

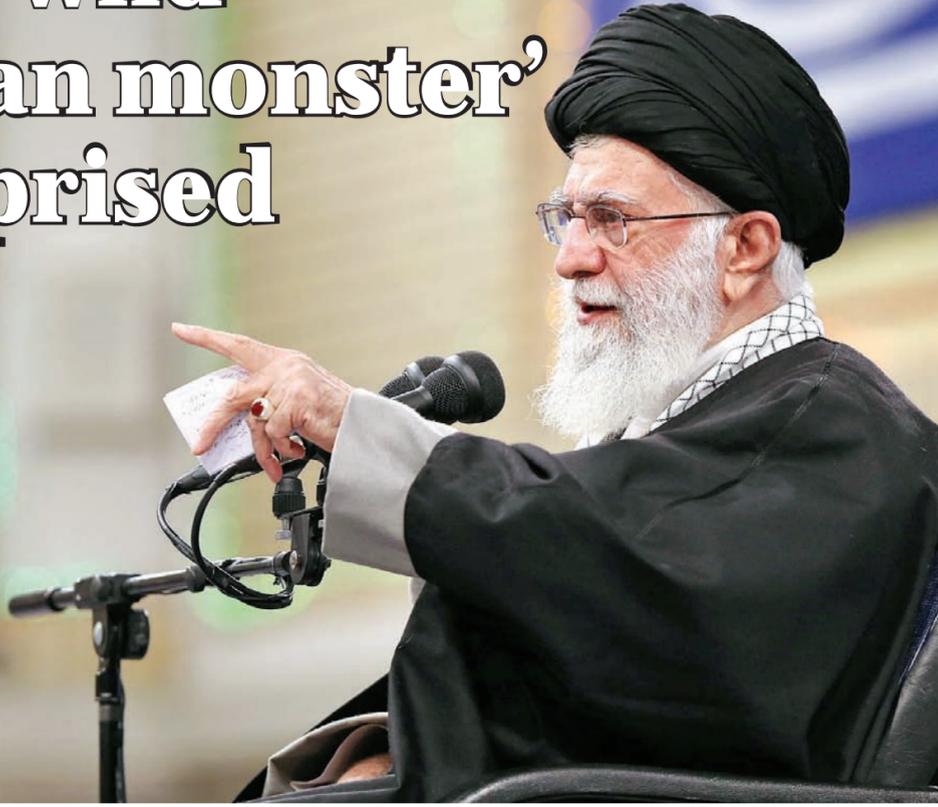
**%26 managerial posts went to women in first half of current year** **2**

**U.S. looking for a guilty to hide defeats in Yemen** **2**

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## Nation's resistance against 'wild American monster' has surprised world



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## Iranian banks' foreign assets up over 17%

**TEHRAN** — The total value of Iranian banks' foreign assets by December 21, 2019 stood at 10.034 quadrillion rials (about \$246.19 billion), registering a 17.3-percent rise compared with the corresponding period of last year.

According to the latest data published by the Central Bank of Iran (CBI), 47.8 percent of the mentioned assets belong to the central bank, IRNA reported on Saturday.

The total value of the banking system's foreign assets had stood at 8.81 quadrillion rials (about \$209.76 billion) for the last year's same time span, the data showed.

As reported, the figure for December 21 has registered a 12.8-percent rise in comparison to the 9.171 quadrillion rials (about \$218.35 billion) recorded at the end of the last Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2019). **->4**

## Trump was misled to believe U.S. could get away with Soleimani assassination: Zarif

**TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif says U.S. President Donald Trump was misled to believe his country would get away with the assassination of General Qassem Soleimani.

Trump believed that the assassination would augment U.S. security but it worked the other way around, Zarif said in an interview with NBC News' Richard Engel in Munich on Friday on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference.

"It was the beginning of the end of the

U.S. presence in the region, and we were very close to a war, because the United States initiated an act of aggression against Iran in a very, excuse the language, cowardly way," Zarif said.

"They couldn't confront Soleimani in the battlefield so they hit him during the dark of night through a drone attack on a car carrying him on a peace mission, which is beneath any dignified way of dealing with this, and it came very close to war," he added. **->3**

## U.S. under pressure as Russia, Syria step up efforts to counter occupying U.S. troops

U.S. troops occupying parts of northeastern Syria have come under increasing pressure as Russia and Syria step up their military presence in the region, according to the New York Times.

The U.S. daily reported that American military and diplomatic officials have said that Russia has been intensifying patrol "run-ins" with U.S. troops and that Rus-

sian helicopters are flying closer to U.S. troops as part of an "intensifying pressure campaign".

According to the report, a notable presence of Syrian and Russian drones and other aircraft in the region has also "eroded American air superiority" in the regions where U.S. forces are present. **->10**

**EDITORIAL**  
**Mohammad Ghaderi**  
 Tehran Times editor-in-chief  
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## Munich Security Conference duty regarding the assassination of commander Soleimani

This year's Munich Security Conference is being held for the fifty-sixth time from 14 to 16 February. The meeting is held annually to discuss the world's security problems and to come up with a unified solution to them.

Significantly, to date, these meetings have not been able to function effectively in resolving global security problems. The chaotic situation in today's world is the reflection of this inability. Now the question is that how this year's summit can achieve the goals proposed by its founders, namely global security and stability.

To answer this question, it is important to consider the key issues of global security and stability. A look at the process of developments shows that the world is facing a series of terrorism, each of which poses many security risks.

The first challenge of today's world is economic terrorism which is carrying out in the form of monopolies and economic sanctions and threats against other countries. This terrorism is directly targeting nations, as can be seen in economic sanctions imposed by U.S. and Europe against other countries. These sanctions aim to impose political demands and bring other countries to their knees.

Economic terrorism even applies in food and medicine fields, which should not be sanctioned according all international laws, even during the war. It is an inhuman terrorism that has repeatedly been perpetrated by the U.S. and its European allies and has endangered the lives of many people around the world.

The second is cultural terrorism, which claims that Western or sometimes American culture is superior to other cultures. Projects such as "The Greater Middle East", which is currently being carried out, seek to destroy the identity of other nations. **->7**

## Italian musicians Aquino, Giachino happy to be at Fajr festival

By Manijeh Rezapoor

**TEHRAN** — Italian jazz trumpeter Luca Aquino and pianist Fabio Giachino has said that they are happy to be taking part in the 35th Fajr Music Festival underway in Tehran.

The two are members of a trio that includes double bassist Dario Miranda, which gave a performance during the festival at Vahdat Hall in Tehran on Saturday.

"We're very happy to have been invited to the festival, for me and for Fabio it was a dream to be here; this is one of the most beautiful places in the world," Aquino told the Tehran Times in an interview ahead of the concert on Saturday.

This is the first time the Italian musicians

have visited Iran.

Giachino said that they wanted to represent their native culture and music at the Fajr Music Festival.

"Some musicians were afraid to attend because of the recent events in Iran and decided not to come. They were worried and decided to cancel their performances, however, we didn't have any plans to change our minds and we are happy that we are taking part," said Aquino who along with his colleagues arrived in Tehran on Thursday.

"Iran is full of history. You have a beautiful city, an amazing mountain with beautiful snow. Musicians travel a lot in the world and we were able to understand and feel the mood of the place

here in Tehran," he asserted.

Aquino praised a performance by the Art and Culture Orchestra, an Iranian ensemble that was conducted by Nader Mashayekhi at the Rudaki Hall on Friday, and said that he does not know any Iranian musicians and is not familiar with Iranian music.

However, he is interested in listening to Iranian music and organizing a concert with Iranian musicians in the future.

Aquino said that he cannot compare the Fajr festival with other musical events in the world and added, "However, I know that there are lots of audiences and musicians interested in jazz in here." **->12**

## Yemeni missile shoots down Saudi-led fighter jet in Jawf

Yemeni army forces have shot down a fighter jet belonging to the Saudi-led military coalition in retaliation for the alliance's military aggression against their conflict-stricken country.

Yemen's Arabic-language al-Masirah television network, citing an unnamed source in the Yemeni missile defense units, reported that the country's air defense units managed to target and shoot down a fighter jet of Tornado type in the skies of Yemen's northern province of Jawf late on Friday night, Press TV reported.

It also quoted spokesman for Yemen's Armed Forces Brigadier General Yahya Saree as saying that the multi-role combat aircraft had been shot down with an advanced surface-to-air missile.

Back in January 2018, the Yemeni missile units managed to shoot down a Tornado fighter jet and an F-15 warplane. Furthermore, the Yemeni forces have so far shot down numerous

Saudi-led combat or surveillance drones as well as a number of helicopters.

The Yemeni army has devised and manufactured its own ballistic missiles and combat drones, which has changed power balance against the failing Saudi-led coalition.

### 30 civilians killed in fresh Saudi airstrikes on Yemen

At least 30 civilians have been killed and many others injured in fresh air raids conducted by Saudi warplanes on Yemen's northern Jawf Province, Yemeni media report.

The al-Masirah TV channel reported Saturday that the Riyadh regime carried out eight aerial assaults on Jawf's al-Maslub district.

The strikes, it added, targeted people who had gathered near the wreckage of a Saudi jet that had been shot down by Yemeni forces on Friday evening.

**ARTICLE**  
**Tohid Raeisi**  
 Analyst

## How Trump has violated Iranian human rights

While in 2015 the U.S. Mission to the United Nations (USUN) had requested that the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and its annexes be circulated as a document of the Security Council, three years later the Trump administration claimed the JCPOA is a political agreement and unilaterally withdrew from it. Since that time, the U.S. has launched a wave of economic sanctions against the Iranian people.

In response to the U.S. moves, in January 2020, the members of the Iranian parliament presented a bill that obliges the government to study U.S. inhuman measures against Iranian citizens and present a report every six months. Nevertheless, the Office of Legislations has asserted the bill is similar to the one that requires the government to pursue compensations arising from U.S. measures and crimes against Iran and Iranian citizens. But it seems that this view is not correct. Because in comparison to the previous law, the core of the bill is focused on human rights, and it refers to the indirect action of the U.S. as well. However, how can the U.S. commit human rights violations inside the national borders of Iran?

The bill states that the government is required to provide a report related to U.S. "crimes against human rights which occur directly and indirectly." However, what is the nature of criminal action and indirect criminal action?

As a whole, to accomplish a crime, its elements must be proven — namely, actus reus (guilty act) and mens rea (guilty mind). In the case of the actus reus, the physical element of the crime is the direct and indirect action of the U.S. government, and it must violate the Islamic Penal Code (IPC) and the human rights that are recognized in international conventions. The assassination of Qassem Soleimani is the best example in case of direct action. Not only it is considered a crime under IPC, but also, it contradicts the "Principle of Necessity" which is accepted under International Humanitarian Law. **->3**



## Iranian Armenians celebrate Islamic Revolution anniversary

Representatives of the Armenian community in Iran attended a ceremony to celebrate the 41st anniversary of the Islamic Revolution.

The ceremony was held on Friday at the Rafi cultural-sport complex in Tehran.

Archbishop Sebo Sarkissian of Iran's Armenian community along with a number of government officials also participated in the ceremony.

## 'End of U.S. in the region has already begun'

**POLITICAL** TEHRAN — Following his interview with the *desks* NBC News on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference on Friday, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif wrote on his Twitter page that the pullout of the U.S. forces in the West Asia region "has already begun".

"The end of the United States in the region has already begun," Zarif wrote.

In his Twitter, Zarif added, "Bad advice to President Trump has led him to make the wrong decisions."



The Pentagon has announced recently that 109 U.S. service members suffered brain injuries in Iran's missile attack on Ein al-Assad airport in western Iraq.

On January 3, the U.S. assassinated top Iranian general Qassem Soleimani in Baghdad's international airport. According to the Pentagon, the attack took place upon direct order by Trump.

In his interview with the NBC, Zarif said, "We were very close to war because the United States initiated an act of aggression against Iran in a very, excuse the language, cowardly way."

The foreign minister said since the U.S. "couldn't confront Soleimani in the battlefield so they hit him during the dark of night through a drone attack on a car carrying him on a peace mission."

In retaliation to the assassination, five days later, on January 8, Iran fired dozens of ballistic missiles at a major U.S. airbase in western Iraq, dealing a great blow to the U.S.

The Pentagon recently acknowledged that 109 U.S. service members suffered traumatic brain injuries (TBI) despite the fact that they had hunkered down in bunkers for hours.

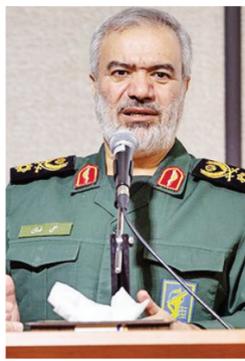
Iran targeted Ein al-Assad base from which U.S. drones had been flown to target Soleimani.

Frank Luntz, a Republican strategist, said on Twitter: "We shouldn't hide our veterans' injuries just to pretend like we're invincible."

## IRGC commander: U.S. looking for a guilty to hide defeats in Yemen

**POLITICAL** TEHRAN — The deputy commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) on Saturday rejected U.S. accusations that an Iranian cargo boat had been carrying arms for Yemen, saying such allegations are aimed at justifying Washington's failed policies in Yemen.

"The Americans are releasing such news from time to time to justify their defeats in Yemen. It is possible that the Yemenis purchase weapons from abroad and deliver them to their country. This is their own business," Rear Admiral Ali Fadavi said.



"The U.S. is looking for a guilty to hide their own defeats in Yemen," the commander remarked.

Bloomberg reported on Thursday that the U.S. Navy boarded a boat in the Persian Gulf region and seized antitank missiles and three surface-to-air missiles it claimed were of Iranian origin and destined for rebel fighters in Yemen.

Iran has on many occasions denied providing weapons to Houthi rebels, who have taken credit for staging attacks on Saudi Arabia since Riyadh rulers launched a war against

their country almost five years ago.

### 'Iran enjoys fresh information about U.S. military base casualties'

Admiral Fadavi further pointed to rising casualties of the U.S. troops in the IRGC missile attack on the U.S.-run military base in western Iraq on January 8 in retaliation for assassination of General Soleimani, saying, "We have much more fresh information about the missile attack on Ein Al Assad base but we prefer the Americans themselves acknowledge the losses and casualties."

"The Americans' lies will be revealed. The entire dimension of Iran's missile attack on the U.S. base of Ein Al Assad will be released by the Americans via their own political factions' games," the commander underscored.

On Monday, the U.S. military, for the fifth time, raised the number of U.S. service members who suffered traumatic brain injuries stemming from Iran's missile attack on the base.

The United States military disclosed a more than 50 percent jump in cases of traumatic brain injuries after the attack on the air base.

The Pentagon, in a statement, confirmed that so far 109 U.S. service members had been diagnosed with mild traumatic brain injury.

The U.S. military in the past had said to expect an increase in numbers in the weeks after the attack because symptoms can take time to manifest and troops can sometimes take longer to report them.

Army General Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said last month that the diagnosis could change as time passed. Symptoms of concussive injuries include headaches, dizziness, sensitivity to light and nausea.

The mounting number of U.S. casualties from missile attacks could increase scrutiny on the Trump administration's approach to Iran.

U.S. Trump appeared to play down the brain injuries last month, saying he "heard that they had headaches and a couple of other things", prompting criticism from politicians and a U.S. veterans group.

Various health and medical groups for years have been trying to raise awareness about the seriousness of brain injuries, including concussions.

# Zarif: Saudi does not seek tension de-escalation

**POLITICAL** TEHRAN — Iranian *desks* Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Saturday that countries such as Saudi Arabia do not seek de-escalation of tensions in the region.

"If there is a will for reducing tensions there are many ways, but I believe that countries such as Saudi Arabia do not seek de-escalation of tensions," Zarif told the Munich Security Conference.

"Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates seek tension in our region," he noted. However, Zarif said Iran is ready negotiations.

The minister said upon a request by Pakistan's prime minister for negotiations with Saudi Arabia, "I and martyr General Qassem Soleimani agreed to send a message to Saudi Arabia" for talks on the Yemen crisis and other issues but an Arab prince responded that the "war between Arab countries is not concerned with you."

The foreign minister also said after the assassination of General Soleimani Iran received messages from "Arabs who said we want dialogue (and) we answered on



the same day but since then we have not received any response."

Iran's chief diplomat went on to say that Iran does not seek tension with neighbors

and that Iran's security is tied to security of its neighbors.

"We do not want to have problems with neighbors. Security of neighboring countries

is tied to our security."

Pointing to Iran's Hormuz Peace Endeavour (HOPE), he said that Kuwait, Qatar, Oman and Iraq have accepted the plan, but Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates have not responded yet.

### 'Persian Gulf belongs to its littoral states'

Zarif also said that the Persian Gulf belongs to its littoral states and its security must be provided by them.

"The Persian Gulf region belongs to all the neighbors and the regional countries must know that the United States and Israel cannot bring us security. It is the regional countries which must provide security and stability in the region," he said.

