responsible for child labor

A R T **TEHRAN** — Oscar-nominated director Majid Majidi whose latest movie “The Sun” is about child labor has said that everybody is responsible for this issue.

Speaking during a press conference after the premiere of his movie at the 38th Fajr Film Festival in Tehran on Monday, Majidi pointed to those children who are making a living from peddling and noted, “They are zealous breadwinners for their families, who can be a positive role model for society.”

“Undoubtedly, officials have a duty to these children, but each one us also has a duty to them,” he said.

Some of Majidi’s cast members have been selected from the students of a special school for these children in the slums of Tehran.

The film also stars Ali Nasirian, Javad Ezzati and Tannaz Tabatabai. Tabatabai makes a cameo appearance in the movie as the mother of one of the children, who is hospitalized in a psychiatric hospital.

Tabatabai said that she did not want to miss a chance for working with Majidi on this project and added that her sense of responsibility for the child labor issue also convinced her to collaborate in the movie.

“I suppose that my appearance in the film may help the serious problem of child labor be regarded in the country,” she added.

The press conference became very emotional when some of the children of the cast elaborated about the auditions they did for their parts in the movie.



Mehran Modiri (L) and Payman Maadi act in a scene from Mohammad-Hossein Mahdavian’s film “Walnut Tree”.

Iranian Kurds welcome “Walnut Tree”

A R T **TEHRAN** — Mohammad-Hossein Mahdavian’s new film “Walnut Tree”, on the profound tragedy of Iraq’s chemical attack on the Iranian town of Sardasht in 1987, has been warmly received by people in the Iranian Kurdish-speaking regions.

“Based on some reports from other Iranian cities that are screening a selection of films from the 38th Fajr Film Festival, ‘Walnut Tree’ has been warmly received, and the organizers were asked to arrange extra screenings for the film in the Kurdish cities of Kermanshah and Sanandaj,” Hossein Seyyedi, a member of the team of the organizers, said in a press release on Tuesday.

He also added that the film was not screened in the city

of Sardasht, because the selections from the Fajr festival are only being screened in the centers of the provinces.

The film, which was screened in the official section of the 38th Fajr Film Festival, tells the true story of Qader Mulanpur, a man who was away when his family was impacted by the chemical attack in a village near Sardasht.

His efforts 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.

In 1987 Iraq bombarded the Iranian town of Sardasht and the surrounding region with chemical weapons, killing over 1000 and injuring over 8000 civilians, many of whom were permanently disabled.

South Korea’s “Parasite” beats Hollywood greats to make Oscar history

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — “Parasite”, a dark social satire from South Korea, won the Oscar for best picture on Sunday, making history as the first film in a language other than English to claim the movie industry’s highest honor.

“Parasite”, about the gap between rich and poor in modern Seoul, won a total of four Oscars, including best director and original screenplay for Bong Joon Ho and best international feature film. No film had ever won both international feature film and best picture at the Oscars.

It was a remarkable outcome for a film that played with subtitles in the United States, beating movies by major studios and Hollywood veterans such as Martin Scorsese and Quentin Tarantino. The win also came at the end of an awards season that had been criticized for lack of diversity.

Instead, the Oscars stage was crowded with South Korean actors and filmmakers, who mostly spoke to the audience through an interpreter.

“I am speechless,” said Kwak Sin Ae, one of “Parasite”’s co-producers. “We never imagined this would ever happen. We are so happy. I feel like a very opportune moment in history is happening right now.”

When Bong got his first Oscar of the night - for best original screenplay - he gazed at the golden statuette in amazement.

He later paid tribute to his four fellow director nominees, saying, “I would like to get a Texas chainsaw and split the Oscar into five and share it with all of you.”

The ceremony, held without an official host, was peppered with jokes and sarcastic commentary about the exclusion of women from the directing category and the list of 20 acting nominees that included just one person of color.

“I thought there was something missing this year,” quipped comedian Steve Martin, opening the show with



Kwak Sin Ae and Bong Joon Ho pose with the Oscar for Best Picture for “Parasite” in the photo room during the 92nd Academy Awards in Hollywood, Los Angeles, California, U.S., February 9, 2020. (Reuters/Lucas Jackson)

Chris Rock.

The acting Oscars went as expected. Joaquin Phoenix won best actor for playing a failing clown who finds fame through violence in the dark comic-book tale “Joker”, and Renee Zellweger was named best actress for her performance as an ageing Judy Garland in the musical biopic “Judy”.

Phoenix, a strict vegan, gave a long, impassioned

acceptance speech about climate change and animal rights but concluded on a personal note.

“I’ve been a scoundrel in my life. I’ve been selfish, cruel at times and hard to work with, and I’m grateful that so many people in this room have given me a second chance,” he said.

World War One movie “1917”, from Universal Pictures, had been seen as the film to beat but won just three of its 10 nominations. They came for its stunning “one-shot” feel cinematography, for visual effects and for sound mixing.

Tarantino’s sentimental ode to Tinseltown, “Once Upon a Time in Hollywood”, brought the first acting Oscar for Brad Pitt, who played a supporting role as a laid-back stunt man.

Laura Dern took the supporting actress Oscar, her first Academy Award, for playing a ruthless divorce lawyer in “Marriage Story”.

But Netflix movie “The Irishman” - a costly Mafia saga directed by Scorsese that had 10 Oscar nominations and starred Hollywood veterans Robert De Niro, Al Pacino and Joe Pesci - came away empty-handed.

Music played a large part in the ceremony, with a surprise performance by rapper Eminem of his 2003 Oscar-winning song “Lose Yourself” from the movie “8 Mile.”

Elton John won best original song for “(I’m Gonna) Love Me Again” from his biopic “Rocketman”, which he performed at Sunday night’s ceremony. And American teen Billie Eilish, who won five Grammys last month, sang the Beatles hit ballad “Yesterday” for the in memoriam segment.

“American Factory”, about the decline of manufacturing jobs in the industrial Midwest from former U.S. President Barack and first lady Michelle Obama’s new production company, won the Oscar for best documentary.

Amazon names Sony executive to lead entertainment unit

NEW YORK (Reuters) — Amazon.com Inc on Monday tapped Sony Corp executive Mike Hopkins to lead its Prime video platform as well as its movie and television studios.

Hopkins, currently chairman of Sony Pictures Television, will leave the company to

business development and digital entertainment including Prime, takes a sabbatical this year to spend more time with his family.

Sony will be realigning the leadership structure and senior executives Keith LeGoy and Jeff Frost will oversee the operations

after Hopkins’ departure, the company said.

Hopkins, who previously headed streaming platform Hulu, will report to Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos.

Amazon did not immediately respond to Reuters’ request for comment.