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Larijani pays official visit to Syria

TEHRAN — Iranian Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani visited Damascus on Sunday to hold a series of meetings with the senior Syrian officials over ways to expand bilateral ties and conferring on the most important regional developments.

Upon departure from the Imam Khomeini international airport, Larijani said that Syria is a key part of

the axis of resistance.

"Recent developments in Syria and in the region have necessitated closer consultations (between Tehran and Damascus)," Larijani added.

"The developments are important. Syria has proved that it has been after materializing good objectives in line with the axis of resistance," he went on to say. **→2**

Ruhollah Zam says after Macron he enjoyed highest security protection in France

TEHRAN — Ruhollah Zam, the operator behind Amad News website and Telegram channel, in the second session of his trial on Sunday said that he had the highest security protection after French President Emmanuel Macron.

"The heaviest French security protection after Macron was for me," Zam told the court.

In October 2019, the Islamic Revolu-

tionary Guard Corps announced that Zam had been arrested during a complicated intelligence operation.

Zam launched Amad News in 2015. The channel frequently posted fake news stories and called for violence with the aim of overthrowing the Islamic Republic system.

During the protest rallies in December 2018, he urged the people to take arms against the government. **→2**

Trump plan will impact border demarcation: Nasrallah

The Middle East peace plan announced by U.S. President Donald Trump will impact negotiations on demarcating the Lebanon-Israeli land and maritime border, Hezbollah's Secretary-General said Sunday.

"The spirit of Trump's plan will be decisive in the issue of demarcating the land and sea borders with occupied Palestine and will affect Lebanon's oil wealth,"

Sayyed Hasan Nasrallah said in a televised speech commemorating "martyrs of the resistance."

Nasrallah said that despite all sanctions, sieges, military and psychological wars the Islamic Revolution of Iran has stood.

He made the remarks on commemoration ceremony of Lt. Gen. Soleimani's 40th day of martyrdom held in Lebanon. **→10**



ARTICLE

Maryam Khormaei
Mehr News Agency
journalist

A look at the slogan of the 2020 Munich Security Conference "Westlessness" so short, so simple

The Munich Security Conference began on Friday with the opening speech by German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier and continued till Sunday.

Germany's president has suggested that Russia and China, along with the United States, were stoking global instability, as he warned of the danger that the three were slipping into a new "great power" competition and nuclear arms race.

"Great again" -- even at the expense of neighbors and partners," Steinmeier said, a reference to U.S. President Donald Trump's campaign slogan: "Make America Great Again."

But even before Steinmeier delivered his rhetoric against "three world powers", we could have realized the special atmosphere of the summit by considering the slogan the hosts of the meeting proposed.

But what is the slogan and what is its concept?

The slogan of the summit was "Westlessness" a combination of two terms "west" and "lessness". It is a simple and short word, needless of any further explanation.

But this emerging word implies different meanings, including the West states' anxiety due to empowerment of non-Western nations, which is largely influenced by their inadequacy in the face of global challenges.

In the past, the Munich Security Conference was often seen as a gathering of Western states, and even when they tried to make it international by involving eastern countries, their goal was to primarily meet the interest of the West. But now, given what happened at the international meeting, it can be concluded that the West has faced a serious trouble, to the point that some experts have described the current situation as an "elegy for the West".

The notion has formed last year when German Chancellor Angela Merkel and U.S. Vice President Mike Pence gave way different answers to similar questions about the future of Iran's nuclear deal, Nord Stream 2 natural gas pipelines, NATO costs and the transatlantic trade balance. **→7**

Maestro Nader Mashayekhi impressed with youth participation in Fajr festival

By Manijeh Rezapoor

TEHRAN — Maestro Nader Mashayekhi, the former conductor of the Tehran Symphony Orchestra, has said that the participation of promising young musicians is one good point about the 35th Fajr Music Festival this year.

"This is the only thing that needs to be done," Mashayekhi told the Tehran Times on Sunday and added, "Iran is a country of the younger generation and it belongs to the youth; they can take responsibilities and we must trust them."

"Iranian youth have made good progress in the country, especially in the fields of science, and we should give them this opportunity to make use of their knowledge, and with the discipline they have, they can make good progress," he added.

He noted that he believes the young musicians are frank and honest, and when something is not good they can easily say so.

He added that the other good point about the festival this year is that the managers are taking a risk and are trusting the young musicians.

The organizers plan to honor Mashayekhi and three other musicians with lifetime achievement awards during the closing ceremony of the festival on February 19.

He pointed to the festival's decision to honor him and said, "This helps me achieve my goals more easily because the goals are very important and need to be taken into consideration."

"One of the goals is education. Education needs to be revived. The teaching methods need to be updated. The interested youth of today learn their lessons in a different way compared to the

older times and the lessons need to be updated. The methods need to go along with the today's needs," he explained.

"The second is that we should learn to be receptive. We have a culture that is rooted in its diversity, and we should learn to accept the diversity of tastes. All types of music have their own status, and we should learn to accept them as they are," he noted.

"The third point is that the media should make use of music, and learn that music is not just for entertainment. Music transfers the feelings which cannot be narrated through words. We have a culture through which we can communicate with one other without words," he added.

Mashayekhi next noted that he believes the festival has been able to gather different tastes together in one place. **→12**

U.S. names members of panel for West Bank annexation

The U.S. government has appointed members of a committee tasked with mapping out areas of the occupied West Bank that Israel plans to annex as part of President Donald Trump's self-proclaimed "Deal of the Century."

A senior Trump administration official told the Israel Hayom daily that U.S. ambassador to Israel David Friedman will lead the joint committee. "Honored to serve on the Joint Committee," tweeted Friedman Saturday. "Looking forward to getting started right away," he said.

Other committee members will include Friedman's senior adviser Aryeh Lightstone, and Scott Leith, a U.S. National Security Council expert on Israel.

Israeli members will include tourism minister Yariv Levin and Israeli ambassador to the United

States Ron Dermer.

The committee was announced by Trump last month during the unveiling of his scheme, which would see Israel control swathes of the West Bank in violation of the fundamental rights of the Palestinians.

Trump said the joint committee would be formed to "convert the conceptual map into a more detailed and calibrated rendering so that recognition can be immediately achieved."

There is still no set timeline for when the committee will finish its work, but Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu has been pressured by right-wing lawmakers in recent weeks to announce the immediate annexation of all settlements before

Israelis head to the polls.

Three weeks ago, both Netanyahu and Friedman said that Israel would be able to do so before the election, and Netanyahu planned to turn the issue into the cornerstone of his re-election campaign.

Trump's son-in-law and adviser Jared Kushner, who is believed to be the architect of the so-called "Vision for Peace," has said the U.S. administration and Israel had decided to wait until a team was formed to examine the maps, and that he hoped Israel would wait until after the election.

On January 28, Trump unveiled his plan negotiated with Israel but without Palestinians, as one side of any agreement, being involved in the process. **→10**



Young Soldier Festival held in Tehran

The 12th Young Soldier Festival was held in Tehran on Sunday, February 16. With the theme of "Young Soldier, Security, Skill, and Promotion of Production" the event was held at Javadnia Martyrs Hall of the Ministry of Defense.



ARTICLE

Salman Parviz
Journalist

"Deal of the Century" and Sudan-Israel normalization

The so-called "Deal of the Century" was announced on January 29. It was rejected by most of the Muslim world. Just a few days after the Arab League's rejection of the initiative, Lt. Gen. Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, Chairman of Sudan's ruling Sovereign Council met with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Entebbe, Uganda, to begin talks for normalization of bilateral ties.

Just a day after the Entebbe meeting and amid objections from domestic politicians and organization in Sudan, Burhan cast doubt on any rapid normalization of ties with Israel, saying his position on the Palestinian issue remains unchanged. (See Burhan-Netanyahu meeting stokes tensions in fragile Sudan coalition government)

Israeli officials have long expressed a wish to improve ties with Khartoum, citing its importance in the region as well as its geopolitical location. One pretext for the normalization is the Zionist regime has been seeking permission for its planes to overfly Sudan, cutting several hours off trips to South Africa. No confirmation of the request or response so far.

Power sharing arrangement between the military and civilian parties in Sudan began last August, following the overthrow of the 30-year regime of Omar al-Bashir last April. The power was handed over from the Transitional Military Council (TMC) to the Sovereign Council which composed of military and civilian leaders.

In September the Sudanese cabinet was formed and Abdullah Hamdok was declared prime minister. (See Sudan Coup Chronology)

Burhan is the most senior figure in the first phase of power-sharing arrangement in which civilian authorities are due to take the lead for the final 18 months of the 39-month transition. Elections are slated for 2022. **→7**

Firms losing Iranian market cannot easily return: senior diplomat

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** – Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi warned on Sunday that companies which accompany the U.S. in its “maximum pressure” policy against Iran and leave the Iranian market will face difficulty to return to the country in the future.

“The companies which left Iran have lost a market that cannot retake easily,” ISNA quoted Araghchi as saying on Sunday.



He added that Iran will not forget the countries' behavior in difficult times.

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 nuclear deal, also known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi tweeted on Friday, “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.”

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

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

U.S. President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew the U.S. from the multilateral 2015 nuclear deal in May 2018 and introduced the harshest ever sanctions against Iran under his officially stated “maximum pressure” strategy.

World's silence has emboldened Saudi-led war crimes in Yemen: Iran

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** – Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said on Sunday that the international community's silence has emboldened the Saudi-led coalition in committing war crimes in Yemen.

He condemned the Saudi-led airstrikes on Al Maslub District in Al Jawf Governorate on Saturday which left at least 31 civilians killed.

“The international community's silence on these war crimes has emboldened the perpetrators to kill more civilians and continue to violate international law and the human rights,” Mousavi said in a statement.

He added, “In the past years, we have repeatedly witnessed that



whenever forces of the coalition, led by Saudi Arabia, or their allies face disastrous defeats in war fronts, they embark on killing women, children and civilians with the United States' weapons and cause catastrophe. Yesterday's crime in Al Jawf province is an example of their war crimes.”

According to Press TV, UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Yemen Lise Grande also denounced the “terrible strikes” in al-Jawf province.

“So many people are being killed in Yemen – it's a tragedy and it's unjustified. Under international humanitarian law parties which resort to force are obligated to protect civilians,” she said.

“Five years into this conflict and belligerents are still failing to uphold this responsibility. It's shocking,” she added.

International aid group Save the Children also condemned the Saudi airstrikes, saying they showed that the Yemen conflict was “not slowing down.”

“This latest attack must be urgently and independently investigated, and perpetrators held to account,” said Xavier Joubert, the group's country director in Yemen.

Ruhollah Zam says after Macron he enjoyed highest security protection in France

1 → In its statement, the IRGC said it lured Zam into Iran using “clever, multidimensional and innovative tricks”, which even deceived foreign intelligence agencies.



The IRGC also said the French intelligence service was behind Zam's activities, which were also backed by the U.S. and the Zionist regime's spy services.