Zarif also rejected claims that those who attended the funeral ceremony of General Soleimani were proxy forces.

"They were ordinary people who are respected and are angry with the United States' actions. Meanwhile, they are not just in Iraq. They took to streets in India, Italy and Russia holding images of General Soleimani," he said.

## Iranian nation's resistance against 'wild American monster' has surprised world

**POLITICAL** TEHRAN — Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said on Saturday that the Iranian nation has thus far resisted successfully against the enemies' propaganda and plots, noting that the nation's determination in the face of the "wild American monster" has surprised observers worldwide.

The Leader's remarks came as he was addressing a crowd of madahs (eulogists) on the occasion of the birth anniversary of Fatemeh (PBUH), the only daughter of the holy prophet Mohammad (S) in the Imam Khomeini Hosseiniyeh in central Tehran.

Ayatollah Khamenei pointed to widespread propaganda campaigns by the Western media and think tanks to force the Iranian nation to surrender to the U.S. pressures, saying, "Thanks to the Almighty God's mercy, the Iranian nation has thus far resisted (against the pressures). Our nation will keep resisting. This resistance needs continued injection of spiritual power into the society's body."

The Leader also said strengthening of the youth's resolve and insight plays a central role in empowering the country.

"Today, the important need of our country is for our youth to be equipped with various weapons and means of soft war, which consist of willpower and the power of reason," the Leader remarked, Press TV reported.

"I have repeatedly said about the need to strengthen the country," Ayatollah Khamenei said.

"One of the central components of this is to equip the youth with the means of thought and correct insight in the knowledge of the Ahl al-Bayt," he added, referring to the progeny of the Prophet (S).

"The young generation, in which we have much hopes — because the future of the country is in your hands — has to be firm like steel, with strong will and insight in order to know what it wants to do and how to achieve it," the Leader said.

The Leader likened mourning ceremonies following

the assassination of General Qassem Soleimani and his comrades earlier in January to mourning held for Imam Hussein (AS).

"Mourning for the martyrs is not a sign of weakness; it is a mourning that demonstrates resolve and determination which illustrates the sacred emotions of a human being amidst the battlefield," Ayatollah Khamenei said.

"In the recent funerals for our dear martyr, you can see what a major event unfolded across the country; not only in our country but also beyond it," the Leader said.

Ayatollah Khamenei added that "this is what is meant by guiding mourning ceremonies; you need to guide mourning ceremonies of the people in such ways which are in line with the Ahl al-Bayt and is needed by the society".

"The endurance of the Iranian nation against the wild American monster — which has stunned international observers — stems from such knowledge" of the Ahl al-Bayt, the Leader added.

## %26 managerial posts went to women in first half of current year: president

**POLITICAL** TEHRAN — President Hassan Rouhani *desks* said on Saturday that country's educated women enjoyed a share of %26 in managerial posts in the first half of the Iranian calendar year (March 21-September 22, 2019).

Rouhani's remarks came in a gathering of the women in Tehran on the occasion of the birth anniversary of Hazrat Fatemeh (PBUH), the daughter of the holy prophet Mohammad (S).

"There are 2,379,151 government staff across the country, of course, without the Armed Forces staff. A sum of 959,783 of the mentioned number of government staff are women which means %42.11 of the total number of government staff," the president explained.

"According to the Executive Council's enactment approved in 2017, %30 of the total number of the country's managers should be women. Based on the current



statistics, women accounted for %26 of management posts in the first half of the current years which has

increased %4 in comparison with one or two years ago," Rouhani stated.

### 'Women can change outcome of elections: Rouhani underscores'

Elsewhere in his remarks, Rouhani said historically Iranian women have never been politically as active as they have been over the past 41 years, following the Islamic Revolution.

"The women can change fate of elections," the president added.

### 'Men and women should be dealt with equally'

"Our point of view towards the women should be rectified. We say orally that there is no secondary gender; man and woman are equal, and both of them are human beings. This is not enough. We should witness materialization of (the mentioned) realities in executive, legal and practical fields," the president added.

## Tehran says nuclear decisions are reversible if Europe takes 'meaningful' steps

**POLITICAL** TEHRAN — Foreign *desks* Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Friday that Iran's decisions to reduce nuclear commitments are reversible if Europe takes "meaningful" steps in preserving the 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the JCPOA.

Zarif reiterated Iran's stance that all of its moves to ramp-up its nuclear program in the past few months are reversible, "providing that Europe takes steps that are meaningful," he told reporters on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference, according to AP.

AP also reported that Zarif was expected to meet on the sidelines of the conference with German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas to talk about ongoing European efforts to preserve the nuclear deal with Iran.

The U.S. has been pressuring other members of the deal to pull out as well, but Maas told the forum that Germany rejected the U.S. tactic of "maximum pressure" on

Iran.

"We are sticking firmly to our course in the Middle East, and that is de-escalation instead of maximum pressure," he said.

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 February 8.

Borrell was notified in January by Paris, London and Berlin that they had triggered the dispute mechanism.

He has said that the EU will extend indefinitely the time limit to resolve disputes in the nuclear deal to avoid having to go to the UN Security Council or triggering new sanctions.

"There is agreement that more time is needed due to the complexity of the issues

involved. The timeline is therefore extended," Borrell said in a statement on January 24.

In May 2019 Iran started to reduce its commitments to the JCPOA at bi-monthly intervals in response to the abrogation of the pact by the U.S. coupled with the European Union's inaction to shield Iran's economy from sanctions.

### 'U.S. assassination of general was a miscalculation'

Zarif also said that assassination of Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani by the U.S. was a "miscalculation" that has had the effect of bolstering support in Iraq for the removal of American troops.

Zarif said "the U.S. miscalculated," noting that since the assassination, thousands of Iraqis have taken to the streets to protest against the presence of foreign troops in the country.

"The martyr Soleimani is much more effective than Gen. Soleimani," Zarif said. "We are seeing that in terms of

demonstrations that are taking place in Iraq against the U.S. presence," he said.

The U.S. assassinated Soleimani, Iran's top anti-terror commander, in an airstrike in Baghdad on January 3.

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

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

Also on January 8, Iran fired dozens of ballistic missiles at Ein-al Assad airbase, which hosts U.S. troops, in revenge for the assassination of General Soleimani.

The Pentagon recently admitted that 109 service members had suffered brain injuries in the attack despite that fact that they had hunkered down in bunkers.

## Zarif meets Ukrainian FM in Munich

**POLITICAL** TEHRAN — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and Ukrainian Foreign Minister Vadym Prystaiko met on the sidelines of the 56th Munich Security Conference (MSC) and discussed the Ukrainian passenger plane which was mistakenly downed by the Iranian military on January 8.

IRNA reported on Saturday that the top officials exchanged views on cooperation in investigating the incident.

The victims of the crash included 82 Iranians, 63 Iranian-Canadians, 11 Ukrainians, 10 Swedes, four Afghans, three Germans, and three British nationals.

On Friday, Zarif also met with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Foreign Minister François-Philippe Champagne.

According to website of Canada's Foreign Ministry, the two agreed to remain in close touch over the issue of the Ukrainian plane crash.

"The two also discussed the download and analysis of PS752's black boxes. Minister Champagne reiterated that the preferred option of the International Coordination and Response Group is for Iran to make use of the facilities offered by France, which possesses the technical capacity to perform this work. Minister Champagne also stressed the importance of a fair and equitable compensation settlement for the families of the victims, based on international standards," the website reported.

Zarif also met separately with Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi; Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi; Omani Foreign Minister Yusef bin Alawi; Croatian Foreign Minister Gordan Grlic-Radman; and also the members of the European Council on Foreign Relations.

He also discussed expansion of Iran's relations with Europe in a separate meeting with Spanish Foreign Minister Margarita Robles.



In another meeting with German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas, Zarif discussed the 2015 nuclear deal and Europe's commitments.

# Trump was misled to believe U.S. could get away with Soleimani assassination: Zarif

**1→** On January 3, Trump ordered strikes that martyred General Soleimani, chief of the IRGC Quds Force, and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the second-in-command of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units (PMU).

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

"Iran responded in a proportionate way against the base from which the operations against Soleimani were carried out," said Zarif.

He explained that Iran's retaliatory attack was intended to show to the United States that they cannot bully Iran and that actions against Iran will have repercussions.

But the intention, he continued, was not to kill anybody.

"The intention was to send a message, a very clear message to the United States, that if they kill Iranians we will hit back," he remarked.

The foreign minister said Iran is entitled to defend itself against armed attack by the United States under article 51 of the UN Charter. "We acted in accordance with the law."

"We informed the Iraqi prime minister forty-five minutes before the operation. Our military sent a special delegation to inform the Iraqi prime minister before the operation and I think he did notify the Americans."

Asked whether Iran had specifically declared which base it will hit, Zarif said Iran did not mention which base.

"Actually, I believe the emissaries did not know which base was going to be attacked," Zarif said. "[We said] there will be a military response within the next minutes or hours."

"We were prepared for a counter-attack. We had hoped that wisdom would prevail. We believed that President Trump had been misled into believing that an operation against General Soleimani would first of all create happiness in Iran and Iraq, and we saw even Mike Pompeo tweeting to that effect."



**Zarif explains that Iran's retaliatory attack was intended to show to the United States that they cannot bully Iran and that actions against Iran will have repercussions.**

The chief Iranian diplomat went on to say that people proved how wrong U.S. calculations have been.

**U.S. suffering from misinformation about Iran, says Zarif**

"We did respond in order to change that calculus," said Zarif.

"We believe that's a disastrous calculus. I think the United States is suffering, the administration is suffering, from misperceptions, misinformation about Iran, and I believe that can cause catastrophe. It is important for President Trump to listen to advisors who have better knowledge of our region, rather than novices who know nothing about our region."

Pressed to name whom he meant, Zarif said, "I'm making a general pronouncement that President Trump is receiving bad advice. It's for him to decide. I don't interfere in the internal affairs of the United States."

On the possibility of further acts of retaliation by Iran, Zarif said "it's not over" but explained that Iran's military response has been carried out and has been concluded.

However, he continued, what the United States did was "to hurt the emotions and feelings of millions of people who came to the streets of not only various cities in Iran but cities in Iraq, elsewhere in the region, even as far as India or Latin America."

He further said the reaction of the people

is not over yet, reiterating that the end of the U.S. presence in the region has begun.

"I think the first reaction of the people reflected itself in the decision of the parliament of Iraq to ask the government to kick the U.S. out of Iraq."

He said Soleimani's funeral brought millions upon millions of people into the streets.

"Seventy people were killed in a stampede during his funeral. That shows the amount of love and affection that people had for him. I think that's a signal for the United States how mistaken their policy has been."

On the U.S. Senate's vote to curb Trump's power to wage war against Iran, Zarif said the move is an indication that even a Republican-controlled Senate is tired of adventurism.

"[The Senate] is tired of taking action based on miscalculations, tired of taking action based on basically illusions," he said, adding, "President Trump has believed that Iran would fall since he left the nuclear deal. Now he is misled to believe that we will fall soon. I think he is making all these mistakes, and I think the U.S. Senate, the U.S. House of Representatives and the American people don't want him to make such disastrous mistakes."

He said he thinks it is obvious that people believe Trump is making a strategic miscalculation.

Zarif further described the Senate's move as a symbolic but very important measure that indicates that the American people do not want to see a miscalculated adventurist move that can cause disaster for the entire region and for the entire world.

"I think enough damage has been done. I think bad advice to President Trump has led him to make a lot of bad decisions. I think he can correct them by making the right decision, by accepting that maximum pressure on Iran has failed, by accepting that leaving the JCPOA was a wrong decision based on disinformation that he received from some of his advisors."

## Tehran slams Korean companies for submitting to U.S. bullying

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Tehran has criticized some **d e s k** South Korean companies' move to leave Iran's market due to U.S. sanctions and bullying, saying the Islamic Republic will never forget its friends during tough times.

"Some foreign companies, which have left Iran in recent years and months submitting to the U.S. bullying, should know that returning to the Iranian market will be very difficult," Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said via Twitter on Friday night.



According to trade principles, keeping one's foothold in a country's market is harder than entering it, Mousavi said.

In his post, Mousavi also attached a photo of workers removing a banner of the South Korean company Samsung in Iran.

Samsung and its fellow South Korean company LG Electronics — for which Iran has been a key market in the Middle East — reportedly pulled down their last advertisement banners in Iran on Friday.

The two companies had cut their trade relations with Tehran in the past months, submitting to U.S. sanctions imposed on Iran after Washington withdrew from the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, also known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

The JCPOA was struck between Iran and the five permanent UN Security Council members — the United States, Russia, China, France, and the UK — as well as Germany and the European Union.

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

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

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

## Race for Iran's parliament: Battle lines drawn in Tehran

**TEHRAN (FNA)** — Race for the 30 seats of the constituency of Tehran has got more heated with different factions offering lists to their supporters, with just 6 days remaining till the polls for the 11th parliamentary elections in Iran.

Principlists offered their 30-candidate list on Friday. Presenting the list, Qolam Ali Haddad Adel, the chairman of the Council of Islamic Revolution Forces Alliance, called on the people of Tehran to vote for the list in the upcoming polls.



Mostafa Aqa-Mirsalim and Former Tehran Mayor Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, who both ran for the 12th Presidential election in 2017, are top on the list.

On the other side of the race, seven reformist parties have established "coalition for Iran". Faraj Kimjani, the head of the election campaign of the coalition, said in a presser on Saturday that this coalition has been formed to hold a competitive election in line with the country's interests. Threats from foreign countries require us to have a live significant election, he said.

Majid Ansari, head of the Association of Combatant Clerics, and Mostafa Kavakebian, the secretary-general of Mardomsalari party (Democracy Party), are among the main figures of the list.

The campaigns officially started at 00:00 Thursday (20:30 GMT, Wednesday), and the candidates will have one week to win the people's support for their candidacy.

The 11th parliamentary elections and the midterm elections for the Assembly of Experts — a body whose members designate the country's Leader — are to be held simultaneously on February 21.

The candidates will have until Wednesday night to promote themselves, and after that, there will be a 24-hour silence until the voting begins on Friday morning.

The elections, held every four years, are scheduled to take place on February 21. A second round could take place in the second month of the next year on the solar calendar (April 20-May 20, 2020) if some seats remain vacant.

Last year, Iran's parliament objected to a motion to increase the number of the seats, keeping the figure at 290.

A total of 57,918,000 people are eligible to cast their ballots, therefore, there would be one lawmaker at the parliament per each 190,000-strong segment of the Iranian population.

A total of 7,148 candidates, including dozens of Iranians from the religious minorities, are running for the parliament. In capital Tehran, 1,453 candidates are contesting one of the 30 allocated seats on the legislature.

The lawmakers are elected for a 4-year term, with no limitation for the incumbent or former parliamentarians to run again.

## Iran's military doctrine is defensive: Sayyari

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — The deputy Army commander **d e s k** for coordination affairs said on Saturday that Iran's military doctrine is fundamentally defensive with a focus on reinvigorating deterrent power.

"In order to attain deterrent power, we need qualified human resources," Rear Admiral Habibollah Sayyari said in a scientific competition ceremony attended by the army officers in Tehran.

Touching upon remarks by Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Khamenei a couple of days ago, the commander said, "You must become so strong that the enemy would not dare to approach you, to be capable of sitting around the table of negotiations powerfully, to be capable of clarifying your standing worldwide and preventing the enemies from even thinking about aggression against your country and your interests."

"We have not been after waging war against any country and will continue this policy. We are not a threat to other countries. Today, our growing military power is for protecting



our own country," Sayyari added.

Earlier this month, Ayatollah Khamenei said that to prevent a war against itself, Iran must increase its military power, noting that being militarily vulnerable would prompt the enemy to take action against the country.

"In order to prevent war and in order to put an end to threats we must become powerful," Ayatollah Ali Khamenei told a number of Air Force officers on the occasion of Air Force Day on February 8.

The Leader went on to say, "We are not seeking to threaten any country or nation, rather we are after protecting the country's security and preventing threats."

Ayatollah Khamenei also said reliance on domestic capacities and turning threats into opportunities are the chief reasons for the successes of the Air Force.

"In addition to repairing and maintenance of aircrafts, the Air Force has successfully planned and manufactured fighter jets in spite of the U.S. sanctions," the Leader stated.

## Top Democrat slams Trump's 'false' justification for assassination of Soleimani

*By staff and agency*

Democratic Representative Eliot Engel, chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, slammed on Friday the Trump administration over assassination of Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, arguing a new report justifying the attack undermines the argument that the operation was in response to an imminent threat.

"The administration's explanation in this report makes no mention of any imminent threat and shows that the justification the President offered to the American people was false, plain and simple," Engel said in a statement, Politico reported.

"To make matters worse, to avoid having to justify its actions to Congress, the administration falsely claims Congress had already authorized the strike under



the 2002 Iraq war resolution," the New York Democrat added. "This legal theory is absurd."

Congressional Democrats, and even some Republicans, have complained top administration officials haven't adequately outlined the imminent threat

that justified the provocative move of assassinating Soleimani or shown an adequate legal justification.

"This spurious, after-the-fact explanation won't do," Engel added of the report.

The Senate on Thursday passed a resolution calling for an end to hostilities against Iran without congressional authorization. In addition to passing a war powers resolution, the House has recently voted to cut off funding for offensive military operations against Iran and to repeal the 2002 Iraq war AUMF.

In an interview with Geo News published on January 25, Engel criticized Trump for beating drums of war against Iran.

"The United States, frankly, has been involved in too many wars in the last twenty years. And, I think it's time to back off and

not have a perpetual war," he said.

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

Many members of Congress, including some Republicans, have been pushing the administration for more information about assassination of Soleimani, Reuters reported.

Trump did not inform Congress about the drone strike until after it took place and then, according to many lawmakers, his administration held back too much information about the reason for the strike and its legal justification.

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

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

## Iranian mirage jets equipped with homegrown radars, weaponry: commander

**TEHRAN (Tasnim)** — Deputy commander of the Islamic Republic of Iran Air Force (IRIAF) Brigadier General Hamid Vahedi said the country's Mirage fighter jets have been equipped with domestically made radars and weaponry.

Speaking to Tasnim, Brigadier General Vahedi highlighted the country's self-sufficiency in the arms sphere and said the IRIAF's Mirage F1 fighters have been equipped with homegrown radars.

The fighter jets have also been armed with domestic weapons, the commander added.

Back in December 2014, Iran said it had equipped the

Mirage fighters with home-made cruise missiles despite sanctions imposed on the country's Armed Forces.

Military technicians at the Iranian defense ministry managed to manufacture a missile system and mount it on Mirage fighter jets.

Previously, Iran's Mirage fighters were almost out of service and could not be used in military missions since the jets were compatible with Exocet missiles as well as some types of Russian-made missiles which Iran was unable to import because of sanctions.

Mirage fighter jets produced by the French aircraft man-

ufacturer Dassault Aviation, have great capabilities in aerial combat and are in service in only six countries around the world, including Iran.

Iranian military experts and technicians have in recent years made great headways in manufacturing a broad range of indigenous equipment, making the armed forces self-sufficient in the arms sphere.

Tehran has always assured other nations that its military might poses no threat to the regional countries, saying that the Islamic Republic's defense doctrine is entirely based on deterrence.

## How Trump has violated Iranian human rights

**1→** However, the situation of indirect action is different and complex. In other words, the side effects of an action can be deemed as *actus reus* of the crime. For example, according to the OPEC monthly oil market report, which was released on January 15, 2020, due to the return of U.S. sanctions, Iranian crude oil production decreased from 3/553/000 to 2/357/000 between 2018 to 2019 (based on secondary sources). If we accept the accuracy of

the report, we see a sharp decline in the revenues of Iran's Ministry of Petroleum. Hence, making dismissal of employees or banning employment for job-seekers at the ministry will be unavoidable. In fact, in this case, the side effects of U.S. sanctions violate international human rights, such as the right to work that is recognized in the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights.

In the case of the mental element of the

crime, direct or indirect actions of the U.S. must be accompanied by criminal intent. That is, the action must be aimed at hitting an Iranian citizen or a group of them. To prove *mens rea*, it is sufficient to know that the U.S. was aware of the nature of sanctions. As a simple fact, the main target of sanctions are civilians, and it has a direct effect on their daily lives. Therefore, the sanctions by themselves have criminal intent because it leads to the gradual death

of vulnerable people in the long-term and leads to a violation of a chain of human rights that are binding to all nations. Therefore, the U.S. sanctions can be perceived as a human rights violation, in the form of indirect action, so it will be prosecutable under article 1 of the bill.

All in all, according to the matters above, it is clear that U.S. allegation to friendship with Iranian people just a slogan, and it is a trick for U.S. political purposes.

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	461988.9
IFX	5915.0

Sources: tse.ir, ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	45,476 rials
GBP	54,797 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$57.32/b
WTI	\$52.05/b
OPEC Basket	\$55.86/b
Gold	\$1,585.95/oz
Silver	\$17.81/oz
Platinum	\$968.55/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

Iranian banks' foreign assets up over 17%

Since the foreign branches of state-run banks are not considered in calculating the foreign assets, private banks and non-bank credit institutions account for the biggest share of the country's banking system's foreign assets.



Central Bank of Iran's foreign assets also witnessed a 6.7-percent increase in the said period, reaching 4.94 quadrillion rials (nearly \$117.61 billion) from last year's 4.63 quadrillion rials (about \$110.23 billion).

The previous CBI report, released in September 2019, had put the banking system's foreign assets by June 21, 2019 at 9.245 quadrillion rials (about \$220.11 billion), 13 percent more than the corresponding period of last year.

TEDPIX, IFX rise on Saturday

TEHRAN — TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), ended 2,908 points higher at 461,988 on Saturday (the first day of Iranian calendar week), IRNA reported.

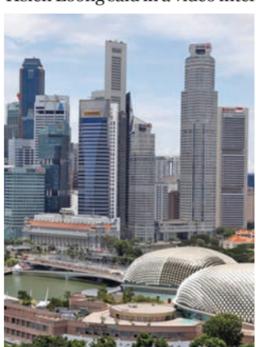
Over 6,229 securities worth 39.171 trillion rials (about \$932.6 million) were traded at TSE, while the first market's index rose 1,048 points and the second market's index climbed 10,685 points.

Also, IFX, the main index of Iran's over-the-counter (OTC) market known as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB), went up 100 points to 5,915, as 2.675 billion securities valued at 34.602 trillion rials (about \$823.8 million) were traded at this market on Saturday.

Singapore may face recession, says PM

Singapore's economy could enter a recession due to the blow from an outbreak of COVID-19 in China, its prime minister said yesterday, adding that the city-state was bracing for a "significant" hit in the coming quarters.

The "impact will be significant at least in the next couple of quarters. It is a very intense outbreak," Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said in a video interview posted on Facebook.



"I can't say whether we will have a recession or not. It's possible, but definitely our economy will take a hit," Lee said in remarks made to media at Changi Airport.

Lee said that business at the airport had suffered with flights down by a third.

Singapore has in effect banned all visitors from China, its biggest source of tourists, while some countries have advised against travel to Singapore, which has one of the highest virus infection tallies outside China at 58.

Its manufacturing and trade sectors might also be hit by widespread economic disruptions in China due to the outbreak.

The Asian business hub had just been showing signs of recovery from its lowest growth rate in a decade last year — at 0.7 percent — when the outbreak spread to the city-state late last month.

Singapore is due to release final fourth-quarter growth data on Monday, and economists said they are anticipating revisions to its growth forecast range of 0.5 to 2.5 percent this year.

On Tuesday, the government is set to roll out a hefty package of budget measures to cushion the economic blow from the epidemic, with some analysts expecting it to run its biggest deficit in more than a decade.

Economists at Citigroup Inc. and Maybank Investment Bank Bhd expect a virus relief package of at least \$700 million (\$503 million).

(Source: taipeitimes.co)

Iron ore concentrate output exceeds 39m tons in 10 months

TEHRAN — Production of iron ore concentrate in Iran during the first 10 months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2019 – January 20, 2020) reached 39.341 million tons, registering a three-percent rise compared to the same period last year, IRIB reported.

The country's major mineral production companies had managed to produce 38.162 million tons of iron ore concentrate in the previous year's same time span.

According to Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO), in the mentioned

10 months, 22.512 million tons of iron ore conglomerate was produced, showing two percent decline as compared to the last year's corresponding period.

Based on IMIDRO's data, 3.459 million tons of granulated iron ore was also produced in the first 10 months of the current year to register a 39-percent decline as compared to the last year's 10-month period.

As previously announced, Iran's export of iron ore concentrate rose 96.6 percent during the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20, 2019), compared to its preceding year.



The country exported 5.552 million tons of the product worth \$398 million in the past year.

In a bid to prevent the exports of unprocessed minerals, creating more value added and meeting the requirements of domestic producers for the raw materials, Iran has

levied a 25-percent duty on the exports of raw minerals (especially iron ore) since September 23, 2019.

The new duty is encouraging production of more processed minerals such as pellet and concentrate instead of selling the raw minerals.

Bandar Abbas to hold date exhibition in late Feb.

TEHRAN — Hormozgan Province, in southern Iran, will hold a specialized exhibition on dates and date products in Bandar Abbas, the capital city of the province, from February 24 to 28, Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) published on its website.

As reported, Bandar Abbas International Exhibitions Company will organize the event, which is the sixth edition of the exhibition.

Last month, head of National Association of Iranian Dates (NAID) announced that production of dates in Iran has reached 1.5 million tons in the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 19, 2020), registering a 20-percent rise from that of the previous year, IRNA reported.

Mohsen Rashid Farokhi underlined the increase in rainfalls and favorable weather conditions as the major factors that contributed to the increase in the production of dates this year.

The official said despite the good harvest, the farmers are facing difficulties for selling their products in foreign markets.

He cited the government's ban on date exports and interference in the pricing process over the past year as some of the issues that hurt the export of the product and have become a concern for producers



and exporters.

"The price of date is dependent on the supply and demand and the government should not price it, because such pricing will not be economically viable for producers and exporters," he explained.

According to the official, currently Iranian dates are being exported to India, Southeast Asia, CIS countries, Eurasia, Russia and Europe.

Farokhi further noted that last year (March 2018-March 2019), over 300,000 tons of dates worth \$400 million were exported to other countries.

Every year, up to 1.2 million tons of various types of dates are produced in 203,763 hectares of land in Iran, making the country the second largest producer in terms of production and area under cultivation and the fifth largest exporter.

TCCIMA to hold Iran-India business forum on Monday

TEHRAN — Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA) will hold an Iran-India business forum at the place of the chamber on Monday, TCCIMA website published.

The gathering is aimed at investigating the barriers in the way of bilateral trade between the two countries and finding the ways to boost Iran-India trade.

It will be participated by the Indian Ambassadors to Tehran Gaddam Dharmendra, some officials from Indian Embassy in Iran, and representative of India's UCO Bank, in addition to officials from Iranian Foreign Affairs Ministry, banking system, Trade Promotion Organization (TPO), and some Iranian traders and businessmen.

In an exclusive interview conducted by Iran's Labor News Agency (ILNA), Indian ambassador to Tehran has said that his country's ties with Tehran would not be influenced by other countries.

"Bilateral discussions between Indian prime minister and Iran's president have led to a diversification of trade exchanges", Gaddam Dharmendra noted.

With regard to how U.S. sanctions can affect the volume of trade between Iran and India, he said, "We do not adjust



our relations with Iran based on the behavior of other countries. Iran is our neighbor and we have extensive relations with this country."

The ambassador also said that sanctions are making officials on both sides to think of diversifying their trade ties beyond the energy sector. "Tehran-New Delhi relations were mostly in the field of energy, and Iran exported oil to India and India exported items to Iran that were not in balance before."

According to Dharmendra, the U.S. sanctions against Iran are a new challenge which nevertheless offers an opportunity for both countries.

Members of Iran-India chambers of commerce, manufacturers and traders must explore ways to further boost trade between the two countries, he suggested.

Commodities worth \$690m traded at IME in a week

TEHRAN — Some 441,821 tons of commodities worth over \$690 million were traded at Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) during the past Iranian calendar week (ended on Friday), IME Public Relations Department reported.

Last week, on the domestic and export metal and mineral trading floor of IME, 154,903 tons of various products worth \$ 324 million were traded, the same report confirmed.

On this trading floor, 139,111 tons of steel, 8,080 tons of copper, 7,800 tons of aluminum, 150 tons of molybdenum concentrates, 12 tons of precious metal concentrates as well as 10 kg of gold bullion were traded by customers.

The report declared that on domestic and export oil and petrochemical trading floors of IME, 285,661 tons of different commodities with the total value of \$373 million were traded.

On this trading floor, 69,458 tons of bitumen, 70,065 tons of VB feed stock, 78,154 tons of polymer products, 27,000 tons of lube cut oil, 28,754 tons of chemical products, 506 tons of base oil, 1,500 tons of slaps waxes, 720 tons of insulation, as well as 7,690 tons of sulfur were traded.



Furthermore, the side market of IME experienced trading of 1,257 tons of various commodities.

As previously announced by IME's International Affairs and Public Relations Department, 2.874 million tons of commodities valued at \$3.397 billion were traded at this exchange market in January.

Europe's stagnant economy is vulnerable to a shock from China

By Julia Horowitz

Recession fears are stalking Europe again after Germany's economy flatlined at the end of 2019. The coronavirus now threatens to slam exports to China.

The German economy did not grow in the final three months of last year, setting up the country for a difficult 2020 just when it was meant to begin experiencing a revival.

Weakness in the world's fourth largest economy reverberated across the eurozone, where growth slumped to a seven-year low of 0.1% in final quarter of last year.

That makes Europe especially vulnerable to the looming hit from the coronavirus outbreak. More than 64,000 people globally have been infected, and China's economy is still struggling to get moving again after the extended Lunar New Year holiday.

The "(Eurozone) economy should be about to turn a corner, but the coronavirus now means that (the first quarter) could well be a write-off," Claus Vistesen, chief eurozone economist at Pantheon Macroeconomics, said in a research note.

**The logging of growth**  
Germany was already in a feeble condition, logging growth of just 0.6% for the whole of 2019 amid weak global auto sales, the U.S.-China trade war and uncertainty over Brexit.

Economists thought that the economy,



which has been held back by its manufacturing sector, would start to pick up early this year. Then came the outbreak of the novel coronavirus.

China is the third biggest destination for German goods exports, and a drop in demand there is expected to further damage the country's factories. In 2018, the country exported goods worth nearly €94 billion (\$101.6 billion) to China, more than four times as much as France.

German carmakers, which do big business in China, are exposed: Major automakers sold fewer than 2 million cars in China last month, an 18% plunge from a year earlier. The "impact from the coronavirus on

the Chinese economy is likely to delay any rebound in the manufacturing sector as it at least temporarily disrupts supply chains," Carsten Brzeski, chief German economist at ING, wrote Friday.

That's drummed up talk about a potential recession in Germany, or two consecutive quarters of negative growth. Deutsche Bank, in a note to clients earlier this week, called a recession in the first half of the year "quite probable."

**Economy will be at a standstill**  
Andrew Kenningham, chief Europe economist at Capital Economics, said he thinks Germany's economy will remain at a standstill in the first half of 2020, which means a

recession is "absolutely on the cards." "If you're forecasting zero (growth), then it's definitely fair to be talking about a potential recession," he said.

Kenningham predicts that economic growth in the eurozone will come in at 0.1% in the first quarter and 0.2% between April and June. Without momentum at the start of the year, he expects annual growth this year to be weaker than in 2019, when it was 1.2%.

The full impact of the coronavirus on the global economy remains unclear, with little clarity about when the pace of infections will level off and begin to decline. In the meantime, workers in the world's second largest economy have had a hard time getting back to work, even as some bigger companies try to reopen their doors.

"Looking forward, the coronavirus provides a substantial risk for the expected global recovery, as hopes were pinned on an improvement of the Chinese economy," Deutsche Bank said in its note.

Should the situation continue to deteriorate, the European Central Bank may need to step in, pushing interest rates further into negative territory or increasing monthly bond purchases.

President Christine Lagarde had started to review these unconventional policies, and the expectation had been for the central bank to keep policy on hold in the meantime.

(Source: edition.cnn.com)

# Over \$30b needed for completing semi-finished petchem projects: Zanganeh

**ENERGY** TEHRAN — Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh said more than \$30 billion is required to complete unfinished petrochemical projects across the country, IRNA reported.

"Over \$30 billion is needed to be invested in the country's petrochemical industry within the next five years," Zanganeh said on Saturday.

Speaking in a seminar on the development of the oil industry's monetary system in Tehran, Zanganeh added: "domestic companies are able to make such an investment, but if we can get it from micro-

liquidity, there would be a greater chance for development in the oil industry."

Underlining the importance of investment in the oil industry, the official noted that, every year, more than \$25 billion is required to be invested in the country's oil industry and if this doesn't happen in other areas of the economy would also suffer the consequences.

"There is only \$12 billion worth of petrochemical projects which have been finalized but have not yet been started; there are also downstream and midstream projects, which together create a \$40 billion investment opportunity in the petrochemical



industry," he added.

Some petro-refinery and refineries are also set to be constructed across the country which would require up to \$20 billion and will be built and invested mostly by private and semi-private companies, he noted.

He further noted that most of the investment in the gas sector is done by the

government, adding that the private sector could become involved in gas storage projects.

"In oil projects such as exploration and production, we do not expect Iranian companies to accept the high risk of exploration projects, but there is a high potential for maintenance projects," he stressed.

## Capital market able to meet 50% of oil industry's investment needs: SEO head

**ENERGY** TEHRAN — Head of Iran's Securities and Exchange Organization (SEO) Shapour Mohammadi says the capital market is able to meet more than 50 percent of the oil industry's funding requirements, IRNA reported.