On Sunday, Zam told the court hearing that he had first visited Malaysia in 2011 and then moved to Turkey in 2012 and while there he met the French ambassador to get a visa to fly to France.

Zam also said while in France he tried to get a permission to immigrate to the United States.

EU's Borrell says remains committed to keep nuclear deal alive

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** – European Union foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said on Sunday that he will remain committed to keep the 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the JCPOA, alive.

“As coordinator I remain committed to listen to all sides and keep the #NuclearDeal alive,” he said in a tweet.

He posted the tweet after a meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference.

“Met with Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov on the margins of @MunSecConf. Discussions included #MEPP and #JCPOA,” Borrell wrote.

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Friday that Iran's decisions to reduce JCPOA commitments are reversible if Europe takes “meaningful” steps in preserving the JCPOA.

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



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 resolution 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 an 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.

Rouhani: U.S. maximum pressure has failed

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** – President Hassan Rouhani said on Sunday that the United States' maximum pressure against Iran has failed and sanctions will be ineffective.

“20 months have passed since the United States' sanctions and maximum pressure. Our situation has become better in the past 6 months and the maximum pressure has failed,” he told a press conference.

He added, “Our domestic condition is our unity. They wanted to make the people believe that we cannot live without an agreement with the United States. Nobody in the country has this belief.”

Elsewhere, he said, “They thought they could bring us to the negotiating table in a state in which we are weak by the maximum pressure. Such a thing is not possible.”

■ ‘We will force enemy come to the negotiating table’

Rouhani also said that Iran will continue its path powerfully and finally will force the enemy to come to the negotiating table.

“Today, they ask for negotiation, however, they must return to a fair situation,” he noted.

He added, “So, our path will be resistance and progress.”

Elsewhere, Rouhani noted that it does not matter which party will take the helm at the White House and what is important

is “national interests”.

“The United States must forget unilateralism and must also forget it is the leader of the world. If it respects these two factors and values legal governments and all the nations, we can pass problems,” he noted.

■ ‘We still insist on Hormuz peace initiative’

Rouhani also said that all the regional countries must enjoy security and Iran still insists on the Hormuz peace initiative.

“It is obvious to the world that there will be no peace in this region without in-

volvement of Iran. Regional stability will only be possible with the involvement of an important and powerful country like Iran,” he said.

■ ‘We have no unsolvable problem with Saudi Arabia’

Rouhani also said that Iran has “no unsolvable” problem with Saudi Arabia.

“We have always said that we have no complicated and unsolvable problem with Saudi Arabia and the issues between the two countries can be discussed whenever Saudi Arabia is ready,” he stated.

■ ‘People could be informed about Ukrainian plane crash earlier’

Rouhani also said that the people could be informed earlier about the Ukrainian passenger plane crash which was mistakenly shot down on January 8.

He praised the armed forces' apology for the incident.

Rouhani says, “They (the U.S.) thought they could bring us to the negotiating table in a state in which we are weak by the maximum pressure. Such a thing is not possible.”

Germany says won't join U.S. naval coalition in Hormuz Strait

German Defense Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer announced on Saturday that her country's navy will not join the U.S. naval coalition in the Strait of Hormuz at the mouth of the Persian Gulf.

Speaking at the Munich Security Conference, Kramp-Karrenbauer said Berlin regards Washington's maximum pressure policy against Tehran as wrong.

At the meantime she said Europe's joint action in the Strait of Hormuz to protect maritime routes is a necessary measure.

The minister added that regional stability and open maritime routes are of great importance for Germany.

Addressing the UN General Assembly late in September 2019, President Hassan Rouhani unveiled Iran's new initiative for the establishment of peace and security in the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz.

“The goal of the Coalition for Hope is to promote peace, stability, progress and welfare for all the residents

of the Strait of Hormuz region, and to enhance mutual understanding and peaceful and friendly relations amongst them,” Rouhani told the delegates at the UN.

“This initiative includes various venues for cooperation, such as the collective supply of energy security, freedom of navigation and free transfer of oil and other resources to and from the Strait of Hormuz and beyond,” he added.

“The Coalition for Hope is based on important principles such as compliance with the goals and principles of the United Nations, mutual respect, equal footing, dialog and understanding, respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty, inviolability of international borders, the peaceful settlement of all disputes, and more importantly, the two fundamental principles of non-aggression and non-interference in the domestic affairs of each other. The presence of the United Nations is necessary for the creation of an



international umbrella in support of the Coalition for Hope,” Rouhani underlined.

Larijani pays official visit to Syria

1 → Larijani's visit to Damascus comes as Syrian and Turkish troops have exchanged fires in Idlib, leaving troops dead on both sides.

On Friday, Hamid Reza Dehghani, the director general for the Middle East and North Africa affairs at the Iranian Foreign Ministry, called on Syria and Turkey to practice self-restraint in order to avoid worsening of the situation.

He expressed concerns over the situation in Idlib, Syria's northwest, and

conflicts between Turkey and Syria.

Dehghani also reiterated Iran's readiness to help prevent worsening of the situation.

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on February 10 that Iran was steadfast in its readiness to mediate between Turkey and Syria.

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

He added, “Escalation of tensions

only serves interests of terrorists and their sponsors. Avoidance of bloodshed and respect for sovereignty & territorial integrity is imperative.”

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

“Iran is ready to do its best to settle

differences between Damascus and Ankara over developments in Idlib province,” he said in a meeting at the United Nations Security Council.

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

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

Aviation body allows resumption of U.S. flights south of Iran



with military planes operating in the area. Concerns about the safety of flights

deepened on January 8 when Iran accidentally shot down a Ukrainian

airliner flying from Tehran to Kiev.

All 176 people on board were killed in the incident which came hours after Iran fired ballistic missiles at an American military base in Iraq.

The missile attacks had come in response to U.S. airstrikes in early January that killed a top Iranian military commander along several Iranian and Iraqi military personnel.

Iran has taken full responsibility for the downing of the Boeing 737-800 operated by Ukraine International Airlines, saying it will do it best to clarify the circumstances surrounding the incident.

Aviation bodies in Europe as well as major airlines around the world have already removed bans on flights through the Iranian and Iraqi airspace.

(Source: Press TV)

Soleimani assassination means the two foes remain on collision course: researcher

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Neither Iran nor the United States want a full-fledged military war but the Trump administration's campaign of "maximum pressure" and Soleimani's assassination mean the two foes remain on collision course, says a researcher at the journal of the Center for Strategic Studies in Tehran.

"The reckless assassination of top Iranian General Qasem Soleimani in foreign land was, under international law, a breach of the U.N. Charter, a violation of Iraq's territorial integrity, an infringement on Iraq's political independence, and an act of state-sponsored terrorism," Ali Akbar Dareini said in an article originally published on Al Jazeera on Thursday.

The following is an excerpt from the article. The assassinations at the direction of U.S. President Donald Trump transformed the red lines. Trump probably took the biggest gamble of his presidency. By sharply escalating U.S. hostilities with Iran, the Trump administration stepped into a very dangerous territory that it may not be able to control the consequences. Initially, American officials tried to justify the assassination, claiming that Soleimani posed an "imminent threat" to American lives in Iraq. But there were obvious loopholes in their justification.

The same day the U.S. killed Soleimani, American forces carried out another mission to kill Abdul Reza Shahlaei, a commander of Iran's elite Quds Force, but failed. It did not result in his death.

The outrageous killing pushed the entire region into greater instability. It marked the end of an era and the beginning of a new chaotic history. In the post-Soleimani era, the U.S. has to spend billions of dollars to protect its military bases and troops in the volatile Middle East and yet it may not be able to do so. By killing Soleimani, Trump dangerously undermined international order and promoted the law of the jungle.

Soleimani's assassination demonstrated that the Trump administration has effectively shut the door of dialogue. Denying visa recently to Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif to attend a U.N. Security Council meeting in New York was another piece of evidence showing that the U.S. has closed the path of diplomacy. When Washington says it wants talks with Tehran without preconditions, it has already prepared a list of 12 conditions as spelled out by U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo.

Trump abandoned Barack Obama's policy of "interaction" with Iran and instead adopted a new belligerent policy of "confrontation." His calculation is based on the assumption that Iran will finally back down in the face of tremendous pressure and that Iranian leaders will crawl to the table to sign a deal he arrogantly desires. But that's not what history provides. Trump has ignored Iran's national pride and the widely-tested view that the Islamic Republic doesn't give in to pressure.

Washington's unilateral sanctions were a declaration of an all-out economic war against Iran and Soleimani's assassination has taken the war to a highly dangerous military level. But this reckless policy may at one point spiral out of control and lead to a disastrous all-out war with grave and



unpredictable consequences.

There was absolutely no chance that Iran would not respond to the assassination of its icon soldier. The assassination unified the Iranians. Large funeral processions for Soleimani and his companions in Iraq, with thousands of mourners in attendance, and millions of Iranians who paid tribute to their national hero — the largest processions in Iran since the 1989 funeral for the Islamic Republic's founder Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini — was widely seen as a street referendum in support of Soleimani's strategy.

Iran's intention was to keep the strike limited and proportional. Firing a barrage of missiles from its own soil was retaliation, not escalation. It was intended to give a direct military response to America's act of war. But it was not designed to cause American casualties that would very likely lead to a full-fledged regional war.

The Guard's calibrated and carefully-designed military response to the U.S. did the job without leading to an all-out war.

Iran's missile strikes were the first military strike by a state against the U.S. in 79 years since World War II when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor in 1941. Iranian missiles destroyed the selected buildings inside the sprawling al-Assad air base. Should Iran's missiles had not been accurate in hitting targets after flying 700 kilometers in the air, Trump would have likely been encouraged to respond and further escalate the tensions.

Soleimani has a huge number of followers throughout the Middle East who will take revenge and they will not operate under Iran's control.

Americans should just ask themselves this question. What would they do and how would they react if Iran had assassinated

U.S. Defense Secretary Mark Esper or the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Mark Milley?

The United States has effectively encircled Iran by setting up military bases all around it and stationing about 68,000 troops, 11,000 kilometers away from its borders. The prime responsibility of every state is to protect its own security and the security of its people. Soleimani's assassination proved beyond any doubt that U.S. military presence in the region is an existential danger to Iran and a threat not only to Iran's territorial integrity but also Iraq's security.

Soleimani carried out Iran's security strategy across the Middle East from Afghanistan to Lebanon to Gaza Strip. He was the celebrated commander of the Resistance Front.

The U.S. and Israel see the Resistance Front a major obstacle in the way of their scheme. So, Soleimani, a champion of this front, needed to be removed. But, it's simplistic to assume that decapitating Soleimani will open the way for U.S. and Israeli domination of this region.

Soleimani made Iran the most consequential player in the Middle East. He led Iran's public diplomacy - reaching out to people rather than governments - inspiring people to defend their rights, their country and their identity.