"The capital market has issued over 1.3 quadrillion rials (about \$3.9 billion) worth of bonds this year and considering this figure it is clear that this market is able to finance over 50 percent of the oil industry's projects," Mohammadi said in a seminar on development of the oil industry's monetary system.

The official further put the total value of the deals made in Iran Energy Exchange (IRENEX) at 450 trillion rials (over \$10.7 billion) in the present Iranian calendar year (started on March 21, 2019), while the total value of the stock exchange transactions stands at 8.3 quadrillion ri-



als (about \$197.6 billion) since the beginning of the year.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Mohammadi noted that the government and the SEO should create incentives for people to encourage them for investment in the capital market, saying that "there should be a reason for people to choose investment rather than depositing."

"Investment risks should be offset by increased interest rates and returns," he added.

Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh had said in the same seminar that the oil industry needs more than \$25 billion of investment every year, and if this doesn't happen other areas of the economy would also suffer the consequences.

Zanganeh had also emphasized that more than \$30 billion is required for completing unfinished petrochemical projects across the country.

## Why LNG prices are falling and what's the outlook

The impact of China's coronavirus outbreak on LNG market could worsen in the coming weeks as economic activity in manufacturing hubs struggles to rebound, keeping a lid on natural gas demand and triggering more LNG trade flow disruptions.

Coronavirus impact is being felt on world trade. Almost all commodity prices have been hit after China was cut off from the world. Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) -- has suffered the most on account of a sharp price fall.

Imports of LNG into China, the world's second-largest importer of LNG after Japan, have almost stopped. The result is visible in Asian LNG spot prices which have tumbled to \$3 per mmBtu - less than half of what they were ... at the same time last year.

China National Offshore Oil Corporation, China's top LNG buyer declared force majeure last week, which is a legal provision that allow them to break contractual obligations because of circumstances beyond their control.

This has raised the specter of more Chinese LNG importers revoking on supply contracts, and concerns about more cargo cancellations.

Record low prices of (LNG) on the one hand is creating havoc as traders are rushing to find alternative locations for cargoes and on the other hand are attracting buying interest from companies in Asia which are hunting a bargain at these prices.

### For the LNG industry

For the LNG industry, this kind of force majeure situation had never happened earlier and therefore there is this panic.

The other problem with LNG is that the economic slowdown and mild winters had already resulted in high inventory levels of LNG globally.

Japan, which is the largest importer, has slowed down purchases on account of a mild winter and lower consumption of the fuel. And now with Chinese com-



panies looking to revoke contracts -- it has only added to the troubles.

Traders are now casting around for homes for unwanted cargoes. As per some reports, one Cargo bound towards China has been diverted to Singapore now.

Some suppliers have also said that the Chinese company has requested them to delay cargo deliveries India, which recently commissioned an LNG terminal, has some scope for more purchases, but experts say even with LNG prices so low, India's poor infrastructure facility and lack of a pipeline and distribution network will not allow to buy what it could have.

Major buyers in Japan and South Korea could benefit as they but overall consumption levels there are also limited. Europe which absorbed most of the incremental supply in 2019 also has limitations now.

The impact of China's coronavirus outbreak on LNG market could worsen in coming weeks as economic activity in key manufacturing hubs struggles to rebound, keeping a lid on natural gas demand and triggering more LNG trade flow disruptions.

Consultancy firm Rystad Energy has also cut its forecast for Chinese LNG demand growth this year to 4.7%, from a year on year gain of between 10% and 13%.

Experts suggest how Low spot prices will certainly challenge the economics of many export projects, and that some LNG suppliers may even need to reduce their exports if they become uneconomic.

(Source: moneycontrol.com)

## Oil glut, stronger rouble strengthen case for Russia to cut oil output: sources

By Olesya Astakhova, Gleb Gorodyankin

A growing oil glut in Russia and the promise of a flood of dollars from the sale of a leading bank are strengthening the case for Russia to cut oil output in tandem with OPEC, oil sources said.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), Russia and other producers have for more than a year implemented a deal to cut oil output by 2.1 million barrels per day to support the market. The agreement expires at the end of March.

OPEC has recommended extending the output curbs and deepening the combined cuts because of the impact of the new coronavirus in China, which the International Energy Agency (IEA) said on Thursday would contribute to oil demand falling year on year in the first quarter.

The Kremlin has said no decision has been taken yet on whether Russia agrees to extend or deepen the output curbs - the final decision lies with President Vladimir Putin.

But a \$38-billion deal under which the finance ministry will buy state lender Sberbank is due to start in April and promises to swell state coffers, with Russia using a big chunk of its dollar national wealth fund to the central bank's stake.

This is expected to lead to a stronger rouble, which is a factor that is generally disliked by oil exporters as it hits their profits.

### Favoring a stronger rouble

At a meeting on Wednesday, oil companies asked Energy Minister Alexander Novak to tell central bank governor Elvira Nabiullina that they do not favor a strong rouble, two sources familiar with the outcome of the meeting said.

"A lot of dollars will come to the market, boosting the rouble, so a 'rouble barrel' will become cheaper," one of the two sources familiar with the outcome said.

The source said a stronger rouble was an "important factor" in the decision on whether to deepen cuts in what is known as the OPEC+ deal following a proposal by its partners in the agreement to add another



600,000 bpd to the combined cuts.

Both sources said that two Russian oil companies, Surgutneftegaz and Zarubezhneft, in particular had raised the exchange rate issue.

The companies, the energy ministry and the central bank did not reply to Reuters' requests for comments.

A number of oil executives, after leaving the energy ministry on Wednesday, told reporters that no final decision had been taken but the basic scenario was to extend the existing OPEC+ deal to end-June.

Nabiullina said on Thursday she did not expect a "significant" impact on the money market from Sberbank's sale although the economy ministry has raised its rouble rate forecast by nearly 2 roubles to 63.9 per U.S. dollar for this year.

Another factor in Russia's decision is a disagreement with Belarus under which Moscow has halted its 240,000 bpd supply of oil to its neighbor.

In addition to this, the number of Russian oil refineries undergoing maintenance will peak in April-May, according to energy ministry data and Reuters calculations, freeing up another up to 580,000 bpd of oil.

Russia is reallocating oil flows meant for Belarus to other destinations but the upcoming peak in maintenance means it will be flooded with crude, an oil trader told Reuters.

A "decision on (resumption of supplies to Belarus) should be taken in early March," the oil trader said. "We can add a couple more cargoes on the Baltic (ports) but it is not possible to add more."

(Source: reuters.com)

## More than 50% of Iranian dams' capacity full

**ENERGY** TEHRAN — Iran's deputy energy minister **d e s k** says currently 54 percent of the capacity of the country's dams have been filled and the rest is kept for flood management, IRIB reported on Saturday.

Speaking on the sidelines of an exhibition in Tehran, Ghasem Taghizadeh Khamesi expressed hope that considering the recent heavy snowfall, the country won't be facing any water shortage in the upcoming hot seasons.

"Before the recent snowfall, we have had five to even 50 percent water shortage in 20 provinces of the country; the recent snowfall has helped improve the condition, but we are still facing a crisis in some places," he said.

According to the official, condoling the surface waters resulted from snowfall is easier than rain and the energy ministry would have more time to properly manage these water resources.



Severe snowfall along with snowstorms have been reported in several north and northwestern provinces of Iran over the past few days.

Massive snowstorm barreled across several provinces namely Hamedan, Markazi, Lorestan, Gilan, Qazvin, Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari, Ilam and West Azarbaijan.

Last year, the volume of water behind the country's dams went so down that the country faced serious problem regarding power generation by hydro-electric power plants.

The current water year, however, kicked off with great amount of rainfalls across the country which even caused some floods in northern and eastern provinces.

## Integrating renewable energy sources into the electricity grid

A Swansea-led team will be examining how best to integrate renewable energy sources into the UK power grid, helping to cut carbon emissions, thanks to a new £244,000 research award.

The UK is committed to reducing its greenhouse gas emissions by at least 80% by 2050, relative to 1990 levels. Meeting this target will require a significant shift in the way energy is used and generated.

To reduce our dependency on fossil fuels, renewable energy sources, such as wind and solar energy, will need to be integrated into the power grid.

While the benefits of renewables are indisputable, there are certain areas that need to be addressed before they can be integrated into the power grid while maintaining safety and reliability.

This is because renewable energy sources have certain characteristics that differentiate them from traditional sources: they are less controllable, they cause unintended power flow patterns, and they impact voltage and current waveforms and the overall power quality of electricity.



More specifically, renewable energy sources, like all devices connected to the grid by means of power converters, generate harmonics, i.e. unwanted high frequency current and voltage components that can disrupt the electricity supply.

These are not necessarily problems in themselves, as long as there is a way to integrate variable renewable supplies into the grid without disrupting the system.

### The renewable energy sources

The research carried out in this project aims at assessing the expected levels of harmonics in the future UK power grid due to the integration of technologies that include renewable energy sources, electric vehicles and interconnectors.

Carrying out this assessment means developing accurate models of these devices and of the power system. At the same time, these models require some form of simplification because of the number of components involved.

Previous research has focused on either detailed power converter models, or the use of a large power system model with simplified converter representation.

This project aims at combining both aspects in a single model. This would be able to represent correctly harmonic generation from renewable sources, the transfer of harmonics between voltage levels, and the representation of statistical variations of harmonic levels in the system.

This research will be led by the Energy Safety Research Institute at Swansea University, in close collaboration with two industrial partners, National Grid and Measurable Ltd, and with the University of Texas at Austin.

The funding for the research has been awarded by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC).

Dr. Grazia Todeschini from the Energy Safety Research Institute at Swansea University, lead researcher on the project, said:

"With increasing levels of renewable energy sources integrated in the UK power grid, we are reaching a tipping point where the impact of these devices on the day-to-day operation of the power grid is visible.

I and the project collaborators are delighted that EPSRC will support this research and we look forward to contributing to the further integration of renewable energies into the UK power grid'.

(Source: eurasiareview.com)

## Total looks to stop selling fuel oil to power plants

By Tsvetana Paraskova

This is the latest attempt from an oil and gas major to cut its carbon footprint as the French company aims to be known as an energy company rather than oil and gas major.

According to Total's data cited by Reuters, fuel oil represented about 5 percent of the company's total production of refined oil products in 2018.

Total's marketing division is considering the idea to stop selling fuel oil for power generation, a spokesman for the company told Reuters.

Reducing the carbon footprint fits in Total's ambition to reduce the carbon intensity of the energy products it makes available to customers by 15 percent between 2015 — the date of the Paris Agreement — and 2030.

Other majors are also pledging reductions in carbon emissions. Last week, Equinor unveiled a plan to reduce the net carbon intensity, from initial production to final consumption,



of energy produced by at least 50 percent by 2050.

Shell has also set short-term targets for reducing the net

carbon footprint of the energy products it sells.

In the latest pledge from an oil major, BP said on Wednesday that it aims to become a net zero company by 2050 or sooner.

Total, for its part, wants to be known as a 'global energy company', much like Equinor has been doing since it dropped the name Statoil.

Improving energy efficiency, growing in natural gas, developing a low-carbon electricity business, sustainable biofuels, and investing in carbon capture, utilization and storage (CCUS) technology are Total's key pillars of integrating climate in its strategy.

In just two weeks, Total announced several renewables and batteries projects, from a pilot plant to manufacture European batteries for electric vehicles, to entering the Spanish solar market to develop nearly 2 gigawatts (GW) of solar projects, to expanding its partnership in India's renewables market.

(Source: oilprice.com)

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# Iran after Soleimani

By Abbas Aslani

**TEHRAN** — This week, several cities in Iran will host ceremonies to commemorate the 40th day following the assassination of former Quds Force commander Qassem Soleimani. While the mourning ceremonies for the loss of the popular military commander have nearly come to their conclusion, questions remain about the impact Soleimani's absence will have on Iranian foreign policy in the region.

Some believe that the Americans have successfully cut off one of Iran's arms of influence in the region and have effectively established some level of deterrence with the assassination. From this standpoint, Iran's influence and presence in the region will diminish eventually forcing Tehran to go to the negotiating table with the US under unfavorable terms. On top of that, they believe Iran will be forced to avoid any friction with Americans which could easily spiral into a conflict they cannot win.

Soleimani was an important and influential military commander of incredible significance for Tehran. However, it is important we recognize that the infrastructure of Iranian foreign policy which he helped to build over decades remains in place, as does the hierarchy of military commanders in Quds Force. The immediate appointment of a new Quds Force commander by the supreme leader of Iran signaled that there would be no change in the country's regional policies and that Tehran was not unprepared for this possibility.

Although American senior officials, including President Donald Trump, attempted to portray Soleimani as a terrorist, millions of Iranians and Iraqis attended his funeral ceremonies in cities across their respective countries. Contrary to what many western politicians said, Iranians and Iraqis see Soleimani as a brave anti-



terrorist and anti-ISIS hero. The vast majority of people who came to the funeral ceremonies came to encourage the government to carry on in conducting anti-American policies. Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, in his first Friday prayer sermon on January 17, said that "the cry of revenge that the people let out throughout the country was in fact the real fuel for the missiles that turned the American base upside down."

Trump, who commonly sees foreign policy issues through a domestic politics lens, might gain some short-term rewards back at home, in particular among his voting base during the coming election. However, that will not necessarily guarantee American foreign policy interests in the long run. As a result, the costs of the assassination of Soleimani will very likely outweigh the benefits for the US in the long term.

## Russian analyst: Iran, Russia and China's joint naval drills promote multipolar World Order

**TEHRAN (FNA)** — Leonid Savin, Journalist and Geopolitical analyst, says the joint military exercise in the Persian Gulf sent a "clear message to the outsiders" that the security of the Strait of Hormuz and Gulf of Oman can be properly maintained by the region states.

In an exclusive interview with FNA, Savin said, "The Strait of Hormuz is a very narrow place... Any small incidents may lead to a domino effect with serious consequences. The current geopolitical turbulence was an opportunity for the non-state actors... It is potentially a crossroad for both hybrid and conventional future wars."

Leonid Savin is a Member of the Military-Scientific Society of the Russian Ministry of Defense. He is also the Chief Editor of Geopolitica.ru, the Founder and Chief Editor of Journal of Eurasian Affairs. He has authored numerous books which have been translated and published in Russia, Ukraine, Serbia, Spain and Iran.

Below is the full text of the interview:  
■ The Gulf of Oman was a focal point of geopolitical tensions, namely the tanker attacks, British oil tanker seizure and the US drone hunt, in 2019. Why do the Gulf of Oman and

Strait of Hormuz play an important role in the security of international maritime trade?

A: The point is that main routes of oil trade from region pass through this critical point. And there are countries with main global oil and gas resources. We need to note that the Suez Channel connects European, African and Asian maritime routes and all of them also pass through the Persian Gulf. The rise of Asian economics has also impacted this maritime transport node. Carter's doctrine about vital interests of United States in region is also still active. Just add the geopolitical rivalry between main actors there (for example Iran and Saudi Arabia) and bilateral agreements between US and its regional allies; you will get the complete picture.

The Strait of Hormuz is a very narrow place. From the technical point of view any small incidents may lead to a domino effect with serious consequences. The current geopolitical turbulence was an opportunity for the non-state actors, which are considered proxy by some states in this region; it is potentially a crossroad for both hybrid and conventional future wars.

From the viewpoint of classical geopolitics,



the Persian Gulf is a part of Eurasian rimland that can play a very crucial role and serve the both sides: for the Eurasia and Atlantic Sea Powers (historically British Empire and later United States). When land powers meet sea powers in such place, the clash is very possible due to the conflict of interests.

■ The Foreign Ministers of Iran and Russia said their countries are pursuing initiatives

to establish collective security in the Persian Gulf region. Is there any room left for the "Sea Powers" to claim the responsibility of the region's security?

A: The joint drills of Iran, Russia and China were very essential. At first, it was needed for the coordination among the states. It also promoted multipolar world order as well as presenting very clear message for outsiders and regional actors. More joint maneuvers in the future should be repeated even in larger scales. Besides Navy, Air-Space Forces, Ground Forces and Special Operation Forces also may be integrated.

But there is political level too. Step by step we must adopt a new strategy and doctrine that will be acceptable for local countries and main Eurasian powers. For the moment, we can sign a kind of memorandum of understanding and start negotiation process with all interested sides. Russia can be effective mediator for engaging more states into a new regional deal. This is also the case with China. They should develop an action plan for a negative scenario, to organize the counter-measures against any threats to the security of our own and partners' vessels.

## Munich Security Conference duty regarding the assassination of commander Soleimani

1 → The cultural war that has launched in the world arena by the West is an example of cultural terrorism, including Islamophobia, racism against colored people and natives, critical situation of Indigenous people in Canada, the U.S. and Australia and removing the identity of other nations, as the Deal of the Century, by which millions of innocent Palestinians have been deprived from their right and identities.

The cultural terrorism waged by the U.S. and its allies and has caused many wars and injustices around the world, with increasing number of victims every day.

The third is scientific terrorism that the West seeks to inflict. Monopoly in the field of nuclear science comes while according to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) all IAEA members have the right to enjoy peaceful nuclear education. Monopoly in the aerospace field is a sample of this terrorism.

Countries that have nuclear weapons, such as France, call its nuclear bombs the cause of Europe stability. The U.S., which allocates \$ 700 billion to upgrade its nuclear missile capability, has been obstructing other nations' access to peaceful nuclear knowledge and even sanctioning and threatening them.

Interestingly, the same Western states that express concern over the world's nuclear security do not even adhere to their nuclear commitments. The non-commitment of the P5+1 in the JCPOA (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action) despite of all Iran's commitments is a clear sign of the nuclear monopoly by these countries.

Any country has the right to access to defense industry, including the missile sector, to secure itself. This is while the West does not consider this very simple right for other countries, a matter that can easily be seen in its attempt for destroying Iran's missile capability, which is purely defensive. Interestingly, the scope of scientific terrorism has even influenced the field of scientific researches. The U.S. and French hostile position towards Iranian satellite achievements indicates this scientific apartheid.

Fourth is military terrorism, which is another aspect of security threats and is formed by terrorist acts of those who claim are fighting terrorism. The so-called counterterrorism U.S.-led coalition in recent years has not only had not combating terrorism but has been widely supported it to the point that it has officially become a shelter for terrorists in Syria and Iraq.

Military moves by these countries against Syria and Iraq shows that they are fostering terrorism. Their support for Saudi state terrorism against the oppressed Yemenis and the Zionist state terrorism against the Palestinians reveal another aspect their fostering of terrorism.

Their support for terrorism is such that, in a move against regional and global security, in the apparent terrorist act and war crime, they assassinated Commanders of the resistance movement, Major General Qassem Soleimani, commander of the Quds force of the Islamic Republic of Iran, deputy chief of the Popular Mobilization Committee (PMC) Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis and their companions. These martyrs are considered as elements who played an important role in the fight against terrorism.

Regarding these points, if this year's Munich Security Summit seeks to resolve the world's security crises, it should focus on confronting the types of the terrorism listed.

Emphasizing on the withdrawal of foreign forces, especially the U.S., from West Asia, countering the economic, cultural, scientific and military terrorism, expressing tribute to the commanders of the resistance movement, in particular Commander Soleimani and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, by the participants of the summit and condemning U.S. state terrorism are preliminary steps to need to be taken to prove the intention of the Munich Security Summit for world peace and security.

## Trump's new travel ban best way to uncover U.S. foreign policy drives



**TEHRAN (FNA)** —The Trump administration has announced an expansion of the Muslim travel ban - one of Trump's signature policies which has been derided by critics as an attempt to ban Muslims from the US - to include six new countries.

Immigration restrictions will be imposed on: Nigeria, Eritrea, Tanzania, Sudan, Kyrgyzstan and Myanmar.

The latest iteration comes three years after President Donald Trump - in one of his first moves in office - signed the first Muslim travel ban, which caused chaos at airports and eventually landed at the Supreme Court.

As it turned out, Trump is now targeting African countries despite having a year previously revealed a "prosper Africa" strategy, which sought to re-engage the continent. However, as the new policy reveals, this was never pursued in serious solidarity for Africa and was only about American strategy. With the highlighted targeting of Nigeria, Trump has now dealt a serious blow

to one of their most successful relationships on the continent.

On a diplomatic and economic level, Nigeria is fast becoming the most important country in Africa. With a population of 190 million, it is often touted as "an economy of the future" and is anticipated to become an engine of global economic growth. With its primary export being oil, the United States sits as Nigeria's highest provider of Foreign Direct Investment, with most of it being centered in the petrochemical sector.

With the United States having released their "Prosper Africa" policy in late 2018, a doctrine is largely emerging from the fact that Washington had turned against China as a "strategic competitor", one would assume logically that the administration would continue to place emphasis on diplomacy with Nigeria and look for opportunities to expand investment, not least because the Nigeria-China relationship has also grown in tandem.

However, the Trump administration's domestic and foreign policy outlooks more than often prove to be contradictory. With this so-called pivot to Africa being largely insincere in practice, based as a reaction to other competitors than a genuine cause for concern for the continent, it cannot neutralize the anti-migrant populist-nationalism rooted at the heart of the administration.

With the election looming this year, Trump is inevitably going to care more about his own domestic standing and voter base than issues in Africa, and an extremely tough position on immigration has long been one of his core priorities. As a result, the option to extend the racially motivated travel ban inevitably "trumps" any foreign policy preferences.

The diplomatic consequences of such a move will be significant. The move is a slap in the face for Nigeria and a number of other African countries, which will damage America's soft power and appeal, as well as make it more challenging for the two countries to do two-way business. It sends out a negative message that will consolidate the fact that the United States is an unreliable partner and is prejudiced against Africans, which ironically serves to contradict Trump's entire "prosper Africa" strategy in the first place.

In this case, his newest travel bans represent a poorly thought out strategic blunder. At the heart of the White House's foreign policy, the aggressive push for "America First" and appeal to racial anxieties contradicts sharply with the equally assertive belief that the country ought to reassert its hegemony against perceived challengers.

Still, any interest it held in Africa was merely an extension of the latter, than a serious end in and of itself. It is painfully obvious Trump has little empathy for African people. Thus, as the election comes calling, he turns to his base and, without a second thought, alienates the continent.

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National Iranian Drilling Company	3/221/048	Tender No.:FP/20-98/149 Indent No.: 08-23-9845857	14,625,000,000

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<b>Submitting Method</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt in the amount of 510,000 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.</li> <li>Submitting format Request for the purpose of receiving Tender Documents.</li> </ul>		
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## The wait is over: “Simurgh” named Iran’s national brand for tourism

**TOURISM** TEHRAN – Finally the wait is over for many tourism lovers in Iran as the country has introduced “Simurgh” – a huge mythical bird of Persian legend credited with possessing great wisdom – as its national brand for tourism.



The national brand was unveiled by tourism minister Ali-Asghar Mounesan on Wednesday during the opening ceremony of the 13th Tehran International Tourism Exhibition. CHTN reported.

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).

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.

## Milwaukee airport lets travelers check their coats before leaving for warm destinations

If you're the type of person who lives in a cold-weather state but flees winter each year in favor of a warm-weather destination, you've probably faced this dilemma: what do you do with your heavy winter coat?

You can stay warm on the way to the airport and then lug your winter coat with you to the beach, where you won't need it. Or you can leave the parka at home or in your car and freeze on the way to the airport terminal, then, freeze again on the return trip.

The folks at Milwaukee Mitchell International Airport say they have come up with a solution: Leave your coat with them. “Milwaukee Mitchell International Airport is proud to announce the debut of a new coat check service,” the Milwaukee County-owned airport said in a statement Thursday.

“The new amenity is sure to be a hit with travelers heading to warm weather destinations,” according to the statement.

Travelers had been asking for the service, with “where can I leave my coat?” being one of the top questions asked at the airport’s information desk, explained airport spokesman Harold Mester.

“We think this is something that the traveling public will take advantage of,” he said.

The airport is prepared to handle as many coats as people drop off, whether 100 or 1,000 or more, Mester said.

Those numbers are sure to soar during spring break, when tens of thousands of Wisconsinites head to Mitchell to catch a flight to just about anywhere warm.

(Source: MSN)

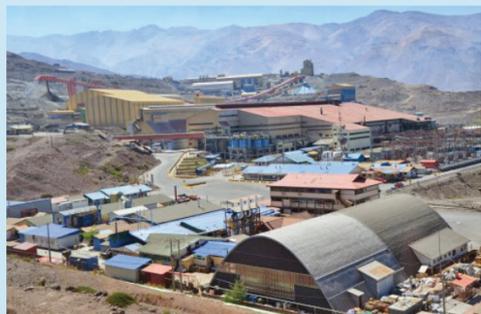


## ROUND THE GLOBE

### Sewell Mining Town

Situated at 2,000 m in the Andes, 60 km to the east of Rancagua, Chile, in an environment marked by extremes of climate, Sewell Mining Town was built by the Braden Copper company in 1905 to house workers at what was to become the world’s largest underground copper mine, El Teniente.

It is an outstanding example of the company towns that were born in many remote parts of the world from the fusion of local labor and resources from an industrialized nation,



to mine and process high-value natural resources. The town was built on a terrain too steep for wheeled vehicles around a large central staircase rising from the railway station. Along its route formal squares of irregular shape with ornamental trees and plants constituted the main public spaces or squares of the town. The buildings lining the streets are timber, often painted in vivid green, yellow, red and blue. At its peak Sewell numbered 15,000 inhabitants, but was largely abandoned in the 1970s.

The most outstanding attributes of the property are the industrial installations, which take advantage of the hillside incline for the mineral grinding process; the buildings that combine houses on the upper floors with business or services in the ground floor; the service buildings, public spaces and pedestrian circulation system; the electric infrastructure and drinking water and sewer systems; as well as the assorted and diverse networks of pipes crossing the town.

(Source: UNESCO)

# Living in Iran is a great experience, Swiss envoy says

**TOURISM** TEHRAN – Swiss ambassador to Iran believes that living in the country is a “great experience”, saying Swiss people mostly think Iranians are so hospitable.

Markus Leitner told CHTN in an interview released on Thursday that “Iranians are so hospitable, this is the very first thing I heard from Swiss tourists who are impressed by these characteristic.”

“I think they (Swiss citizens) know Iran quiet well, they know its history, they know the importance of the regional power that Iran has. We always have good relations with Iran, so from this point of view we can celebrate the 100 years of diplomatic presence in Iran,” the senior diplomat stated.

He underlined that people of Switzerland always notice, obviously when they see, they discover more, they are curious and love to travel, adding “Iran offers a lot of different aspects which are interesting for them.”

“They start with the heritage sides and then discover more, so there are more places to be seen and many forms of tourism like nature tourism which are not very well developed and there still are potentials.”

The ambassador made the remarks during a visit to the 13th Tehran International Tourism Exhibition, which was opened to the public concurrent with the 33rd National Handicrafts Exhibition at the Tehran Permanent International Fairground.

Tourists start with cultural and heritage side which are very well-preserved, and more than that is the people that Swiss nationals are mostly impressed contacting with Iranians, Leitner explained.

Answering a question on how tourism could deepen ties between the two nations, the envoy said, “In general I think tourism is a perfect way to make connections between countries, because these are people who travel and gain experience directly about the destination, by doing that, they can see for themselves what they heard from news and also gain new perspective, so it will be very good to expand relations and cooperation for tourism industry.”

He also referred to tourism as a bridge between nations that could go beyond media interests, saying, “Tourism is a good way that people look at themselves. People are not trust media all the times, so tourism is an appropriate way to see for themselves, to check the pictures they’ve seen, the news that they’ve heard. These is a good thing about tourism.”

The envoy also touched upon [U.S.] sanctions [on Iran] and the [negative] political atmosphere, noting that they are not barriers for avid travelers.

“If you want to travel to Iran, it’s not the question of sanctions or not. Honestly people think about their safety and security, these are the issues to them not the sanctions.”

Asked about the way he sees the travel fair, the envoy explained:

“Certainly, it’s a proper way promote your tourism



Swiss ambassador to Iran Markus Leitner in an undated photo

industry to those who want to travel to Iran. It also is useful from two aspects, one is to be seen among the professionals who are here to exchange what is the trends and the future of tourism and the second one is for the travelers who are curious to see what is available for them.”

“I think tourism is such a great industry which involves so many aspects, tourism is much more than selling one product, it’s a whole experience that travelers have from staying in one place, services they received. The impact of tourism on economy is massive, usually more than what statistics show. I think for the economy of Iran such exhibitions like this is very good.”

Talking about his visits to Iranian destinations, Leitner

**“If you want to travel to Iran, it’s not the question of sanctions or not. Honestly people think about their safety and security, these are the issues to them not the sanctions.”**

noted, “We have been traveling a lot and it will be continued, we didn’t see many places but we have seen quite a lot, we started with the places that all international tourist visit, like Shiraz, Isfahan, Persepolis. We love to visit different places.”

Elsewhere in his remarks, the envoy pointed to Iranian handicrafts, saying, “They are beautiful, when we go back we always take home handicrafts as souvenir or gifts. My family live here or come to visit us and we think it’s a great experience to live in Iran.”

The 2019 Travel Risk Map, which shows the risk level around the world, puts Iran among countries with “insignificant risk”, a category where the UK, Denmark, Switzerland, Norway, and Finland are placed in.

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 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.

## Take a year off and travel without going broke

By Geoffrey Morrison

If you want to get away — really away — you don’t need to be rich. Here’s how.

Let’s say you hate your job. Or maybe your job hates you and left you for someone else. Maybe you just feel stuck after doing the same thing day after day after week after year. The world is calling you, and you keep letting it ring, because you know if you pick up, the world is going to convince you that it’s all O.K., don’t worry about it, spend your savings and see it all. All the cool kids are doing it.

Well, I’m going to do the same thing, except you don’t need to go broke or into debt. With a bit of planning, knowledge and frugal travel, you can take off a year, or more or less, and travel. For the past six years I’ve spent more than half of every year traveling across five continents and dozens of countries. You might not be able to do it exactly as I have, but I can hopefully give you some inspiration to figure out how to make it work for you.

It’s a lot harder if you have a family, car payments or lots of bills, but not impossible. It’s a lot easier if you’re younger, renting or don’t have an established career. So-called gap years are common in many countries but infrequent in the United States (to our detriment). If, like me, you missed out on extensive travel when you were young, here’s how to do it when you’re ... let’s call it more experienced.

### ■ Save up

It’s certainly possible to sell it all and flee, but that doesn’t give you much of a cushion to land on when you return. If we assume you’re just taking some time off to see the world, not leaving your old life behind forever, you’ll need to prepare.

Where you’re going will have a huge effect on how much you’ll need. In my Times guide “How to Travel Like a Local,” I discuss how I usually plan on spending about \$50 a day, or \$1,500 a month, including accommodation. However, I have a job that allows me to work while I travel (you’re reading it), and I’m not particularly careful when it comes to food. So that \$50 is split between nice hostels and eating in restaurants at least once a day. If you don’t mind larger dorm rooms and making your own food, and you’re more careful with money, you could easily do it for less. Depending on where you go, a lot less. I once had a three-course meal with drinks beachside



in Thailand for \$6. I had a medium pizza and two Cokes in Oslo for \$50. This isn’t to say you can’t backpack around Europe on a budget; it just means your budget is going to last longer elsewhere, and you should consider locations accordingly.

By far the most expensive item will be the flight. If you know when you’re coming home, it’s probably best to buy a round-trip ticket. If you end up wanting to stay longer or come home sooner, you can always change it. That comes with a cost, but it’s better than running out of money and not having a flight home. Some countries will require that you have a return flight before letting you in (or at least have the ability to show you have the means to support yourself). Google Flights has lots of tools to figure out the best days for specific flights. It will even give you ideas about where you can go for cheap from your nearest airport.

It’s likely that most people won’t be able to save up all the money they need to take a year off. If you can’t, managing what you have, and perhaps making some along the way, is vital to any extended travel.

### ■ Reduce costs

One of the main ways to make this work is by reducing your recurring costs. If you’re trying to live as cheaply as possible on a beach in Portugal, spending hundreds of dollars maintaining your life in the United States makes it harder.

Ideally, you can end your lease and put your stuff in storage. This isn’t what I did, because by the time I started my extended travels I’d already bought a house and filled it with things I didn’t need. But I was able to find a roommate who was able to make sure no one stole my house while I was gone. Instead of roommates, you could also sublet or, if you have a nice place, rent it on Airbnb. For that, though, you’ll need someone local to help out in case issues arise.

Your car insurance company might let you pause your coverage if you don’t plan to drive on your adventure, though it probably won’t cover you overseas. Health insurance, on the other hand, is more of an issue. Yes, health care is almost always cheaper overseas than in the United States, but you’ll be taking a big risk if you forgo insurance. If you’re leaving your job, you have 60 days after your employment ends to enroll in a new plan through the Health Insurance Marketplace.

As far as phone bills go, the free international data roaming on T-Mobile, Sprint and Google Fi might seem attractive, but none of those companies want you roaming for 12 months. You might need to pause your service. Call your provider to verify. In reality, local SIM cards are the way to go, giving you inexpensive local phone calls and data.

### ■ Make money, or at least spend less of it

The ideal, of course, is to have a job you can do remotely. Many bosses might say “no” to your working remotely. However, many jobs can be done just fine from afar; you just need to prove you can be productive when not in an office. I suggest trying to work from home a few days a week and expand from there. A word of caution: This is far more difficult than you might imagine. Working from home takes discipline, and working while in a fascinating new city even more so. This may be “the dream,” but it is far more challenging than the fantasy might appear.