Iran has learnt the hard lesson that the international system is not based on ethics or even international law but power. If you are not powerful, you will be bullied, humiliated and toppled. That's why Washington seeks to take these two elements away from Iran because it doesn't want Iran to be strong.

Washington has worked to weaken governments and push the region backward. When the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria

(ISIS) emerged, it was Soleimani going to the frontlines to fight it. He was the international face of the Resistance Front against ISIS terrorists. Without Soleimani, Baghdad would have fallen to ISIS in 2014. He successfully defeated ISIS while the Americans bombed one selected ISIS target for publicity and then assisted terrorists by bombing Syrian army bases to pave the way for ISIS advance. Soleimani's assassination was a gift to the terrorists who were defeated in the battlefield in the hands of the Iranian legend. Rarely anybody can dispute the fact that ISIS was the winner of Soleimani's death.

After the U.S. unilaterally withdrew from the multilateral nuclear deal on 8 May 2018, Iran remained committed to all its obligations for one year in the hope that Europe will keep its part of the deal. Europe used to buy 500,000 barrels a day of crude oil from Iran. Under the threat of U.S. sanctions, it stopped buying Iranian oil. Their companies withdrew from Iran. There were no banking relations. Under the JCPOA, Europe was required to normalize trade relations with Iran but it did not. Europe had promised to activate a special purpose vehicle, known as the Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges (INSTEX), to facilitate non-dollar trade with Iran but it was never implemented.

Iran currently finds no reason to hold talks with an administration that speaks through assassination and economic terrorism. Iran had a multilateral deal with the U.S. and Trump broke it. Why should Iran re-negotiate a deal with the U.S. when it violated its own signature? Why should Iran consider the terms of a proposed deal that's tantamount to surrender?

But things may change if respectful language replaces bullying.

Senior Ukrainian team meets Shamkhani

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — A high ranking Ukrainian delegation held talks with Ali Shamkhani, secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council in Tehran, discussing the issues surrounding the Ukrainian passenger plane which was mistakenly downed by the Iranian military near Tehran on January 8.



Oleksiy Danilov, secretary of Ukraine's National Security and Defense Council (NSDC), headed the Ukrainian delegation.

The Ukrainian passenger plane, with 176 people aboard, was mistaken for an invading missile. The tragic incident happened a few hours after Iran fired missiles at a U.S. airbase in Iraq in retaliation for the January 3 assassination of General Qasem Soleimani. Following the retaliation attack, the Iranian military had been put on high alert.

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

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and Ukrainian Foreign Minister Vadym Prystaiko met on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference (MSC) on Saturday and discussed the incident.

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

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

According to the website of Canada's Foreign Ministry, the two agreed to remain in close touch over the issue of the 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 says pushed for tension de-escalation in West Asia region in Munich

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif who had attended the Munich Security Conference (MSC) said on Sunday that he discussed ways to advance "the cause of peace" and de-escalating tension in the West Asia region.

"Advancing the cause of peace and de-escalation in our region and beyond," Zarif tweeted on Sunday.

While in Munich Zarif held talks with a number of counterparts, the Canadian prime minister, and talked to media persons.



"Wrapping up three days in Munich, where I met with my counterparts from across the globe, as well as many other officials, think tanks, NGOs and media representatives on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference," Zarif explained.

In his talks Italian Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio on Sunday, the two chief diplomats exchanged views about the ways to keep the nuclear deal, officially called the JCPOA, alive and the European Union's responsibility toward the international agreement, IRNA reported.

Almost one million assigned to conduct Feb. 21 elections: interior minister

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — The interior minister announced on Saturday night that approximately one million people across the country are assigned to implement, supervise, provide logistics and secure the parliamentary elections on Friday, Feb. 21.

In an interview with channel 1 of the national TV, Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli said that the ministry kicked off its activities related to the elections from April 2019.

"We started to train executive staff seven months ago," the minister said, adding that the security roadmap for the entire towns and cities has been prepared, special measures have been taken and full considerations have been preauthorized.

He added, "April 17 has been chosen for a possible second round of the elections."

He further called on the people with different political dispositions to participate massively in the elections.

Earlier this month, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said, "Those who love dear Iran and its reputation and intend to solve the problems should take part in the upcoming elections."

He added that the people must come to the scene on the elections day to manifest the country's national might and firm will.

The parliamentary elections, the 11th of its kind since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, will be held in over 200 constituencies across the country's 31 provinces on Feb. 21.

7,144 candidates are competing for 290 seats in the parliament, meaning that for each seat about 24 candidate contest. In the Tehran constituency, 1,453 candidates are vying for 30 seats.

Iran urges E3 to fulfill JCPOA obligations if they want nuclear standoff solved

MUNICH — The only path to put an end to the current nuclear standoff between Iran and the Europe is that the European trio, also called E3, fulfill their undertakings under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Saturday.

In a meeting with his French counterpart Jean-Yves Le Drian on the margins of the Munich Security Conference, Zarif underscored that France, Germany and Britain should return to their commitments, noting that honoring commitments will settle the existing dispute in the most appropriate way.

"The way that the E3 is currently pursuing does not help resolve the problems," Zarif added.

The two chief diplomats also exchanged views over bilateral ties and regional developments.

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.

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", according to AP.

The U.S. has been pressuring other parties to the deal to pull out as well, but German Foreign Minister Heiko 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 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 an 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.

On January 5 Iran took the fifth last and final step, announcing that it no longer observes any limit under the JCPOA.

Lavrov discusses Iran nuclear deal with Zarif, Borrell

MOSCOW (Sputnik) Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov discussed the Iran nuclear deal as well as the situation in the Middle East, particularly in Syria, with his Iranian counterpart Mohammad Javad Zarif and EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell, the Russian Foreign Ministry said on Sunday.

"A discussion was held on the situation in the Middle East and North Africa, as well as on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action [JCPOA] for the Iranian nuclear program. Some issues of Russian-EU relations were touched upon," the ministry said in a statement after a meeting between Lavrov and Borrell at the Munich Security Conference.

Lavrov's meeting with Zarif also took place on the sidelines of the conference. The two foreign ministers discussed the strengthening of multifaceted Russian-Iranian cooperation,



among other issues.

"An in-depth exchange of views also took place on a number of issues on the international

agenda, including the situation in Syria and issues related to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action," the Russian Foreign Ministry

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	472749.9
IFX	6254.77

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

Virus outbreak hitting many areas of China economy: Alibaba Group

Alibaba Group Holding Ltd warned that the coronavirus responsible for killing more than 1,300 people in China is exerting a fundamental impact on the country's consumers and merchants, and will hurt its revenue growth in the current quarter.

Alibaba, the first major Chinese technology corporation to report results since the epidemic emerged in January, said the virus is undermining production in the economy because many workers can't get to or perform their jobs. It has also changed buying patterns with consumers pulling back on discretionary spending, including travel and restaurants.



The Chinese e-commerce giant made the comments after reporting strong financial results for the quarter that ended in December. Revenue surged a better-than-expected 38 percent to 161.5 billion yuan (\$32 billion), while net income rose 58 percent to 52.3 billion yuan.

But chief executive officer Daniel Zhang and chief financial officer Maggie Wu were clear about the fallout from the deadly virus on employees, suppliers and merchants. Many merchants that work with the company have not been able to return to normal operations because of a shortage of employees. Alibaba's U.S.-listed shares slid 1.8 percent Thursday.

Production in economy

The "epidemic has negatively impacted the overall China economy, especially the retail and service sectors," said Ms Wu in a conference call after the results. "While demand for goods and services is there, the means of production in the economy has been hampered by the delayed opening of offices, factories and schools after the Lunar New Year's holiday."

Asked about the affect on Alibaba, she voiced caution about giving estimates because it's only halfway through the March quarter. "Overall revenue will be negatively impacted," she said, adding that the hit to growth could be "significantly" negative.

Mr. Zhang said that they are seeing relatively large changes in buying patterns. While food delivery is growing, areas like clothing and electronics are running into logistical problems. He warned that the core e-commerce business suffered a negative impact in the first two weeks after the holiday. Restaurant orders and travel bookings have also taken hits, hurting its Ele.me delivery and Alitrip businesses.

Alibaba is rolling out measures to support merchants, including lowering the fees it charges and providing subsidies for delivery personnel.

Mr. Zhang said more workers are going back to work in Beijing, Guangzhou and Shenzhen. Many logistics companies are also recovering their capacity in the past 12 days.

China's economy - which had been showing signs of stabilization after a rough year buffered by the U.S. trade war - has been hammered by the virus and measures to prevent its spread.

Lowering growth forecasts

Economists have been lowering their growth forecasts for the first quarter and the full year with factories shuttered, supply chains disrupted and consumers reluctant to go outside for fear of contagion.

Bloomberg Economics's scenario analysis suggests China's first-quarter GDP growth could slow to 4.5 per cent year on year - a record low. "If that happens, a period of weaker imports will transmit the shock to trade partners," said chief economist Tom Orlik.

Already, China's most valuable corporation has struggled to sustain growth rates during an economic slowdown in its home market. While widespread home confinement is spurring demand for online services from grocery delivery to office apps to streaming entertainment, the disease is snarling nationwide transport and threatens in the long run to dent the consumer spending Alibaba depends on.

The disruption to Alibaba's business from the virus "may be worse than feared," wrote Bloomberg Intelligence analysts Vey-Sern Ling and Tiffany Tam in a report. "Alibaba's sales may contract in its core China retail marketplaces and local services business in the coming quarter even if the coronavirus outbreak subsides, as logistics and production disruptions faced by merchants could take time to resolve."

This week, the company declared a waiver of some service fees for merchants on its main direct-to-consumer Tmall platform to help those struggling with the fallout from the outbreak. That may further depress the top-line in 2020.

(Source: businesstimes.com.sg)

Tehran to host exhibition on Iran's technical, engineering capabilities

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Khatam-e-Desk al Anbiya Construction Headquarters is going to host a national exhibition to showcase the technical and engineering capabilities of Iranian entities from February 22 to 26, IRNA reported.

As reported by KAA, hundreds of capable Iranian companies are going to showcase their latest achievements and products in this five-day exhibition which is planned to be held at Tehran's Imam Khomeini Grand Prayer Campus (Mosalla).

As reported, the exhibition is going to cover various areas including oil, gas and petrochemicals, electricity, marine, road and urban development, industry and mining, information and communication technology

and consulting engineers.

According to a member of the Association of Iranian Exporters of Technical and Engineering Services, Iran has the potential and capability to export technical and engineering services worth \$25 billion every year.

According to Farzin Mahdyar, Iran is already conducting technical and engineering projects in CIS countries and Iraq, but due to some barriers mainly related to the international limitations which make issuance of guarantees impossible for the both sides, the Iranian operators of those projects will have no choice rather than leaving those countries.

Electricity sector accounts for the lion's

TEDPIX notches record high of 472,000 points



ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), posted a new record high on Sunday, as the index surpassed 472,000 points, IRNA reported.