One of the easiest ways to reduce your costs is to work for a hostel. For a few hours a day you can help out the hostel, usually by cleaning or replacing sheets, and in return you can stay there for free. It isn’t the most glamorous work, and not every hostel offers it, but imagine doing a bit of housekeeping in the morning then taking the rest of the day to explore some city you’ve seen only in pictures while spending only a few

dollars a day.

I’ve met many people who dream about becoming a travel writer or video blogger. When I ask to see what they’ve done so far, most shrug and just say it’s something they want to do. I hate to be harsh, but these people won’t succeed. You need to treat it like a job before anyone will pay you to do it. I wrote about travel for my own blog for two years before anyone paid me. If you have a catalog of articles or videos to show a potential editor or sponsor, that goes infinitely further than saying: “Well, I think I’ll be good at it, maybe. Trust me?”

For more income, consider countries with working holiday visas. For Americans under age 30, these are available in Australia, Ireland, New Zealand, Portugal and South Korea. These special visas allow you to explore a country for up to a year, sometimes two, while working occasionally. They’re not meant as a back door to staying permanently, only to aid in making some money during extended travels. If you are still a student or a recent grad or open to teaching, there are more options.

### ■ Get your visa (and a credit card, too)

Make sure you have a credit card that doesn’t charge international fees. Wirecutter, the New York Times company that reviews products, recommends several that also have no annual fees. Cash is becoming less necessary in many countries, but having an A.T.M. card that reimburses A.T.M. fees is an added bonus. NerdWallet has a detailed look at some options. I have a card through Schwab that requires you to also open an investment account, but both are free and you can use just the checking account, if you want.

All countries have limits on how long you can stay without a special visa. This is usually 90 days, with a limit on how soon you can return to reset that. Some countries are lenient, others are strict. The last thing you want is to get kicked out of a country for overstaying your visa. Given the rise of low-cost airlines, the increase in high-speed and long-distance trains and the improvement in the overall comfort and quality of buses, it shouldn’t be too hard to make your way to another country to spend a few more months of your life-changing year.

Then, when the year is up, perhaps you find that home is really the place you wanted to be all along. Or maybe, as I did, you start it all over again next year.

(Source: The New York Times)

# Wang lauds Zarif as 'first foreign minister who sent sympathy' since coronavirus outbreak

**SOCIETY** TEHRAN — Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on Friday appreciated his Iranian counterpart Mohammad Javad Zarif for being the first foreign minister who sent sympathy to the Chinese people since the outbreak of the novel coronavirus.

"You are the first foreign minister who sent sympathies to the Chinese people since the outbreak of the novel coronavirus, which fully reflects the profound friendship between the people of the two countries, who support each other and tackle difficulties in a cooperative manner," said Wang in a meeting with Zarif on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference.

Both China and Iran are ancient civilizations with a history of thousands of years, whose forward steps cannot be stopped by any kind of difficulties, Wang said, stressing that China is full of confidence in scoring a full victory in the fight against the epidemic at an early date, Xinhua reported.

Echoing the Chinese foreign minister, Zarif lauded Chinese President Xi Jinping's outstanding leadership in the fight against the novel coronavirus pneumonia epidemic. Meanwhile, the solidarity of the Chinese



Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi (R) meets with Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif in Munich, Germany, Feb. 14, 2020. (Xinhua/Lu Yang)

people has also impressed the world, said Zarif.

On behalf of Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, Zarif conveyed once again sympathies and respect to Xi and the Chinese people, saying that the Iranian government and people will continue to provide China with all necessary support and assistance.

In a tweet in Persian language on Thursday, Chinese Ambassador to Tehran Chang Hua thanked Iranian people for sympathizing with the Chinese in their campaign against coronavirus.

"There is a proverb in the Persian language that says 'heart speaks to heart'. In China's struggle against coronavirus we deeply felt the friendship of the government and nation of Iran," the ambassador said.

Meanwhile, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Geng Shuang on Friday announced that many foreign ambassadors and representatives to China have said on social media platforms that they stand with China in this fight against the virus.

He thanked the Iranian ambassador to China, Mohammad Keshavarz-Zadeh, for saying, "I'm sure China, with 5000 years of civilization, will overcome this problem."

## Fajr Intl. Fashion, Clothing Festival underway in Tehran

**SOCIETY** TEHRAN — The 9th Fajr International Fashion and Clothing Festival kicked off in Tehran on Thursday, ISNA news agency reported.



The festival includes different sections of science and academia, fabric and scarf design, women and men clothes design, bags and shoes, and jewelry.

Organizing workshops, meetings as well as expert panels and discussions in the field of fashion and clothing are other parts of the festival.

In the international sector, representatives from nine countries, including Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Slovenia, Turkey, Iraq, Oman, Italy, India and Indonesia, are taking part in promoting Islamic models around the world, particularly Muslim countries.

The festival runs until February 18 in Goftogu Park. It aims to boost cooperation and interaction between designers, producers and people.

## 'Don't introduce abortion for down's syndrome up to birth to Northern Ireland'

Boris Johnson's Government have released a consultation on proposed abortion regulations for Northern Ireland, however, people with Down Syndrome and their families signed a letter to Boris Johnson to urgently clarify that his Government will not introduce abortion for Down's syndrome to Northern Ireland.

The consultation document outlines that abortion would be introduced to Northern Ireland, possibly through to birth (see open letter for further details).

The Government are not required by the Northern Ireland (Executive Formation etc) Act 2019 to introduce abortion for Down's syndrome to Northern Ireland. Sadly, it appears that the Government are proposing to go further than they are required to do by the Act and are going to opt to introduce abortion for Down's syndrome to Northern Ireland in the proposed legal framework.

The most recent figures in England and Wales show that 90% of babies found to have Down's syndrome are aborted. Northern Ireland has a very different approach to how it views people with Down's syndrome. Disability-selective



abortion for Down's syndrome is illegal and there is a more positive culture of accepting people with disabilities.

We can see this in the latest figures (2016) from the Department of Health in Northern Ireland. They show that there were 52 children with Down's syndrome born. In the same year only 1 child from Northern Ireland with Down's syndrome was aborted in England and Wales.

So many babies found to have Down's syndrome are already selectively terminated in England, Wales

and Scotland.

We are calling on Boris Johnson to urgently clarify that his Government will not introduce abortion for Down's syndrome to Northern Ireland. All that is required is for his Government to commit to add a simple provision to the abortion framework that will clearly outline that abortion for Down's syndrome will explicitly not be allowed.

If you are a person with Down's syndrome or have a family member with Down's syndrome, please sign the open letter to Boris Johnson asking him to act so that disability-selective abortion for Down's syndrome, which will have such devastating consequences for our community, is not introduced to Northern Ireland.

We know that there are many people within our community who are concerned about this change and have not been heard yet – this letter is your chance to be heard and to let Boris Johnson know just how many people are seriously concerned about the proposed changes.

(Source: dontscreenusout.org)

## Coronavirus and media literacy

By Payam Mohebbi

These days we hear a lot of news through the media, even in official news agencies, about the Coronavirus, the number of people infected and the deaths, which can raise our concern; so I intend to give tips about the Coronavirus.

Much of these news would bring no achievements for us, and it's not easy to interpret much of it. When it comes to information transfer in the world, there is a misuse of statistics or statistical fallacy that make news to seem frightening, sometimes attractive, or that some politicians use statistical fallacy to justify their performance and destroy a competitor.

There have been many debates about the coronavirus and its transmission, none of which are 100 percent proven, and even the production of the virus in the laboratory and the subject of bioterrorism, but with such interpretations, it is important to consider how coronavirus is transmitted between humans and animals.

There are two international organiza-

tions active in health sector, one of which is the World Health Organization (WHO) and the other the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), which controls all animal diseases.

It has been suggested by WHO and OIE that its association between humans and animals and vice versa has been proven and whether the disease can be transmitted in different animal species as well.

Coronavirus is not a new virus, although many people who are not familiar with the health issues have just heard of it, but doctors, veterinarians or microbiologists, have known the virus for many years and can talk about it professionally.

A case in point is that coronavirus seen in camels of Jask city (Hormozgan Province) differs from coronavirus originating in China, as thousands of urban cats in Tehran may now be infected with the coronavirus, and cat coronavirus causes a disease called feline infectious peritonitis (FIP) that causes inflation in the belly of the animal and can result in death.

Coronavirus has existed in the past and has been controlled, but we have to be aware of what media releases and Coronavirus facts.

Unfortunately, some news agencies are exaggerating about the normal coronavirus and present it as the novel coronavirus to attract audiences.

The media often publishes negative news, so that is why many psychologists recommend the depressed people to avoid keeping track of the news.

It is very natural that negative news spreads faster and unfortunately news agencies are also using the method of releasing frightening and painful news to increase audience attraction and make it more appealing to the audience.

This is why news agencies provide the people with news free of charge so that they can convey the message to the target audience.

So, besides hearing the news, we have to refer to our media literacy to know what news we receive from what source and how well

the source is qualified to release the news.

We need to weigh the news to find out which side of the story drives the audience alongside the news and what is the psychological impact on the audience and what social feedback does it expect? For this reason, the need for media literacy is increasing day by day, which is a difficult task, and media cannot be easily verified and media literacy in the community and audience requires time to be achieved.

We have to know that with the advent of coronavirus, people's lives are not going to be interrupted or their activities stopped, but we have to learn that not all news is necessarily true and they should not be cited.

Audiences and people should not be too busy publishing this news, because many of these will upset and disturb people's minds and may lose their peace of mind.

So, we should all strive to increase our media literacy and not believe every single news anywhere.

Head of Tehran Pet Hospital

## ENGLISH IN USE

### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

## Iran to carry out cloud seeding project within two weeks

A cloud seeding project will be carried out within the next two weeks in some northern, central and southern provinces of the country, Farid Golkar, head of Iran's National Cloud Seeding Research Center, has announced.

Golkar explained that the operation will be carried out on the Zagros and Alborz Mountains in the north, Isfahan and Yazd provinces in the center, and Fars and Kerman provinces in the south.

The first cloud seeding project was launched in the Iranian calendar year 1395 (March 2016-March 2017), he stated, adding that, each operation can lead to a 10-15 percent increase in precipitation.

He went on to highlight that this year, a total budget of 70 billion rials (about \$1.6 million) has been earmarked in this regard.

## آغاز عملیات باروری ابرها تا دو هفته دیگر

عملیات بارورسازی ابرها تا دو هفته دیگر در بخش‌هایی از شمال، مرکز، و جنوب کشور انجام می‌شود.

فرید گلکار، رئیس مرکز ملی تحقیقات و مطالعات باروری ابرها، در گفت‌وگو با ایسنا، توضیح داد این عملیات روی کوهستان‌های زاگرس و البرز در شمال کشور، استان‌های اصفهان و یزد در مرکز، و استان‌های فارس و کرمان در جنوب انجام می‌شود.

او با بیان این‌که نخستین پروژه بارورسازی ابرها در سال ۱۳۹۵ انجام شد، اظهار کرد تاثیر یکبار عملیات در میزان افزایش بارش‌ها ۱۰ تا ۱۵ درصد است.

گلکار اضافه کرد: امسال هفت میلیارد تومان بودجه برای این موضوع در نظر گرفته شده است.

## PREFIX/SUFFIX

### "omni-"

■ **Meaning:** all, every

■ **For example:** the **omnipresent** threat of natural disasters.

## PHRASAL VERB

### Pull over

■ **Meaning:** to move over to the side of the road

■ **For example:** She pulled over to make way for the ambulance.

## IDIOM

### Do a good turn

■ **Explanation:** If you do someone a good turn, you act in a helpful way

■ **For example:** Mike is a great guy - always ready to do a good turn.

## WORDS IN THE NEWS

### North Korea and the IAEA

(February 12, 2003)

The United Nations nuclear agency, the International Atomic Energy Agency, is expected to refer the North Korean nuclear crisis to the United Nations Security Council. The move could open the way for sanctions on North Korea which has expelled UN inspectors and withdrawn from nuclear agreements. This report from Bethany Bell:

In January the UN's **nuclear watchdog**, the IAEA, gave North Korea one more chance to readmit UN inspectors and abandon its secret nuclear programme. But since then North Korea has withdrawn from the **Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty** and the IAEA's director general, Mohammed El Baradei, says he's **exhausted all possibilities** in his power to bring North Korea into **compliance**.

The IAEA's board of governors is now expected to **issue a toughly worded resolution** that will take the **stand-off** with North Korea to the United Nations Security Council. That in turn could **pave the way** for the imposition of economic and political sanctions on Pyongyang. But there's concern that **moving the issue** to the Security Council could **inflammate the crisis**. Pyongyang has said it would **consider sanctions as** a declaration of war.

#### Words

**nuclear watchdog:** an organization checking that countries with nuclear material do not act in an illegal way

**Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty:** an agreement to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons

**exhausted all possibilities:** has tried everything he could

**compliance:** being willing to do what you have been asked

**issue a toughly worded resolution:** publish a decision which states firmly what they want to happen

**stand-off:** a situation when neither side will make a move

**pave the way:** creates a situation where something can happen

**moving the issue:** taking discussions about the topic

**inflammate the crisis:** make the political conflict worse

**consider sanctions as:** in their view, sanctions will be

(Source: BBC)

## Syrian army clears barricades on Damascus-Aleppo highway-state media

Syrian troops began clearing barricades from the main highway between Damascus and Aleppo on Saturday after recovering full control of the, Syrian state media reported.

It marks a major gain for President Bashar al-Assad, as reopening the M5 highway will restore the shortest route between Syria's two biggest cities for the first time in more than seven years of conflict.

A reporter with state-run al-Ikhbariya news channel, broadcasting from the highway on the Aleppo outskirts, said clearing the barriers started in the early hours of Saturday.

Restoring government control over the M5 has been seen as a major objective of a Russian-backed offensive that has been underway since early December in the rebel-held northwest.

The offensive has forced more than 800,000 people to flee.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, which reports on the war using a network of sources on the ground, said government forces had captured a belt of territory around the road, securing it completely.

Observatory Director Rami Abdulrahman told Reuters the Russian-backed offensive may stop now that the road had been secured but added that the government could yet seek to seize more ground north of Aleppo to secure the city.

The reopening of the highway was part of a 2018 agreement between Russia and Turkey which was concluded with the stated aim of stabilizing the situation in the Idlib region of the northwest, a major foothold for the anti-Assad insurgency.

The pact called for establishing a de-militarized zone between the warring sides in addition to the reopening of a second highway, the main road linking Aleppo with the government-held coastal region.

In agreement with Russia, Turkish forces deployed into the northwest at a dozen observation posts.

But tensions have spiraled between Russia and Turkey during the latest offensive, as 13 Turkish soldiers have been killed by Syrian attacks in the past two weeks.

(Source: Reuters)

## Turkey says Haftar violating ceasefire, must be stopped

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu accused Libyan military commander Khalifa Haftar on Saturday of constantly violating a ceasefire in the country, saying he "must be stopped" so a political solution could be found.

Turkey backs the internationally-recognized government of Faye al-Serraj in Libya and has sent military personnel to the country in support of Serraj. President Tayyip Erdogan has also warned that Ankara may deploy troops there if necessary.

Speaking at a news conference with German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas at the Munich Security Conference, Cavusoglu said that Haftar, who is based in east Libya, wanted a military solution to the conflict rather than a political one.

(Source: Reuters)

## Over 6,000 bodies found in Burundi's mass graves

Burundi's Truth and Reconciliation Commission has found more than 6,000 bodies in six mass graves in Karusi Province, the largest finding since the government launched a nationwide excavation in January.

The commission chairman Pierre Claver Ndayicariye told journalists on Friday that the remains of 6,032 victims as well as thousands of bullets were recovered. Clothes, glasses and rosaries were used to identify some of the victims.

The tiny East African nation is struggling to come to terms with a violent past, characterized by suffered colonial occupation, civil war and decades of intermittent massacres.

Referring to a massacre which is believed to have targeted people from the Hutu ethnic group, Ndayicariye said families of the victims were able to "break the silence" that was imposed 48 years ago.

Burundi's population is divided between the Tutsi and Hutu ethnic groups. The civil war - which killed 300,000 people before it ended in 2005 - had ethnic overtones.

The government-run commission was set up in 2014 to investigate atrocities from 1885, when foreigners arrived in Burundi, until 2008, when a stalled peace deal to end the civil war was fully implemented.

So far it has mapped over 4,000 mass graves across the country and identified more than 142,000 victims of violence.

Its mandate does not cover most of the rule of the current president, Pierre Nkurunziza, who took office in 2005.

The United Nations has warned that human rights abuses might increase again ahead of May 2020 elections. Since 2015, when Nkurunziza ran for a third, disputed term in office, hundreds of Burundians have been killed in clashes with security forces.

(Source: Reuters)

## Yemeni missile shoots down Saudi-led fighter jet in Jawf

Saudi Arabia and a coalition of its vassal states launched the war on Yemen in March 2015 in an attempt to reinstall a Riyadh-backed former regime and eliminate the popular Houthis who have been defending the impoverished country against the offensive.

The Saudi military aggression, coupled with a naval blockade, has killed and injured hundreds of thousands of people, and plunged Yemen into what the UN says the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

The UN says an estimated 24 million people - close to 80 per cent of the population - need assistance and protection in Yemen.

(Source: agencies)

# Macron warns of 'weakening' West after Pompeo defends U.S. policy

France's President Emmanuel Macron warns that the West is "weakening" after U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo downplayed European anxiety about a decline of transatlantic unity.

Speaking at the Munich Security Conference on Saturday, Macron said, "There is a weakening of the West."

"There's an American policy that started several years ago and not just under this administration that includes a certain kind of withdrawal, of a rethink of its relationship with Europe."

Macron's remarks came in response to Pompeo's statements in the same conference during which he said the death of the transatlantic bond had been "grossly exaggerated," rejecting European pessimism about the U.S.' retreat from the global stage.

"The West is winning and we're winning together," Pompeo said.

In November, Macron said he believes North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is experiencing "brain death," citing a lack of coordination between Europe and the US. He warned Europeans that they could no longer rely on America to defend NATO allies.

### 'I'm impatient'

Macron also hit at German Chancellor



Angela Merkel's inaction on his proposed reforms to strengthen the European Union after the UK's departure from the bloc.

"I'm not frustrated, I'm impatient," he said when he was asked he was frustrated by Merkel's stance, adding, "We have a history

of waiting for answers" from each other.

"What's key in the coming years is to move much faster on issues of sovereignty on the European level."

### 'Continent doesn't believe in its future'

Macron also urged the European Union to wake up and beef up its budget to match with the scale of its ambitions so that it does not fall behind the U.S. and China, particularly in future technologies.

"We are becoming a continent that doesn't believe in its future," Macron said, adding, "We don't invest in our future sufficiently ... and politically it is the only way to reconcile with (our) middle classes."

Elsewhere in his remarks, Macron reiterated his call for closer dialogue with Russia in order to resolve conflicts, noting that he saw none of his allies willing to confront Russia.

"I hear the defiance of all our partners, I'm not mad, but I know that being defiant and weak ... it is not a policy, it's a completely inefficient system," Macron said.

"There is a second choice which is to be demanding and restart a strategic dialogue because today we talk less and less, conflicts multiply and we aren't able to resolve them," he added.

Relations between Moscow and the rest of Europe have deteriorated since 2014, when the then-Ukrainian territory of Crimea voted in a referendum to fall under Russian sovereignty. The EU has leveled several rounds of sanctions against Moscow.

(source: agencies)

## U.S. under pressure as Russia, Syria step up efforts to counter occupying U.S. troops

The report claimed that the Russian measures, alongside Syrian military presence, seek to "present a constant set of challenges" that will eventually make U.S. military presence "more tenuous".

The report quoted Vice Admiral Tim Szymanski, a Navy SEAL who is deputy head of the military's Special Operations Command, saying that Russian and Damascus were effectively "pressing" U.S. forces in northeast Syria.

Speaking with reporters last week, top American diplomat overseeing Syria issues James F. Jeffrey also said that run-ins and encounters with Russian and Syrian troops are "not daily occurrences but have been increasing in number and thus is troubling".

Russian troops were formally invited to the Arab country by the Syrian government in 2015 and - alongside Iranian military advisers - allowed Damascus to gradually push back foreign-backed terrorists which had ravaged the country since 2011.

Washington, however, illegally deployed troops to the country on the pretext of fighting the Daesh Takfiri terrorists.

Despite Daesh currently having no significant presence in the country, the Trump administration announced October last year that it was keeping hundreds of troops in northeastern



Syria, where a large portion of Syria's oilfields is situated.

U.S. President Donald Trump has repeatedly said that Washington seeks to profit off of Syria's oil reserves.

"What I intend to do, perhaps, is make a deal with an ExxonMobil or one of our great companies to go in there and do it properly," Trump said in October.

According to Washington's 2012 budget proposal introduced earlier this week, the Trump administration seeks to allocate \$200 million to the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which currently control the oil fields in northeastern Syria.

Observers have noted that the sum may be related to oil-related transactions involving the U.S.-backed SDF forces.

### U.S. fears endgame as terrorists are routed in Idlib

In its Friday report, the NYT said that U.S. officials fear that ongoing run-ins between U.S. troops and Damascus-led forces could escalate once Syria concludes its anti-terror military campaign in the Idlib province, the last terrorist stronghold in the country.

U.S. occupation of Syrian oil fields comes as Damascus is in great need of its major oil deposits in order to address its energy needs and rebuild the country amid crippling Western sanctions.

Speaking in November, head of the U.S. military's Central Command, General McKenzie, said that he would "expect at some point" that the Syrian government "will come forward to that ground".

Tensions have, however, already turned tense with U.S. troops killing a Syrian civilian after Syrian troops stopped a U.S. military patrol east of Syria's northeastern city of Qamishli earlier this week.

Syrian locals, who had gathered to express their opposition to U.S. presence, attacked and pelted the military vehicles in response.

(Source: agencies)

## In nationwide move, protesters mark 9th anniversary of Bahrain uprising

Thousands of people have staged nationwide demonstrations across Bahrain on the eve of the ninth anniversary of the popular uprising against the ruling Al Khalifah dynasty.

Demonstrators took to the streets in the capital Manama as well as the village of Sanabis, which lies in the suburbs of Manama, the northwestern village of Diraz, located about 12 kilometers (seven miles) southeast of the capital, Bilad al-Qadeem suburb of Manama and the village of Tubli, west of the island of Sitra.

They called for the immediate release of the 54-year-old prominent Shia cleric and secretary general of the dissolved al-Wefaq National Islamic Society, Sheikh Ali Salman, and other political prisoners.

On January 28, 2019, the Supreme Court of Bahrain upheld a life sentence against the Shia opposition leader over charges of spying for Qatar.

According to a statement released by the public prosecutor, the court confirmed the verdict against Salman and his aides Ali al-Aswad and Hassan Sultan for "spying for a foreign state in order to ... overthrow the government."

The London-based Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy condemned the ruling at the time.

"This is political revenge and an insult to justice," said Sayed Ahmed Alwadai, the group's director of advocacy.

"Punishing peaceful dissidents for leading protests against the corrupt ruling family has nothing to do with justice.



This verdict shames Bahrain's rulers and their allies ..., namely the US and UK."

The trio had been initially acquitted by the high criminal court, but the decision was later overturned by an appeals court on November 4, 2018.

Demonstrations in Bahrain have been held on a regular basis ever since a popular uprising began in mid-February 2011.

The participants demand that the Al Khalifah regime relinquish power and allow a just system representing all Bahrainis to be established.

Manama, however, has gone to great lengths to clamp down on any sign of dissent.

On March 5, 2017, Bahrain's parliament approved the trial of civilians at military tribunals in a measure censured by human rights campaigners as tantamount to imposition of an undeclared martial law in the country. King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifah ratified the constitutional amendment on April 3, 2017.

(Source: Press TV)

## Pentagon chief warns China rejecting U.S. 'world order'

U.S. Secretary of Defense Mark Esper has warned that China is pursuing aggressive economic and military policies at the expense of other nations and challenging the "international order" established by Washington.

Beijing "is heading even faster and further in the wrong direction, more internal repression, more predatory economic practices, more heavy-handedness, and, most concerning for me, a more aggressive military posture," Esper said at the Munich Security Conference in Germany on Saturday.

"It is essential that we -- as an international community -- wake up to the challenges presented by China's manipulation of the long-standing international, rules-based order," said Esper.

The Pentagon chief also said Washington was working with U.S. and European technology companies to develop 5G wireless technology and counter China's dominance in the industry.

"We are encouraging allied and U.S. tech companies to develop alternative 5G solutions and we are working alongside them to test these technologies at our military bases as we speak," Esper said.

"Developing our own secure 5G networks will outweigh any perceived gains from partnering with heavily subsidized Chinese providers that answer to party leadership."

Esper has made China a key focus for the Pentagon since taking office and seeks to redeploy American forces from other

areas to confront a growing military competition with China.

Esper is the latest senior official in President Donald Trump's administration to warn about what the U.S. perceives as the threat posed by China.

U.S. Secretary of State Michael Pompeo, Attorney General Bill Barr and FBI Director Christopher Wray have also issued warnings about Beijing this week.

The U.S. claim that China is seeking to expand its international influence has been a common U.S. government assertion since the administration of former President Barack Obama.

There are a growing number of disputes in the U.S.-Chinese relationship, which include a trade war, the disputed South China Sea, and the U.S. relationship with Taiwan, which Beijing considers a renegade province.

Trump launched a trade war with China in 2018 to restrain the country's growing economic power and to punish China for its alleged economic espionage, cyber attacks, forced technology transfer and dumping of low-priced goods made with massive government subsidies.

While Trump often touts his relationship with Chinese President Xi Jinping, competition between the countries has only deepened since they signed their "phase-one" trade deal last month. The two nations' inability to cooperate on the coronavirus is one sign of how much the relationship has deteriorated over the past few years.

(Source: Press TV)

## Esper says Taliban deal is promising but not without risk

U.S. Defense Secretary Mark Esper said Saturday that a truce agreement between the United States and the Taliban that could lead to the withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan is not without risk but "looks very promising."

Ahead of a formal announcement of the seven-day "reduction in violence" deal, Esper said it was time to give peace a chance in Afghanistan through a political negotiation. He spoke a day after a senior U.S. official said the deal had been concluded and would take effect very soon.

Expectations are that agreement will be formally announced Sunday and that the reduction in violence will begin on Monday, according to people familiar with the plan.

"So we have on the table right now a reduction in violence proposal that was negotiated between our ambassador and the Taliban," Esper told an audience at the Munich Security Conference. "It looks very promising."



"It's my view as well that we have to give peace a chance, that the best if not the only way forward in Afghanistan is through a political agreement and that means taking

some risk," he said. "That means enabling our diplomats and that means working together with our partners and allies on the ground to affect such a thing."

Esper and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo met Friday in Munich with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, who has been skeptical of the scheme, which, if successful, would see an end to attacks for seven days and then the signing of a U.S.-Taliban peace deal. All-Afghan peace talks would then begin within 10 days as part of the plan, which envisions the phased withdrawal of U.S. forces over 18 months.

Ghani has not yet spoken publicly about the agreement which was finalized last week by U.S. special envoy for Afghanistan Zalmay Khalilzad and Taliban representatives in Doha, Qatar. Esper, however, said Ghani was supportive of the deal and had pledged to do his best to support it.

(Source: AP)

# Team Melli need to feel positive energy: Skocic

**S P O R T S** TEHRAN — Newly-appointed coach Dragan Skocic says that Iran national football team need to feel energy in a positive way to book a place at the 2022 FIFA World Cup qualification third round.

The 51-year-old Croat was appointed as Team Melli coach last week as a replacement for Belgian coach Marc Wilmots who left Iran in early December.

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

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

Iran will entertain Hong Kong on March 26 in Tehran and meet Cambodia five days later in an away match. The Persians will face Bahrain and Iraq on June 4 and 9, respectively in Tehran.

Iran sit five points behind leaders Iraq in Group C but having played one game fewer. "First of all, I would like to say it's a great honor for me to be appointed as Iran coach. I have good knowledge of the Iranian football and players and want to bring an injection of positive energy, something the team and players desperately need. We want to celebrate qualifying for the World Cup for the sixth time, that's why I am here," Skocic said in his first news conference on Saturday.

"I think Team Melli are not on the right track and I want to change the situation. From now on, I will be in contact with the clubs 24 hours a day to reach our goal. I am familiar with the Iranian players and know the way they think," he added.



"I will concentrate on my job and do my best to help Team Melli back on track. The team need more organization but all of us must help the team advance to the next stage. I am not here for personal gain and if Team Melli qualify for the 2022 World Cup, it will be a big honor for all of us.

"The door is open for any player and the best players will be invited to the national

team — no matter which club they play," Skocic said.

"I am a hyperactive coach and like attacking football but we also are ready to play defensive football. Before that, we need good relationship between the players and coaching staff. The good relationships will help boost team morale and improve collaboration at work," former Sanat Naft added.

"I'd rather have quality over quantity in my team. I know that Team Melli have weak points and will try to fix them. Our short-term goal is winning a place in the 2022 World Cup and keep working hard to reach that. I am here for five years and know the Iranian people well. We will need their support to make it happen," Skocic concluded.

## Ayanda Patosi denies Esteghlal's officials claims



**S P O R T S** TEHRAN — Foolad midfielder Ayanda Patosi has denied his transfer to the Ahwaz-based club and the reason that he didn't return to his former club Esteghlal.

The South African winger ended his successful six-month on loan stay at Esteghlal in the summer 2019 and signed for Emirati side Baniyas on a season-long loan deal, reuniting with Winfried Schafer, his former coach at Esteghlal.

In January 2020, Patosi returned to Iran and this time he signed a six-month loan deal with Foolad. Although he was heavily linked with Esteghlal reunion. The move never happened and some Esteghlal officials said that Patosi went to Foolad because of more money than this club offered him.

However, Patosi, 27, denied those claims and said: "I lost my brother in December and went to South Africa to attend

my brother's funeral. When I was there, my agent called me and talked about the Foolad's offer. The Foolad managers were very clear and professional and everything went well and they pay the money to Cape Town City club, the club whom I am under contract with them." He said.

"But before everything happen, I spoke with Esteghlal's coach Farhad Majidi and he told me that the club wanted me. Also, I talked with Voria Ghafouri (Esteghlal captain) in this regard. But there was no official negotiation and I didn't see any official offer from Esteghlal club," Patosi added.

Ayanda scored his first goal for Foolad in a 2-1 victory against Paykan last Friday. Speaking about Javad Nekounam, his coach at Foolad, Patosi said: "Javad is a young head coach. He put most emphasis on discipline and he is very hard working and wants the players to keep working hard."

## Wheelchair basketball represent Iran at 2020 Paralympics



**S P O R T S** TEHRAN — Wheelchair basketball team will represent Iran at the 2020 Paralympic Games but the football 5-a-side will be absent in the event.

Iran's chef de mission for the 2020 Paralympic Games Hadi Rezaei had already said that they would send the athletes who have more chance of winning medals in the Paralympics.

Iran sent a record number of competitors to Rio 2016, being represented by 110 athletes in 12 sports. The Iranian athletes won eight gold, nine silver and seven bronze medals and finished in 15th place.

Iran's NPC has reduced the number of athletes to 72 at Tokyo 2020, however, wheelchair basketball and football 5-a-side members have opposed the decision and don't want to miss the prestigious event.

The football 5-a-side won a silver medal at the 2016 Paralympic Games, while the

wheelchair basketball team claimed a gold medal at the 2018 Asian Para Games.

"We sent two letters to the International Wheelchair Basketball Federation (IWBF) and International Blind Sports Federation (IBSA) and announced that we have changed our decision and want to send the teams to the Games. IWBF accepted our request but IBSA told us the deadline has expired. So, we will just send wheelchair basketball team to the 2020 Paralympics," Rezaei said.

Iran football 5-a-side and wheelchair basketball teams have already secured their places at the Tokyo 2020 and the Iranian NPC has said that it will communicate with the related entities to allow the teams to partake at the Games.

Iran's best performance at the Paralympic Games since they made their debut at Seoul in 1988 was at London 2012 when they finished 11th with a total of 24 medals, including 10 gold.

## Manchester City banned from Champions League for two seasons

Manchester City, the reigning Premier League champion and one of the world's richest soccer clubs, has been barred from the Champions League for the next two seasons for "serious breaches" of European soccer's financial regulations.

The decision, announced Friday by an independent financial control body of UEFA, the governing body for soccer in Europe, found that Manchester City had been guilty of multiple violations related to club licensing and so-called financial fair play rules — cost controls put in place by UEFA to try to mitigate the growing gap between rich clubs and poor ones in European leagues, and to tackle a growing debt crisis. The club, which also was criticized for failing to cooperate with UEFA's investigators, also was fined 30 million euros (\$32.5 million).

The penalty is the most significant punishment UEFA has handed out in the decade since it created its financial fair play regulations, and if upheld its consequences for Manchester City's balance sheet and its competitive future could be severe. Participation in the Champions League is worth about \$100 million a year to the club, and missing out on it could factor into the career decisions of some of the team's star players, potential signings and even City's coach, Pep Guardiola.

The ban has no effect on this year's Champions League; Manchester City, which has never won the competition, will play Real Madrid on Feb. 26 in the first leg of a home-and-home series in the round of 16. And City, which is currently second in the Premier League, may be able to delay a ban for next season if its appeal is not resolved before the 2020-21 Champions League begins this fall.



UEFA's decision also raises the prospect of further penalties from the Premier League, which has its own cost control regulations that rely on clubs' providing accurate financial information. The Premier League said last March that it had opened an investigation into Manchester City in the wake of leaks of the club's internal documents in the Football Leaks hacking scandal. The Premier League's chief executive, Richard Masters, last week declined to answer when asked about the status of that investigation.