As reported, TEDPIX ended 10,761 points higher at 472,749, as 9.572 billion securities worth 47.175 trillion rials (about \$1.123 billion) were traded at TSE on Sunday.

The first market's index rose 7,699 points and the second market's index climbed 22,433 points.

TEDPIX went up 13,185 points, or 2.96 percent, to 459,080 in the past Iranian calendar week (ended on Friday).

Some 29.020 billion securities worth 170.657 trillion rials (about \$4.063 billion) were traded through 3.147 million deals at TSE in the past week.

The first market's index climbed 8,905 points, or 2.77 percent, to 330,953, and the second market's index increased 29,854 points, or 3.26 percent, to 915,951.

As previously reported, TSE witnessed the highest ever weekly rise of its main index in the Iranian calendar week ended on January 17, which was the last week of

Iran's tenth calendar month of Dey.

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

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

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

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

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

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



share of Iran's technical and engineering exports, and also given that Iranian companies' presence in water projects of other countries (construction of dams, water and wastewater treatment plants,

and water transferring pipelines) is rising, Energy Ministry of Iran is seriously following up the objective of boosting technical and engineering services exports from electricity and water sectors.

Industry minister holds talks with ICCIMA board of directors



Industry Minister Reza Rahmani (1st L), Deputy Industry Minister Hossein Mdareh Khiabani (middle) and ICCIMA Head Gholam-Hossein Shafeie discuss expansion of cooperation between the two entities in a meeting in Tehran on Saturday.

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Reza Rahmani and his deputies met with the board of directors of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) on Saturday at the place of ICCIMA.

The meeting emphasized greater cooperation between the industry ministry and the ICCIMA in various areas like ranking of business cards and making optimum use of the opportunities presented by the government-private sector dialogue council.

The process of transferring some of the ministry's duties to the private sector, under the new law pertaining to the reduction of government tenure was also among the issues discussed at the meeting.

Speaking in the meeting, Rahmani praised the efforts of the Iranian chamber for improving the business environment in the country and its efforts to solve the problems facing the private sector.

"If we are to solve the country's economic problems, there is no other way than cooperation between the government and the private sector," he stressed.

He further underlined the importance of holding such meetings between the industry ministry and representatives of the country's private sector and noted that interaction and dialogue between all decision-making entities will lead to harmony and unity, and will help us pass through the problems created by the sanctions.

Also in the event, Deputy Industry Minister Hossein Mdareh Khiabani, praised the positive interactions between his ministry and the ICCIMA, and mentioned the launching of the country's "integrated trade system" as an effective measure taken by the two sides for facilitating the process of issuance and renewal of business cards and better enforcement of trade-related regulations.

ICCIMA Head Gholam-Hossein Shafeie for his part expressed gratitude for the close cooperation of the industry ministry with the private sector and stressed that new measures should be taken and detailed planning should be made in order to make optimal use of new capacities like the government-private sector dialogue council.

158 new vessels to be added to Iran's shipping fleet

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Some 158 new vessels are going to be added to Iran's shipping fleet, IRIB reported on Sunday, quoting the head of the Industry Ministry's Supreme Maritime Council.

"We have the construction of 158 vessels on the agenda; about 62-70 percent of which will be built inside the country," Siamak Seyed Marandi said.

According to Marandi, development of the maritime industry has been considered as one of the main priorities of the industry ministry and the necessary planning has been carried out in this regard.

Focusing on development of the production and reliance on domestic production are the two main features considered in the planning for development of the country's maritime industry, the official said.

Talking about other measures taken for the development of the country's maritime sector, he said: "With regard to



the replacement of worn-out vessels, the necessary plans have been made for benefiting from domestic capacities

since we would like to use domestic infrastructure for the replacement of such vessels."

Back in November 2019, Director of Supply and Equipment Engineering at Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) announced the organization's plans for entrusting the country's private sector with construction of 92 vessels within the next two years.

"We have plans to hold tenders for awarding the construction projects of 92 small and large-scale vessels by the end of the [Iranian calendar] year of 1399 [March 20, 2021], the contracts for building nine of which worth €112 million has already been signed," Farhad Montaser Kouhsari said.

According to the official, plans were also made for holding tenders for construction of 78 large and small coastal service ships and boats worth about €205 million, all of which will be constructed by the end of next year.

Coronavirus scare highlights euro's vulnerability to market shocks: senior manager

outbreak and political risks from Germany to Ireland. Also weighing on the common currency are still-unresolved Brexit risks and concerns that the U.S. could impose import tariffs on European cars. The euro's disappointing run this year is now bringing back a debate about its basic design flaws.

The "big picture is that the euro area remains a sclerotic structural mess," James Athey, senior investment manager at Aberdeen Standard Investments, said in emailed comments. "It consists of divergent economies with a range of idiosyncratic structural issues, who all fudged convergence criteria, and are now trapped in an ill-fitting straight jacket of a monetary union without fiscal transfers."

Becoming a reserve currency

The currency, adopted in 1999, is shared by 19 countries from the world's No. 4 economy Germany to tiny Malta. After gaining on the greenback in its first decade, the euro saw the European debt crisis hurt

its prospects of becoming a reserve currency to knock the dollar off its perch.

The slide in euro sentiment has been sharp at banks. Credit Agricole SA called the common currency's drop against the dollar the "epitome of the global divergence trade that was revived by the coronavirus outbreak" -- with the health scare deepening the "perceived growth divide" between the U.S. and the eurozone.

The bank lowered its fourth-quarter euro prediction this week to \$1.13 from \$1.16, following similar action last week at JPMorgan Chase & Co. and RBC Capital Markets. Danske Bank A/S slashed its year-end projection all the way down to \$1.08, from \$1.15. The currency traded at \$1.0861 Friday afternoon in London. The forecast cuts came after data showed Germany's economy stagnated in late 2019.

It's not just the economics

It's not just the economics. Political uncertainty has deepened in Germany,

where Angela Merkel's 15-year tenure as chancellor is due to end in a succession battle.

Ireland's general election was dominated by Sinn Fein, from the radical left. It all adds to the sense of unease, fanning doubts that euro-area governments will heed the European Central Bank's call for fiscal stimulus to take over from monetary policy to boost growth. That has stoked talk of further easing at the ECB.

And then there's Brexit, which remains as much a threat for the euro as for the pound.

While the UK has left the European Union, a failure to put a new trade deal in place by year-end would raise serious economic risks for both sides.

The global gloom has also tarnished the appeal of haven assets -- including the dollar -- and highlights a concentration of risks in the euro area. That's fueled the euro's slide and powered a rally in the Swiss franc.

(Source: finance.yahoo.com)

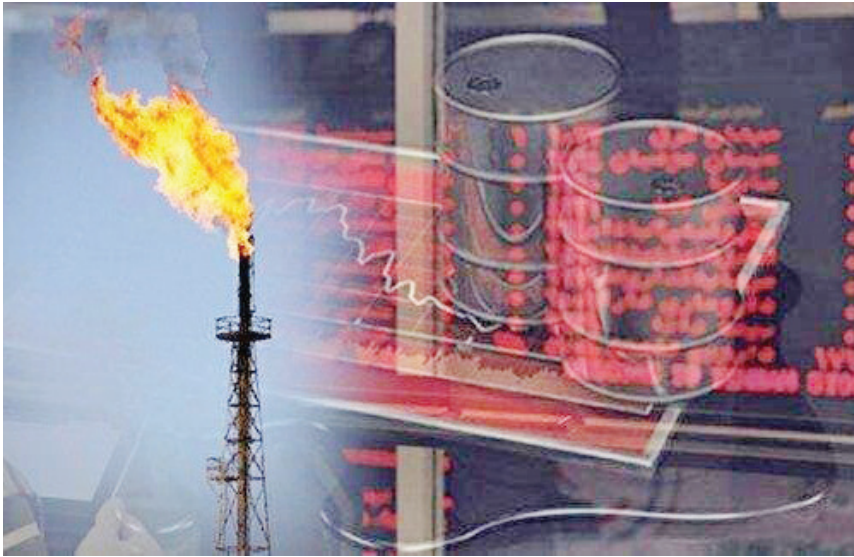
6m barrels of oil, condensate to be offered at IRENEX this week

ENERGY **TEHRAN** — National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) is going to offer a total of six million barrels of oil and gas condensate at the international ring of the country's energy exchange (IRENEX) during the current week, Mehr News Agency reported on Sunday, quoting an NIOC official.

According to Amir-Hossein Tebyanian, NIOC's representative at IRENEX, the offerings are scheduled to be made on three consecutive days, namely Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, and every day two million barrels of oil or gas condensate would be offered.

"So far, we have sold 1.1 million barrels of crude oil through IRENEX's international ring, all of which have been sold during the first half of the current [Iranian calendar] year (March 21-September 22, 2019), and so far no condensate shipments have been sold," Tebyanian said.

The offerings at IRENEX have been made based on the guidelines provided by the Oil Ministry in late November, however, the



regulations could be revised again. "We made some changes in the pricing and

supply processes back in [the Iranian calendar month of Aban (October 23-November 21,

2019)] and, we could make new adjustments if necessary," he said.

NIOC recently halted the crude oil and gas condensate offerings at IRENEX, resulting in some rumors saying that the offerings are to be stopped permanently, however, NIOC has repeatedly rejected the rumors, announcing that oil offerings will definitely continue.

Offering crude oil and gas condensate at IRENEX is to materialize the objectives of "Resistance Economy" for diversifying methods of selling these products and benefitting from the capabilities of private sector for exporting them.

National Iranian Oil Company offered light crude oil at IRENEX first on October 28, 2018, just a few days before new U.S. sanctions on Iran's petroleum sector took effect (November 4).

Offering gas condensate at IRENEX came after the successful offering of crude oil at this market. And then the turn came to heavy crude. Offering heavy crude at IRENEX came after NIOC offered light crude at this stock market in eight rounds.

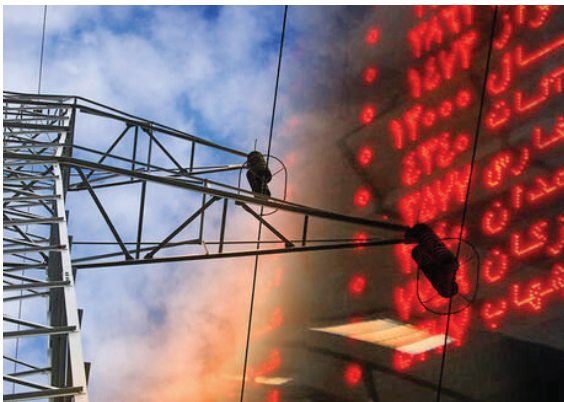
'Offering electricity at IRENEX to stabilize power prices'

ENERGY **TEHRAN** — Managing Director of Iran Energy Exchange (IRENEX) says offering electricity at the energy exchange would centralize the country's electricity trades and consequently balance the prices, IRNA reported.