Shortly after UEFA's ruling, City issued a statement indicating it would appeal the Champions League ban.

"Manchester City is disappointed but not surprised by today's announcement by the UEFA Adjudicatory Chamber," the statement said. "The Club has always anticipated the ultimate need to seek out an independent body and

process to impartially consider the comprehensive body of irrefutable evidence in support of its position."

Manchester City already has sought to short-circuit the investigation by financial regulators at UEFA — and preserve its place in the Champions League, European soccer's richest competition and the trophy the club covets most — by appealing to the Court of Arbitration for Sport. But in November the court rejected the appeal, in which City had tried to end the investigation on procedural grounds, by ruling that it could not hear the case until the club had exhausted the disciplinary process at UEFA.

The earlier decision at CAS was not, its officials noted at the time, a verdict on whether Manchester City did or did not breach financial regulations, a charge that English soccer authorities and officials at UEFA had been investigating for months.

Manchester City has vigorously denied wrongdoing, and its officials had warned UEFA that they would mount an aggressive response to any effort to bar the club from the competition. "The accusation of financial irregularities are entirely false," City said in a statement last year, after news media reports that it would face a one-year ban.

Critics fear that City's ability to avoid punishment would be a death blow for UEFA's ability to impose financial limits on its clubs. Those rules, in place since 2011, were designed to impose a measure of financial fairness within the European soccer economy, but powerful clubs — including City, as well as Paris St.-Germain, A.C. Milan and others — have routinely avoided serious punishment for breaking them. (Source: New York Times)

## Mohammad Mousavi not happy with Michal Kubiak's behavior

Iran international middle blocker Mohammad Mousavi says Michal Kubiak is a good player but must behave professionally.

Kubiak launched a stinging attack on Iranian nation in last May and said this nation doesn't exist.

Shortly after, the FIVB Disciplinary Panel Sub-Committee ruled that the Polish player committed violations of the FIVB Disciplinary Regulations and strongly recommended that the Polish Volleyball Federation require Kubiak to issue a written apology.



Mousavi, who currently plays at Polish club Indykpol AZS Olsztyn, has criticized Kubiak for his behavior.

Asked whether Mousavi would shake hands with Michal Kubiak in the 2020 Olympic Games, he replied, "We are professionals and in the profession you have to shake hand with your opponent. However, I do not intend to make friends with him. I respect Kubiak because he is a good volleyball player, but sometimes he does not behave professionally."

Iran have been drawn along with Japan, Poland, Venezuela, Canada and Italy in Pool A.

"We are going to book a place in the next stage. We are not the best team in the world but we are a team to beat," the 32-year-old player added.

(Source: Polsatsport.pl)

## Iran karateka Askari secures berth at Tokyo 2020

**TASNIM** — Iranian karate athlete Bahman Askari Ghoncheh secured a place at the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo on Friday.

The current World title-holder lost to Rafael Aghayev of Azerbaijan 3-0 in a tight semi-final at the Male Kumite -75kg of Karate 1-Premier League Dubai.

Askari earned a place at the Olympics after standing first at the weight class ranking with 7702 points.

Competition will continue on Saturday in the United Arab Emirates city, with the medal bouts taking place on Sunday (February 16).

The event in Dubai is one of the last competitions before the Olympic qualification process ends on April 6.

## Jahanbakhsh's 2nd goal for Brighton brings good luck

**IRNA** — The second goal scored by Iranian football player Alireza Jahanbakhsh for Brighton brought him luck and his acrobatic finish was named the Premier League Goal of the Month for January.

Having experienced a painful 18-month goal drought, Jahanbakhsh netted his first goal for the club on December 29, 2019.

The Iranian winger drilled a shot into the bottom corner of the Bournemouth goal and his team won the match 2-0. He appeared close to tears on the pitch and was crowded around by his team-mates.

This was followed up by an overhead strike against Chelsea on January 1, 2020, and Jahanbakhsh celebrated his equalizer that earned Brighton a point.

The 'onefootball' website described the superb bicycle kick goal as "a work of art"

"I had a feeling the bicycle kick was the only way I could hit the ball. But as you see in my reaction I didn't expect it to touch the net!" Jahanbakhsh told the official premier-league website.

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

His goal and the efforts scored by James Maddison, Hamza Choudhury, Sebastien Haller, Richarlison de Andrade, Nathan Redmond, Jay Rodriguez as well as Raul Jimenez were nominated the January 2020 Goal of the Month in the Premier League.

Finally, he overpowered other contenders and his overhead kick was selected the January 2020 Goal of the Month by a panel of experts combined with a public vote.

The head coach of Brighton, Graham Potter praised the persistence and determination of the 26-year-old athlete, adding persistence has paid off for Alireza.

## Iran to play Oman in friendly

**TASNIM** — Iran national football team will play a friendly match with Oman as part of preparation for the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 and AFC Asian Cup China 2023.

Team Melli will have four matches in late March and early June.

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

Team Melli will meet Bahrain and Iraq on June 4 and 9, respectively in Tehran.

Iran sit five points behind leaders Iraq in Group C but having played one game fewer.

"We will play a friendly match with Oman ahead of matches against Bahrain and Iraq in Tehran," Dragan Skocic said in news conference.

INTERNATIONAL DAILY  
www.tehrantimes.com

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Public Relations Office: Tel: (+98 21) 88805807  
Subscription & Distribution Dept.: Tel: (+98 21) 43051603  
www.eshtarak.ir Distributor: Padideh Novin Co.  
Tel: 88911433  
Webmaster: webmaster@tehrantimes.com  
Printed at: Jame Jam Bartar Borna - 44197737

Tehrantimes79 Tehrantimesdaily

No. 18, Bimeh Alley, Nejatollahi St., Tehran, Iran  
P.O. Box: 14155-4843  
Zip Code: 1599814713



GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

If you give away so much of your wealth to become needy yourself, trade with God by giving charity to the needy.

Imam Ali (AS)

Six Iranian shorts to go on screen in Toronto

TEHRAN — The Iranian Cinematheque of Didar in the Canadian city of Toronto will be screening a lineup of six shorts by Iranian filmmakers in a program named "Screening of Tirgan" on February 21, the organizers have announced.

The lineup includes "Exterior Wash" by Jaber Ramezani, "Online Shopping" by Ghasideh Golmakani, "Bitter Sea" by Fatemeh



A scene from "Online Shopping" by Ghasideh Golmakani.

Ahmadi and "Dash Akol" by Hajar Mehrani. Also included are "Short Wave" by Mohammad Esmaeili, and "Whooping Cough" by Reza Tofiqju.

The screenings will be followed by Q&A sessions, which will be attended by the film crews.

NEWS IN BRIEF



"One Person" from Iran to compete in Canterbury Anifest

TEHRAN — Iranian director Mahbubeh Kalai's short film "One Person" will compete in the Canterbury Anifest, an animation festival in England.

Produced by Iran's Documentary and Experimental Film Center (DEFC), the animated movie is about love and loneliness.

The Canterbury Anifest will be held from February 28 to March 1.

Kenyan sculptor turns scrap metal into art with a message

KAJIADO, Kenya (Reuters) — Two life-size lions crafted from scrap metal guard the entrance to the studio of Kenyan metal sculptor Kioko Mwitiki. Nearby a leopard, with holes in its metal body to mimic spots, crouches next to a giant elephant sculpture.

Mwitiki, 56, estimates that he has sculpted thousands of tons of discarded metal — from supermarket trolley wheels to shredded metal from factories — into art over three decades.

Customers for his artefacts, which can fetch up to \$10,000 each, have included former U.S. president Bill Clinton, the Danish royal family, The Smithsonian museum in Washington and the San Diego Zoo.

Mwitiki says his work is particularly relevant today due to global concerns about over-consumption, pollution and climate change.

"Recycling has become a very important issue because you just need to be in sync with what is happening; all this plastic in the air, all this plastic in the ocean," he told Reuters in his studio, where apprentices noisily beat and twisted metal.

Sometimes his choice of material helps to draw attention to wildlife conservation, an issue close to his heart.

For his lion sculptures, he transforms animal snares, used by illegal hunters in national parks and given to him by the Kenya Wildlife Service, into dramatic manes.

Mwitiki became an artist by accident. His elder sister sent him to be an apprentice in a welder's shop as punishment after he was expelled from university in 1986 for joining anti-government protests on campus.

In his spare time, he fashioned a few artistic objects from metal. He later found them displayed at a Nairobi gallery after a broker bought them cheaply from him and sold them on. This led him to realize he could support himself as an artist.

Mwitiki's childhood memories — and concerns about growing conflict between humans and animals in his country — inspired him to sculpt wildlife.

He grew up south of Nairobi in the Rift Valley, where large herds of wildebeest once roamed the plains.

UNESCO screens "Rona, Azim's Mother"

TEHRAN — "Rona, Azim's Mother", a co-production between Afghanistan and Iran, was screened in a special session at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris last Thursday.

The screening was organized to mark the film's win at the 13th Asia Pacific Screen Awards (APSA) in Brisbane, Australia, last November.

Directed by Tehran-based Afghan brothers Jamshid and Navid Mahmudi, the film was honored with the Cultural Diversity Award, which is presented by UNESCO at the APSA.

Jamshid also was in Paris to receive the award after attending a Q&A session following the screening that was arranged in the context of the 13th session of the UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee.

The film tells the story of Azim, an Afghan refugee living in Tehran with his family and facing a grave decision regarding his very ill mother. The film provides an illuminating picture of family tensions and bureaucratic frustrations in a displaced community confronted by daily challenges.

"Rona, Azim's Mother" has been honored with several awards in Iranian and international events, including the Kim Ji-seok Award at the 22nd Busan International Film Festival in October 2018 and best film award at the Sharm el-Sheikh Asian Film Festival in Egypt last March.

It was Afghanistan's submission to the 91st Academy Awards in the best foreign-language film category in 2018, however, it



"Rona, Azim's Mother" (Fattah Zinuri).

did not make the shortlist. Mohsen Tanabandeh, the Iranian star of

the film, also received a nomination in the best actor category at the APSA, but Manoj

Bajpayee from India won the award for his role in Devashish Makhija's movie, "Bhonsle".

Italian musicians Aquino, Giachino happy to be at Fajr festival



Italian jazz trumpeter Luca Aquino in an undated photo.

The trio's performance at the festival was co-organized with their Finnish manager.

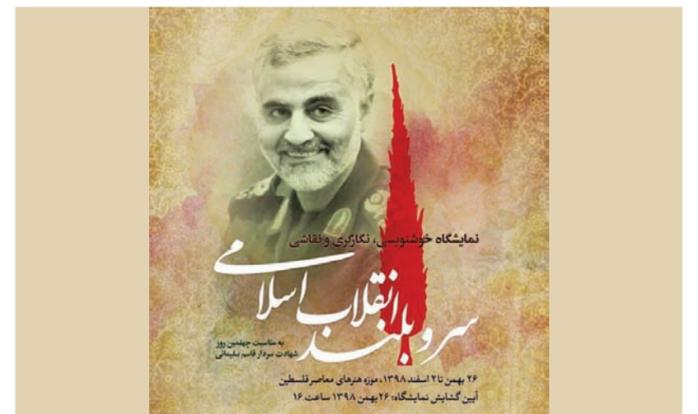
They performed pieces from Aquino's album named "Italian Songbook" as well as some traditional Italian songs and compositions.

Aquino is an Italian trumpet

player with a different and modern sound. He loves to play freely, without impositions and constraints.

His latest project "Italian Songbook" was released in 2019. The album contains jazz arrangements of the most beloved Italian classics, in which he shows his devotion to his Italian roots.

Art exhibition on Martyr Soleimani opens at Tehran museum



A poster for art exhibition "Tall Cypress of the Islamic Revolution".

TEHRAN — An art exhibition on Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani opened at the Palestine Museum of Contemporary Art in Tehran on Saturday.

Paintings and calligraphy works created by 60 Iranian artists during a two-day workshop at the Farshchian University of Iranian-Islamic Arts on February 6 and

7 are on view at the exhibition titled "Tall Cypress of the Islamic Revolution".

The exhibition has been organized to observe the 40th day since the commander of the IRGC Quds Force was assassinated in a U.S. air attack in Baghdad on January 3. Review sessions by artists and art critics will be held on the sidelines of the exhibit, which will run until February 21.

New plays coming to Tehran theaters

TEHRAN — Tehran theaters resume their regular schedule with seven new plays after the 38th Fajr International Theater Festival last week.

Shahzad Theater will host director Reza Javidi's troupe, which will perform an adaptation of "What's in a Name?", a French comedy play co-written by Matthieu Delaporte and Alexandre de la Patellière, on February 20.

The play is about Vincent, a real estate agent and father-to-be, who is invited to a dinner party by his sister Elizabeth. Everything is fine during the party until Vincent reveals he intends to name his son Adolf.

Director Mehran Emam will stage American playwright John Patrick Shanley's 2004 play "Doubt, a Parable" at Neauphle-le-Chateau Hall tonight.

The play is about Sister Aloysius, a Bronx school principal, who takes matters into her own hands when she suspects the young Father Flynn of improper relations with one of the male students.

American dramatist Ira Levin's acclaimed 1978 play "Deathtrap" is currently on stage at Simorgh Hall.

Fatemeh Zamani is the director of the play, which is about a washed-up playwright, Sidney, who finds a chance to rise



Members of director Fatemeh Zamani's troupe perform "Deathtrap" at Tehran's Simorgh Hall on January 26, 2020. (Tiwall/Zia Safavian)

to the top once again. He receives a script from a former student that's a guaranteed success.

His wife suggests the two men could collaborate, but Sidney thinks that it would be just as easy to murder the young man and steal the script for his own.

Director and actor Hassan Majuni restaged Russian playwright Anton Chekhov's "The Bear: A Joke in One Act" and "A Marriage Proposal" at Shahzad Theater.

"A Marriage Proposal" tells the story of a long-time neighbor of Stepan Stepanovitch Chubukov, who comes to propose marriage to his 25-year-old daughter, Natalia.

"The Bear: A Joke in One Act" condenses so much of human nature into a short and comical act to demonstrate how close the relationship between anger and passion can be. Majuni had staged the play in Tehran in 2016 and 2017.

Shano is also among the theaters hosting director Kamal Abdi's troupe, which is performing Polish dramatist Slawomir Mrozek's 1964 play "The Tailor".

Bakbak Beikvand directs Russian playwright Alexander Vampilov's "Incident with a Typesetter" at the Gandam Art and Cultural Institute.

"Elvira", a play by French writer Brigitte Jaques, is performed by director Babak Karimi's troupe at Kargah Namayesh.

New York prosecutor says former movie producer Weinstein abused his power

NEW YORK (Reuters) — New York prosecutors told jurors that Harvey Weinstein abused his power and pushed back against claims by the former Hollywood producer's defense team that his accusers were not credible.

Setting the stage for the jury to begin deliberating next week in Weinstein's weeks-long sexual assault trial, Assistant District Attorney Joan Illuzzi said Weinstein, 67, had counted on his victims never coming forward.

"The defendant not only ran roughshod over the dignity and the very lives of these witnesses, but he also underestimated them," she said.

The trial is a milestone for the #MeToo movement, in which women have accused powerful men in business, entertainment, media and politics of sexual misconduct.

Weinstein has pleaded not guilty to assaulting former production assistant Mimi Haley in 2006 and raping Jessica Mann, a onetime aspiring actress, in 2013.

Justice James Burke is expected to give the jury legal instructions on Tuesday morning, after which they will begin deliberating.

Since 2017, more than 80 women have accused Weinstein of misconduct. The former producer, who was behind films including "The English Patient" and "Shakespeare in Love," has denied any nonconsensual relation.

On Thursday, Donna Rotunno, one of Weinstein's lawyers, assailed Weinstein's accusers as unreliable and said an "overzealous" prosecution was trying to portray the assault, and that women must

be "responsible" for their choices. Illuzzi said on Friday that all the women were credible and had no reason to lie.

"If they didn't feel compelled to do this, would they put their families through this?" she asked. "Would they put themselves through the stress?"

She also pushed back against Rotunno's argument about women's responsibility. "If you're the victim of fraud, nobody is going to say, well, you gave the accountant access to your money," she said.

Illuzzi rejected the defense's claim that Mann had a loving relationship with Weinstein, but also said it would not matter if she had been "head over heels in love with him."

Jurors heard from four other women, including actress Annabella Sciorra, who

testified that Weinstein came into her apartment one winter night in 1993 or 1994 and raped her. The accusation is too old to be charged as a separate crime, but it could act as an aggravating factor to support the most serious charge in the case, which carries a possible life sentence.

Prosecutors called the remaining three women to bolster their evidence of Weinstein's intent, but did not charge him with any crimes related to them.

After court wrapped up for the day, Rotunno told reporters that the evidence showed the relationships the accusers had with Weinstein were consensual.

"I think he's confident. And this is a tough situation for anybody to be in," she said of Weinstein.