According to Seyed Ali Hosseini, balancing the electricity prices at IRENEX can result in providing electricity to industrial buyers at a lower price and would optimize electricity consumption.

"When such trades are concentrated in the energy exchange and economically motivated buyers and sellers start operating in a transparent environment, we will achieve a balanced price. This may be lower for some consumers than the current price," the official told IRNA.

Hosseini further stated that currently, there is no



coherent market for trading electricity, underlining that electricity is being offered at IRENEX on a regular basis.

Offerings of electricity in the stock exchange have been following an upward trend so that in October 2019, the offering of the electricity nearly doubled and reached 500 million kilowatt hours (kWh).

The government has also been offering incentives for private power companies to encourage them to offer their generated electricity at the energy exchange.

In October 2019, Hosseini announced that utility companies that offer electricity at the energy bourse will be eligible for 10 percent tax exemption.

"This will ensure mutual benefit for both sides as power producers get a 10 percent tax break and buyers get electricity cheaper from IRENEX", Hosseini said.

This LNG exporter just got great news on the legal front

By Jason Hall

Natural gas exporter Tellurian (NASDAQ:TELL) is little more than a great business plan and a well-regarded management team. It has little by way of existing operations, and hasn't broken ground on its Driftwood LNG natural gas liquefaction and export facility, which is expected to cost as much as \$30 billion to build.

But all that is set to change this year, with the company anticipated to give the go-ahead to start construction on Driftwood later this year, as well as finalize the necessary financing to pay for it. The company also just cleared a major legal hurdle, with industry giant Cheniere Energy (NYSEMKT:LNG) dropping a lawsuit against Tellurian and co-founders Charif Souki and Martin Houston.

With the cloud of that lawsuit now lifted, Tellurian's path forward is a little more certain, and management can focus on developing and executing on its plans for Driftwood.

Cheniere and Tellurian share much in their roots, starting with a founder in Charif Souki.

Moreover, the initial seeds for what is now Tellurian's Driftwood LNG facility started as a joint venture between Cheniere and Parallax, a consultancy business owned by Martin Houston (the other co-founder of Tellurian) while Souki was still Cheniere's CEO. But before the venture could make much progress, activist investors, led by Carl Icahn, fired Souki as CEO of Cheniere in late 2015.

Soon after pushing Souki out, Cheniere ended the joint venture with Houston to develop what at the time it called Live Oak LNG. Not long after that, Houston and Souki founded Tellurian, and began plans to develop Driftwood as it is now planned, bringing dozens of former Cheniere staff members and executives along, including Tellurian CEO Meg Gentle, who was COO at Cheniere.

Not long after that, Icahn and Cheniere filed suit, saying the new company and its founders stole Driftwood, and \$47 million that Cheniere had loaned to fund the joint venture must be repaid.

On the other side, the defendants in the case claimed that Cheniere was in breach of its contract with Parallax.

■ With Chenierie dropping suit

With Chenierie dropping suit, the long-running feud between Souki and Icahn comes to, if not an end, at least a cessation of hostilities.

Driftwood LNG is going to take between \$25 billion and \$30 billion to fund, from a combination of equity investments and debt. That's a lot of money to raise, particularly on a ground-up venture, and the energy market has been unpredictable enough in recent years to give investors pause on funding big projects.

The overhang of a major lawsuit from a well-funded Cheniere, with an agitator like Icahn involved, has probably had some impact on Tellurian's ability to secure funding.

Now that overhang is gone, and Tellurian



can focus more of its resources on securing capital to move forward with construction. To be more specific, potential investors no longer have to worry that Cheniere and Icahn will be a roadblock to a profitable Driftwood LNG export facility.

Tellurian already has all the necessary government approvals and permits in place to move forward with Driftwood. It also has the bulk of the engineering work done, and the project is essentially "shovel-ready." What Tellurian doesn't have completely in place at this point, is money.

■ Efforts to secure capital

The next steps for Tellurian will be to secure the remaining funds it will need to build Driftwood, so that it can give construction partner Bechtel the go-ahead to start construction. Removing the shadow cast by the Cheniere lawsuit certainly won't hurt its efforts to secure capital.

But I don't think that has substantially lowered Tellurian's risk profile as an investment. The company is still little more than a great business plan with an excellent management team in place to execute it, and that management team is tasked with going from a standstill to completing and operating a \$30 billion LNG export terminal in about three years.

Having management that's done it before -- its core management were deeply involved at Cheniere during this exact same stage -- is a big advantage, but there's a lot that could go wrong between now and putting LNG into the first tanker ship, including unforeseen and unexpected changes in the energy sector that weaken investors' appetite for mega-LNG projects.

But for investors going into with both eyes open, there's a substantial opportunity for profits if things go even remotely close to plan. And that should be at least a little easier with the specter of Cheniere and Icahn removed.

When investing geniuses David and Tom Gardner have a stock tip, it can pay to listen. After all, the newsletter they have run for over a decade, Motley Fool Stock Advisor, has tripled the market. *

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

(Source: fool.com)

Tanker market on rollercoaster mode, OPEC says

According to the latest monthly report from OPEC, issued this week, dirty tanker spot freight rates in January continued the roller coast movement seen since September, this time giving back almost half the gains made in the previous month.

However, rates remained some 50% higher than the same month last year, as the market remained optimistic about an improvement in rates in 2020.

Seasonal factors were a key contributor to the decline.

The outbreak and rapid spread of the Coronavirus temporarily upended the tanker market starting at the end of January, disrupting trade with China, the world's largest crude importer, and is certain to weigh on rates in February.

After rising steadily since September 2019, clean tanker rates fell back in January, but remained slightly higher than the same month last year.

Rates benefited from a strong start to the year, but have fallen in recent weeks, driven by seasonal factors.

Global spot fixtures edged down slightly in January, declining around 0.10 mb/d or 0.5% m-o-m, but down 1.6 mb/d, or 8%, compared to the previous year's levels.

OPEC spot fixtures averaged 12.58 mb/d in January, up 1.4% or 180 tb/d higher than the previous month, but still almost 9% or 1.2 mb/d lower y-o-y.

Fixtures from the Middle East-to-East jumped by almost 15%, or 1 mb/d, to average 7.71 mb/d in January, but fell 3% below last year's level.

Middle East-to-West fixtures were sharply lower, down nearly 30% to 1.1 mb/d.

Compared to the same month last year, rates on the route fell by over 18% or 260 tb/d.

Outside of the Middle East fixtures averaged 3.75 mb/d in January, a decline of 0.5 mb/d, or over 11%, from the previous month, and were down 16%, or 0.7 mb/d, compared to the same month last year.

■ OPEC sailings declined

OPEC sailings declined by less than 1% m-o-m in January to average 24.93 mb/d. Sailings from the Middle East were 2%, or 120 tb/d, higher to average 18.36 mb/d in January. Crude arrivals were largely positive in January.

Arrivals in the Far East increased 3% m-o-m and remained broadly in line with levels seen the same month last year. Arrivals in Europe were up 1% or 140 tb/d higher m-o-m but showed a stronger 9% or 1 mb/d increase y-o-y. Arrivals in North America were broadly unchanged from the previous month but were 12% or 1.3 mb/d lower y-o-y.

West Asia was the only route showing a decline, down 200 tb/d or almost 5% m-o-m, but 130 mb/d or 3% higher y-o-y.

VLCC spot freight rates declined 17% in January, erasing the gains seen in the previous month to stand at WS79 points. The Middle East-to-East route has been up-and-down



over the past four months, averaging WS93 points in January.

Freight rates registered for tankers operating on the Middle East-to-West routes in January were down 16% m-o-m. At WS53 points, rates on the route were more than twice as high as the same month last year.

West Africa-to-East routes in January also showed a similar pattern, down 17% m-o-m to stand at WS90 points, representing a gain of almost 60% compared to January 2019.

Suezmax average spot freight rates edged lower in January, declining 7% following a gain of 36% the month before. Y-o-y, Suezmax rates were 67% higher in January.

Rates for tankers operating on the West Africa-to-U.S. Gulf Coast (USGC) route averaged WS130 points, representing a m-o-m decline of 8% in January.

Y-o-y, however, rates were 68% higher in January compared to the same month last year. The Northwest Europe-to-USGC route edged down 3% m-o-m to average WS108 points, which was some 66% higher than the same month last year.

■ Aframax rates fell back

After a strong finish to the year, Aframax rates fell back some 7% to average WS119 points, but remained 42% higher than the same month last year. The Indonesia-to-East route was 18% lower to average WS151 points, but still represented a gain of 35% y-o-y. Both the intra-Med and the Med-to-Northwest Europe routes fell 24% to average WS151 points. Both routes, however, saw y-o-y gains of 15% and 9%, respectively.

Only the Caribbean-to-U.S. East Coast route enjoyed a m-o-m increase, up 29% to average WS320 points, which was 90% higher y-o-y.

The clean spot tanker market declined for the first time since August, down 19% but still 7% higher than the same month last year. Clean tanker spot freight rates West of Suez averaged WS251 points, representing a decline of 20% since the previous month.

The Mediterranean-to-Mediterranean and Mediterranean-to-Northwest Europe routes saw declines of around 24% to average WS214 points and WS224 points, respectively.

Meanwhile, rates on the Northwest Europe-to-USEC route fell 8% to WS165 points. However, rates on West of Suez routes all showed improvements of up to 25% compared to the same month last year.

(Source: hellenicshippingnews.com)

Libya faces financial crisis due to oil blockade

Libya will face a financial crisis and a budget deficit in 2020 because of a blockade of oil terminals and oil fields by groups loyal to eastern-based commander Khalifa Haftar, the head of Libya's internationally recognized government said on Saturday.

The North African country's oil output has fallen sharply since Jan. 18 when the blockade started. State-run National Oil Corporation (NOC) said on Thursday crude output had dropped to 163,684 barrels per day.

"Certainly, in light of the continued closure of oil facilities, the 2020 budget will face a deficit and (it) will drop to its lowest levels," Tripoli-based Libyan Prime Minister Fayez al-Serraj told reporters.



Serraj echoed the NOC figures, saying that the country had lost more than \$1.4 billion since the start of the blockade.

The Libyan National Army led by Haftar and forces aligned with the internationally recognised Government of National Accord (GNA) in Tripoli have been fighting since April last year for control of the capital.

Fighting has continued despite a call for a truce by Russia and Turkey starting on Jan. 12 and an international summit on Libya in Berlin on Jan. 19 aimed at reducing international interference. (Source: Reuters)

Message to LNG producers: shut in or find new markets

LNG producers has been encouraged to shut in some supply amid the global glut that is helping drive down prices in Asia, or push more volumes to markets beyond Europe, perhaps Latin America.

The takeaway from the final day of the 19th annual S&P Global Platts LNG Conference in Houston was that something has to give, and soon, to allow for more liquefaction projects to be built in time to fill a projected supply shortage around the middle of the decade.

Qatari expansions and additional units coming online in the U.S. that were sanctioned years ago, in addition to supplies coming from Australia and other exporting countries, are pumping more LNG into traditional end-use markets than those markets can handle. Prices have cratered in recent months. Weaker-than-expected demand, relatively mild winter weather, the coronavirus outbreak and Chinese tariffs have made the situation worse.

"The global market needs to balance [things out] by turning off supply. It's got to get somebody to do that. It has not done that in a significant size," Andrew Helm, a senior LNG trader at British utility Centrica, told the conference. "The Asian Basin is essentially telling the Atlantic Basin, 'Whatever you do, please don't send us any cargoes for the winter.'"

In the U.S., currently the world's biggest growth market for liquefaction capacity, utilization at the six major export terminals has remained robust despite the challenging market environment, although feedgas deliveries have dropped more than 1.5 Bcf/d from recent record levels, driven in part by maintenance that Cheniere Energy and Semptra Energy were conducting at their Louisiana facilities.

■ Second wave

The challenges have been more significant for the next wave of U.S. suppliers. Most of the dozen or so developers of new terminals targeted to start up around the mid-2020s have struggled to secure sufficient long-term contracts with off-takers to finance construction. Some have delayed final investment decisions.

One of those developers that has yet to take FID, NextDecade, said late Thursday it had agreed to let Canada's Enbridge take over construction, ownership and operation of its proposed up to 4.5 Bcf/d Rio Bravo Pipeline, which would supply feedgas to its proposed Rio Grande LNG export terminal in Brownsville, Texas. In a statement, CEO Matt Schatzman said the sale of the project, for \$25 million, furthers the developer's efforts to deliver the LNG terminal on time and on budget.

If the pipeline and LNG terminal are ultimately built, NextDecade will retain the firm transportation capacity on the pipeline for at least 20 years, according to the terms of the agreement it negotiated with Enbridge.

While Enbridge has helped balance the market by taking increased volumes of LNG, and it has the regasification capacity to handle even more supplies, there are constraints on sendout from those facilities.

"Effectively, there are just more cargoes looking for homes than there are slots at times," Helm said.

■ Mexico to Brazil

Latin America, with its close proximity to U.S. Gulf Coast liquefaction terminals, could be an option for more cargoes, although there are limitations there too.

Brazil, Colombia and Mexico provide some opportunities for LNG suppliers, while Argentinian import demand is expected to slide, said Majed Limam, manager, LNG Americas, at Poten & Partners.

"So, if you're a supplier looking to Argentina, that's not going to be a growth driver," Limam said. "Brazil is a different story here."

With domestic production on the decline in Brazil, pipeline bottlenecks and the country moving away from being a pure seasonal play, more LNG cargoes could find a home there, he said.

"Brazil we think has potential to sustain its requirements and perhaps increase a bit further," Limam said.

In Mexico, which is heavily dependent on U.S. gas, there are opportunities to import more LNG on the west coast of the country, he said. Increasing flows of U.S. pipeline gas to Mexico, however, could limit the upside for LNG exporters, Limam said.

Added Helm: "If all else is equal, you have to go and shut off somebody."

(Source: Platts)

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From the share of the Free Economic Zones in non-oil exports to employment growth

In the current situation and the exacerbation of US-imposed sanctions against Iran, the major share of Free Industrial and Economic Zones of the non-oil exports of the country cannot be ignored. It should be noted that the Free Zones have played a leading role in generation of employment opportunities in the country especially in the recent two years in such a way that employment generated in the Free Zones registered an eight percent growth as compared to the same period of last year.

Today, countries are forced to plan to attract domestic and foreign capital to finance and build the essential infrastructure for economic growth and development, the acquisition of new technologies, employment creation, and the like; and to this end, the creation of Free and Special Economic Zones has been one of the most important strategies of many countries around the world in recent decades.

Free-Trade zones are an incentive to export, and in the years since 1960, many developing countries have resorted to it as an instrument and they have strived to free themselves from 'underdevelopment'.

Free and Special Economic Zones, in our country, have been established since the beginning of the 90s with similar expectations of creating Free and Special Zones in other countries. The geographical location of those Zones is such that each one is able, in one way or another, cover the economic relationship with the neighboring countries.

In defining those Zones and how they function, one should say that Free-trade zone is a specific territory that is often located in or adjacent to a port where free trade is carried out with the rest of the world.

According to experts, the global economic developments and the experience of today's developed countries has been indicative of the fact that foreign trade can be a driving force for development, especially in today's world where development could not be realized without collaboration, cooperation and trade with others.

Undoubtedly, with economic sanctions against the country intensifying, attention to Free-Trade and Economic Zones can be a useful and practical tool to prevent infliction of a blow against economy of the country.

According to economic activists, the Zones can contribute to the development of the national economy in a variety of ways, includ-



ing unemployment reduction in the national economy as well as conducting activities and services in a Free zone.

In the course of the last two decades, in our country, development of the scope of activities of the Free and Special Economic Zones of the country has been emphasized as one of its economic policies.

As for the importance of using the Free Zones during the sanction period, one should say that the Free Zones contribute to the rescue and dynamics of the economy, play roles such as non-oil export development and tourism development; and under the imposed sanctions, and in comparison with the main land, it is easier to conduct economic transactions in the Free Zones, with a lower risk.

Employment, foreign exchange earnings through value added goods and services, upgrading and expanding export-oriented productive activities by foreign investments and undirected domestic capitals, acquiring technical knowhow and technology, enhancing labour skills as well as trade and labour management, regional development and alleviation of privation, creating of small and appropriate models considering the workforce and the domestic economy and using the created sideline jobs, are amongst the blessings and the salient advantages of utilizing the available capacities and potentials in the Zones.

It should be noted that attracting foreign investment, facilitating trade and promoting exports and facilitating business environment for economic activists are among the most important objectives planned for those Zones.

Now, we continue with the performance of the zones in the past two years.

During the period of March 2018-March 2019, a total of about 102 thousand trillion Rials and \$2,978 million of domestic was made in the Free Trade-Industrial and Special Economic Zones by the private sector, and, also, during the next eight following months, after the period, around 84,000 billion Rials and \$1,300 million domestic investment has been realized. Domestic investment permits have also been significantly issued during the period.

A glance at the overall performance of the Zones reveals that the trend of domestic investment, particularly in the Riyal sector, has grown relatively, in comparison with the same period last year.

Also, during the period of March 2018-March 2019, a total of \$5 million of direct and participatory foreign direct investment has been made in the Free and Special Zones, and \$2 million of foreign direct investment has been realized during the following eight months, after the mentioned period.

A comparison of performance in this sector indicates a significant decrease in foreign investment over the past years, as the sanctions situation, has left serious impacts on implementation of planned projects, particularly on financial and banking sectors.

Exports section also experienced changes; in such a way that the total value of export of goods and services from the Free and Special Economic Zones reached more than \$5 billion during the period of March 2018-March 2019; and during the following eight months, after the mentioned period, it was around \$10

billion in the Zones, of which a major part was made in the Special Economic Zones.

It is noteworthy that the Zones have had the major share of the country's non-oil exports in recent years.

The commodity import sector has also undergone changes and development over the past two years, in such a way that the total value of commodity imports, aimed for production, consumption and supply in the Free Trade-Industrial and Special Economic Zones exceeded \$5 billion over the period of March 2018-March 2019, and imports into the Zones, during the following eight months, after the mentioned period, reached \$2.8 billion, including raw materials, equipment and machinery for industrial plants operating in Free and Special Zones, as well as imports of passenger goods from the Free Zones.

In the last few years, with the escalation of the employment problem, we witnessed a decline in employment, in various sectors of the economy, but, as previously stated, since the Free Trade and economic Zones have been playing a significant role in the growth of employment, the number of non-governmental sector employees working in the Free Trade and Economic Zones, by the end of the period of March 2018-March 2019, reached 478 thousand, and at the end of the following eight months, to 510 thousand people; which indicates an increase of 7 percent.

In the past, however, non-governmental sector has created new jobs in the Free and Special Zones of the country by establishing industries and attracting new investors.

The good news is that the number of active industrial units in the Free and Special Zones of the country has grown by 8%, in such a way that last year the number of active industrial units in the Free and Special Zones increased to 1,696 units; and to 8,840 units in the first six months of the year.

In addition to those industrial units, there are also other active units such as in mining, agriculture, fisheries and livestock, commerce and trade, tourism and travel services.

The total export of goods and services produced in the Free and Special Economic Zones in the period of March 2018-March 2019 was over \$17 billion; and \$10 billion in the following eight months

● **Role of Free and Special Zones in export and transit to Eurasia**

Free and special zones, as pioneers in the

economic development of the country, and in pursuit of the objectives of this agreement, and relying on their legal advantages, have put the policy of the possibility of penetration into Eurasian markets at the headline of their operational plans and programs.

Presently, there are eight active Free Trade-Industrial Zones in border lines of the country and also 32 Special Economic Zones across the mainland, hosting more than 1,850 active production units and about 1,280 active service units. The total of the zones have generated employment opportunities for 510,000 job-seeking applicants.

Since 2013 to date, more than 81,000 billion Tomans and \$22 billion worth of domestic capital as well as \$5.4 billion worth of foreign capital have been absorbed to the Zones. Over the years, more than \$32 billion of non-oil goods have been shipped to the mainland. Also, \$130 billion worth of exports versus \$45 billion in imports indicates a completely positive overall trade balance of these Zones at \$85 billion.

The Octamorous Free Zones of the country are considered as corridors of free trade with the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU); and given the existing legal advantages and the appropriate chain of supply created between economic activists of the Free Trade-Industrial and the Special economic Zones, they play an outstanding role in promoting export and target-oriented management of imports.

The Free Trade and Special Zones of the country will act in four fields for realization of the Eurasian Agreement as follows:

Various advantages for manufacturing processes, especially export-oriented businesses in Free and Special Zones, have been defined so that, given the reduced final costs, the products of the Zones have a competitive advantage over similar goods destined from other countries, in Eurasian markets.

Successful consortiums of manufacturers in specialized fields, in the Zones, along with specialized export management companies, will enjoy a variety of opportunities such as permanent export products exhibitions and business events which, considering the advantages and incentives of the Free Zones for travel of foreign citizens, shall provide a valuable opportunity for introduction of products to tradesmen of target countries.

Various logistics infrastructures created in the Free and Special zones are the optimal

routes for economic activists of the country in order to transit goods between Iran and EAEU members States. Specifically, the Anzali Free Zone, considering the Caspian Port and its existing logistics infrastructure as a maritime hub, the Aras Free Zone relying on the Norduz border as the Iran-Armenia connection hub, the Imam Khomeini (PBUH) Airport Free Zone and its infrastructure for transport of cargoes as an air logistics hubs, and Chabahar Free Zone as the sole oceanic port of the country, have been considered as the backups of this agreement.

Legal advantages of the Free Zones in setting up branch offices of foreign banks and offshore, as well as foreign insurance companies, considering the relevant laws and privileges, have introduced Kish and Anzali Free Zones as financial hubs of the agreement.

Given the high capability of the private sector and in order to boost synergy among economic pillars of the country, the Free and special Zones have created suitable condition and atmosphere for setting up of various export-oriented units. Road, rail, sea, and air freight fleets are well prepared to meet the needs of businesspeople, and with the investment made, we will soon witness development of logistics capacities. The flexibility of customs processes and the setting up of intelligent logistics processes in the Zones to improve the supervision and expedite the movement of commercial goods, in addition to the establishment of Eurasian Banks' branches and the mutually agreed insurance companies in the Zones, will pave the way for resolution of the challenges of international trade exchanges. In the meantime, it is the responsibility of the country's producers and traders to act as the principal operating and licensing arm of this agreement, while properly familiarizing themselves with the potentials of the agreement, to take the appropriate measures to identify market needs, as well as marketing in target countries in the form of robust consortiums. Quality, commitment, and credibility are among the most important factors in maintaining conquered markets which needs to be put on the agenda of the country's private sector.

We hope that despite the cruel US sanctions and the cowardly actions of hegemonic countries, this agreement will be a path for further productivity and blooming of the country's economy.

“Deal of the Century” and Sudan-Israel normalization

Objective: Formation of anti-Iran Arab coalition

➔ Reasons behind normalization:
Two main reasons for such a move are obvious:
1) The initiative will boost Netanyahu's re-election bid, allowing him to tout a diplomatic victory ahead of the March 2 vote. Netanyahu is facing corruption charges and consecutive failures to form a government after back-to-back elections last year; and
2) The move is undoubtedly initiated by Washington, with an incentive for Sudan to be removed from its list of state sponsors of terrorism, thereby removing the U.S. sanctions.
Meanwhile, Sudan's interim government said on Thursday (Feb. 13) that it has reached a financial settlement with families of the victims of the attack on the U.S.S. Col in Yemen in 2000. The terrorist group Al Qaeda had claimed responsibility. Of course, this move from Burhan is another effort to persuade the U.S. to remove Sudan from its list of state sponsors of terrorism and end the sanctions regime.
Seventeen sailors died and another 39 were wounded in the attack. Relatives of victims and surviving sailors accused Sudan of having supported Al Qaeda, and sought to hold the country liable through American courts.
Sudanese officials said a settlement had been reached with the families on Feb. 7, but did not specify how much compensation would be given.
But Sudan has been implicated on other terrorist charges in the past and it is ethically questionable to hold the innocent Sudanese responsible for a dictatorship they did not elect.
According to a report from Al Jazeera, the U.S. maintains that Sudan was complicit in the 1998 terrorist attacks on its embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam which killed 224 people. At that time al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden, who allegedly ordered the attacks, was known to reside on Sudanese territory.
The U.S. insists Sudan must pay approximately \$10bn in damages, \$5.9bn of which to the families of the American victims before the sanctions are lifted. In justifying its position, Washington hides behind the independence of the judiciary and claims that it is a purely legal process that has nothing to do with politics.
West cheers
U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo thanked Burhan by phone "for his leadership in normalizing ties with Israel." Pompeo invited Burhan for a visit to Washington and announced that by December the two countries planned to begin exchanging ambassadors after a 23-year hiatus.
Germany also threw support behind Sudan when Prime



Sudanese General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, the head of the country's Sovereign Council, reportedly met Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Uganda on 3 February 2020. (Photo: AFP)

Minister Hamdok and Chancellor Angela Merkel held a joint press conference in Berlin on 14 February.
Before Hamdok's arrival in Berlin, the German parliament decided to lift sanctions on Sudan since 1989 and to resume development, technical, political and financial cooperation between the two countries.
Conclusion
Ouster of al-Bashir was not a revolution, it was a coup. There is just one difference between the 2013 coup in Egypt and the one in Sudan. Egypt's coup ousted its first democratically elected president while in Sudan, a dictator was replaced by a military council. Both cases have one thing in common: they were preplanned and came with a scheme.
In 2015, Sudan dramatically reduced ties with the Islamic Republic to support the war on Yemen, supplying thousands of troops to the Saudi-led coalition.
According to Al Jazeera, Burhan's deputy in TMC, General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, met with Saudi crown prince MBS last May, promising to support Saudi Arabia against "all threats and attacks from Iran and Houthi militias" and continue sending Sudanese troops to help the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen.
The U.S. is looking to Sudan and Morocco as part of a

larger American and Middle East alliance, led by Saudi Arabia and UAE, as key partners to counter Tehran.
U.S. President Donald Trump's administration is reportedly considering recognizing Morocco's claim to disputed territory in Western Sahara in exchange for the country reopening relations with Israel.
Israel is reported to have lobbied the United States to recognize Moroccan sovereignty over the disputed Western Sahara region in exchange for Rabat taking steps to normalize ties with Israel after suspending them in 2000.
It is through Israel that Sudan and Morocco are seeking favors from Washington, the former for sanctions relief the latter for trying to get U.S. to adopt its position on the Western Sahara.
When the U.S. moved its embassy to Jerusalem, it withdrew support for a two-state solution. When Trump announced the "Deal of Century" it withdrew support for a Palestinian state altogether.
The real aim of the "Deal of the Century" is not for negotiations between Israel and Palestinians, but eventually to normalize ties between Israel and Sunni-Arab states, including Saudi Arabia, which will enable the creation of a regional military alliance against Tehran with the hope of putting the final nails in the coffin of the Palestinian cause.

Chronology of Sudan coup

INTERNATIONAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Here is the time line and some key events that led to the fall of al-Bashir.
Anti-government demonstrations erupt across Sudan in Dec. 2018, initially over steep price rises and shortages, but soon shift to calls for al-Bashir to step down. Security forces respond with fierce crackdown that kills dozens.
By February, 2019, al-Bashir declares a state of emergency.
On April 6 a large sit-in protest begins outside the military's headquarters in Khartoum. Over the next five days, security forces kill 22 people in attempts to clear a sit-in. The protests gain momentum after the resignation of Algeria's President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, in power for 20 years, in response to demonstrations.
On April 11, Sudanese army arrests al-Bashir. He was later convicted of corruption and in December 2019 was sentenced to two years in prison for the elderly.
The military took over control of Sudan and the Transitional Military Council (TMC) was formed, headed by Lt. Gen. Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and his deputy General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo.
Dagalo is also the leader of Rapid Support Forces (RSF), a paramilitary group formerly known as the Janjaweed when it committed atrocities and massacres against rebels in the Darfur region. He was a close political ally of Omar al-Bashir, but as the protests against the former leader escalated in December, his loyalty soon wavered.
Soon after the April coup a Montreal-based Canadian firm Dickens & Madson Inc. signed a \$6-million contract with Dagalo to polish the image of TMC.
Dickens & Madson Inc. is headed by Ari Ben-Menashe, an Iranian born former Israeli intelligence officer whose firm has previously served as a paid lobbyist for ousted Zimbabwean dictator Robert Mugabe and powerful Libyan warlord Khalifa Haftar, head of Libyan National Army.
The Canadian newspaper the Globe and Mail reports that according to a contract filed with the U.S. government, the firm has been lobbying for executive and legislative branches of governments of U.S., Russia and Saudi Arabia.



Omar al-Bashir in a courtroom in Khartoum, Sudan. (Photo: Mohamed Nureldin Abdallah/Reuters)

Ben-Menashe was under investigation by Canadian RCMP after Amnesty International warned Canadian government that Ben-Menashe's attempt to build a partnership between Sudan military and the Libyan militia could be a violation of Canadian sanctions and would deepen human-rights crisis in both countries.
In its letter to the federal cabinet ministers, Amnesty noted that Sudan's military regime is accused of storming a hospital in Khartoum, firing live ammunition at patients and medical staff, dumping the dead bodies of protesters into the Nile River, committing war crimes in Darfur and shutting down the Internet to prevent the protesters from communicating.
"A sense of fear and terror prevails in the country," the letter said.
In early June 2019, following Burhan's and Dagalo's visits

to the Egyptian, UAE and Saudi leaders, the Sudanese Security Forces and RSF, including Janjaweed militias, cracked down on peaceful protests in Sudan, which became known as the 3 June Khartoum massacre. Dozens of peaceful protesters were killed and about forty of the bodies were thrown in the river Nile, hundreds were tortured, violated and raped in the streets of Khartoum.
After the massacre was criticized by international media TMC demanded refund from the \$6m contract from Ben-Manashe for the media outrage.
When the Canadian Globe and Mail newspaper asked for comment on the massacre, Ben-Manashe said Gen. Dagalo is "surrounded by some very hot heads. I had to give him the benefit of doubt too because he is a cool guy. He is not a bad guy ... He sort of got off the rails for a while."
Ben-Menashe's investigation by the Canadian RCMP did not go anywhere and undoubtedly he is the catalyst for Netanyahu's meeting with Burhan.
Amid protests and demands for the military to hand over the power to a civilian rule, a power sharing arrangement between the military and civilian parties was made on August 21, forming 11-member Sovereign Council. The council includes six civilians and five soldiers. Dagalo was appointed to the council.
Abdalla Hamdok was declared the prime minister and he formed a cabinet.
Burhan is the most senior figure in the first phase of power-sharing arrangement in which civilian authorities are due to take the lead for the final 18 months of the 39-month transition. Elections are slated for 2022.
On February 11th the new Sudanese government agreed that Omar al-Bashir would appear before the International Criminal Court (ICC) after being indicted for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide for more than a decade. Bashir, who seized power in 1989, now languishes in a Sudanese prison after being swept from the office last April after losing support from military amid a popular uprising.

Burhan-Netanyahu meeting stokes tensions in fragile Sudan coalition government

INTERNATIONAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — The news of the February 3 meeting between Lt. Gen. Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Entebbe, Uganda caused a stir, especially since it took place just a few days after U.S. President Donald Trump presented the pro-Israel 'Deal of the Century'.
No government of Muslim-majority Sudan have recognized Israel since independence in 1956. Sudanese soldiers have fought in Arab wars against Israel, while the capital, Khartoum, was the scene of a 1967 Arab League summit that called for "Three No's": no peace, no recognition and no negotiations.
Immediately after the Burhan-Netanyahu meeting came to light, Sudanese officials distanced themselves from the summit, indicating it was a unilateral decision by Burhan.

According to the London-based Middle East Eye, Sudanese Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok's office denied receiving information about the meeting in Entebbe.
In another sign of protest the Director of the Foreign Policy Department of the Sovereign Council, Ambassador Rashad Faraj Al-Tayyib presented his resignation. "I resigned today because I can't see the Israeli flag appear in Sudanese territory officially, and I can't accept this clear violation to the Sudanese's constant values of solidarity with the Palestinian people and rejection of the injustice of the Jewish state," he said in statement.
Palestinians living in Sudan have also reacted with shock.
Abu Eyad, a 50-year-old Palestinian restaurant owner in Khartoum, told MEE that Sudanese recognition of Israel would negatively affect

the relationship between Palestine and Sudan.
"We enjoy very good ties with the Sudanese people and we still do believe that the majority of the Sudanese don't support this step," he told.
Sudan's transitional government spokesman and minister of information, Faisal Mohamed Saleh, said that Hamdok was not aware and the meeting had been "a personal initiative". Saleh added that foreign policy decisions, such as normalizing ties with Israel, are not part of the transitional government's mandate.
The Sudanese Professionals' Association (SPA), a powerful body that led the revolution described Burhan's move as unconstitutional and a coup attempt against the civilian component of the government.
Meanwhile, a group of lawyers has filed a lawsuit against Burhan, citing a Sudanese law dating back to 1958 that bans relations with



Israel. The law bans any political, military, trade ties with Israel.
The move for normalization of ties with Israel has also been condemned by the Sudan Communist Party.

What's driving countries from Turkey to India to buy Russia's S-400?

By Shishir Upadhyaya

The S-400 'Triumf' air defense system is taking the globe by storm. After NATO member Turkey, India is next in line and even Iraq is reportedly interested, despite U.S. threats of sanctioning anyone who buys weapons from Moscow.
At the Lucknow DefExpo 2020 last week, Russian officials confirmed that India will receive its first shipment of S-400s by September 2021. The \$5 billion deal signed in 2018 will be moving ahead despite U.S. warnings that such a purchase could trigger sanctions under the CAATSA (Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act), which President Donald Trump signed in August 2017 as part of a wider program aimed against Russia.
Race for the 'Triumf'
The versatile missile system has been around since 2007, but in recent years emerged as a must-have for any nation with serious military aspirations – and not just traditional buyers of Russian arms. The S-400 is winning out over several other options, including the U.S. Patriot and THAAD systems, which has not made Washington happy.
Saudi Arabia and Iraq are the latest countries which have taken keen interest in the 'Triumf'. Riyadh was offered the S-400 following the September 2019 drone attack on the kingdom's oil fields – apparently carried out by the Houthis from Yemen, although the Saudis have blamed Iran. The strikes revealed the limits of Saudi Arabia's seemingly sophisticated air-defense systems, based around the U.S.-made Patriot surface-to-air missiles and associated radars.
Clearly, the Patriots didn't stop the drone attack. Nor was that the first time that Saudi Patriots failed. In March 2018, at least five Patriots apparently missed, misfired or were not operated correctly, when Saudi forces tried to intercept a barrage of rockets targeting Riyadh. However, in deference to US interests, Saudi Arabia is yet to sign a contract with Russia. Instead, Washington has deployed troops and additional air defense systems in the region.
Iraq is reportedly also considering the purchase of S-400s, but is yet to formally begin consultations with Russia.
"There have been no appeals from the Iraqi side about the purchase of Russian S-400 air defense systems, but there is interest in them," said Russian ambassador to Iraq, Maxim Maximov. "We always say that we are ready to continue to assist the Iraqi government in strengthening the country's defense capabilities."
Turkey, though a NATO ally, received its first S-400s last summer, and is expected to have the systems online sometime this year. Washington reacted strongly, blocking Ankara from purchasing US F-35 fighter jets for which it has contracted.
China is in the middle of receiving its final shipment of the S-400s. Evidently, the increasing U.S. activity in the South China Sea – involving advanced aircraft such as the F-35 and F-22 – may have compelled Beijing to buy the S-400, tacitly acknowledging that its own home-grown air defense system was inadequate to counter the modern U.S. air power.
The S-400 advantage
The S-400 has a good pedigree, coming from the family of S-200 and S-300 air defense missile systems. It made its debut on the world stage in 2007, when it was first put into service of the Russian armed forces.
However, it has yet to be tested in battle, unlike the U.S. Patriot Pac-2, manufactured by Raytheon, and Lockheed Martin's THAAD. So what is making countries across the globe opt for the Russian system instead? Apparently, a combination of costs, political baggage, and versatility.
The 'Triumf' is much cheaper than American offerings, coming in at about \$500 million compared to the \$1 billion for the Patriot Pac-2 or the \$3 billion for a THAAD battery. Russian weapons systems are generally less expensive than most Western counterparts, in part because U.S. contracts all come with extensive – and expensive – maintenance deals tacked on.
Another reason why many nations prefer the S-400 is that buying weapons from the US government involves cumbersome processes and time-consuming regulatory hurdles.
Shishir Upadhyaya is a former Indian naval intelligence officer. He is a contributor to Jane's Defence Weekly and Jane's Navy International, and author of 'India's maritime strategy: balancing regional ambitions and China.'
(Source: RT)

“Westlessness” so short, so simple
➔ Merkel and Pence's concurrent statements gave the impression that the small but crowded room where the news conference was held belonged to two completely different worlds. In other words, the audience left the room knowing that from now on, there would be no common understanding of what the West offers.
Far-reaching power shifts in the world and rapid technological change contribute to a sense of anxiety and restlessness. The world is becoming less Western. But more importantly, the West itself may become less Western, too. This is what we call "Westlessness".
For example, in the wake of Western disunity, the first joint Iranian, Russian and Chinese naval drill in the Indian Ocean and Oman Sea was carried out, which itself indicates the possibility of emerging coalitions.
While Western coalitions are no longer interested in directly engaging in many global developments, Russia has increased its role in Syria, Libya and Africa. At the same time, Turkey has pursued a major strategy and is trying to turn into a global actor from a regional one. Activities in the Mediterranean region, Africa, Syria and Iraq, collaborating with NATO, Russia and Iran, trying to expand relations with Pakistan and Malaysia, as well as establishing ties with Qatar, communicating with Hamas, and finally increasing media and the Red Crescent activities all together reveal Turkey's ambitions in the international arena.
The U.S., while affirming this disunity, looks at it from its own point of view that will certainly meet the national interests stated by Trump. The U.S. president had already claimed earlier in July 6, 2017, "We can have the largest economies and the most lethal weapons anywhere on Earth, but if we do not have strong families and strong values, then we will be weak and we will not survive".
But a newer version of Trump's thoughts can be seen in the remarks by Pence at the 2019 Munich Security Conference, saying, "We cannot ensure the defense of the West if our allies grow dependent on the East".
Does Pence's remarks suggest that some Western allies of the U.S. behave like Eastern adversaries and can no longer be regarded as friends?
Therefore, the dangerous development of NATO, the executive arm of the West, must be considered not only as a reaction to emerging powers but as a response to the instability of the West's collective identity.

WWI-era helmets as good for shock wave protection as modern versions

A French army helmet used in World War I was as valuable in protecting from shock waves as modern counterparts, a Duke University study revealed on Friday.

The Adrian helmet, designed to deflect shrapnel and used by French military forces in a war which ended in 1918, actually performed better than modern helmet designs in protection from the shock from overhead blasts.



A World War I-era helmet used by French soldiers underwent shock wave tests and was proven to be superior to modern combat helmets, a study released on Friday concluded. Photo courtesy of PLOS ONE

The study, published Friday in PLOS ONE, was part of research into blast waves and the value of helmets designed to protect from bullets and other penetrating objects.

Blast waves, or shock waves, can cause pulmonary trauma, known as chest trauma, an issue corrected with improved body armor and the reason behind a decline in pulmonary trauma incidents in combat. The waves can also cause brain damage, and no current research suggests that modern helmets are designed to specifically offer blast protection.

The vintage helmets were compared to modern combat helmets in tests involving helmet-wearing dummies and exploding overhead tubes pressurized with helium to simulate shock waves.

When the results were compared with the use of brain-injury charts, all tested helmets were found to offer a reduction in moderate brain bleeding. The French Adrian helmet tested, manufactured in 1915, offered the least risk for brain bleeding of all helmets tested.

(Source: UPI)

Fraport to speed passengers through two Brazilian airports

Fraport Brasil has installed SITA's passenger processing technology at the two airports it manages in Brazil, Fortaleza Airport (FOR) and Porto Alegre Airport (POA). New self-service gates provide passengers with automated entry to the security checking area with a simple scan of their boarding pass. This will reduce queues and make the process four times as efficient.

Andrea Pal, CEO of Fraport Brasil, said: "A significant part of our remit is to invest in infrastructure to transform the passenger experience and make operations highly efficient at these two airports. To do that, we need to provide automation at as many touchpoints as possible, which is why we have installed these gates that read bar-coded boarding passes."

Fraport Brasil has implemented a total of 26 SITA self-service gates: 14 at Fortaleza Airport (FOR) and 12 at Porto Alegre Airport (POA).

Andrea continued: "We selected SITA because we know that using their technology allows us to process four times as many passengers to access the security checkpoint. This will significantly improve the passenger experience."

(Source: Travel Daily News)



ROUND THE GLOBE

Serra da Capivara National Park

Many of the numerous rock shelters in the Serra da Capivara National Park are decorated with cave paintings, some more than 25,000 years old. They are an outstanding testimony to one of the oldest human communities of South America.

Established in 1979, the Serra da Capivara National Park stretched across the municipalities of Sao Raimundo Nonato, Sao Joao do Piaui, and Canto do Buriti in the south-eastern section of Piaui state in Brazil's Northeast Region.



In 1994, the municipality of Brejo do Piaui and, in 1995 the municipality of Joao Costa were dismembered of Sao Joao do Piaui. The municipality of Coronel Jose Dias was dismembered of Sao Raimundo Nonato in 1992. These three municipalities, plus Sao Raimundo Nonato, are partially located in the area of the Serra da Capivara National Park.

The Park covers nearly 129, 140 hectares and has a circumference of 214 kilometers. It is situated in the morphoclimatic zone of the Brazilian Caatinga, distinguished by the multiplicity of plant formations typical of the semi-arid regions of Northeast Brazil. The region's plant species are primarily characterized by the loss of most of their leaves during the dry season, extending from May to December, serving to lend the landscape its silver hue. The region borders two major geological formations – the Maranhao-Piaui sediment basin and the peripheral depression of the Sao Francisco River – and is endowed with a diversity of relief vegetation and landscapes of breathtaking beauty and dotted with exceptional vistas of the surrounding valleys, mountains, and plains.

(Source: UNESCO)

Spain to stand beside Iran to help flourish tourism: CEAV president

TOURISM DESK **TEHRAN** – President of the Spanish Confederation of Travel Agencies (CEAV) has said that his country will stand beside Iran to help flourish tourism as the Islamic Republic is planning to expand tourism for reducing dependence on petrodollars step by step.

"I hope that travel agencies with [exercising] power and passion could overcome the [existing] problems. In this way, we are united with you and in line with the agreements signed [or are to be inked] between the two countries, we are ready to cooperate more and more to achieve mutual goals [in the arena of tourism]," ILNA quoted Carlos Garrido as saying on Saturday.

Garrido, accompanied by a panel of experts and colleagues, made the remarks during a meeting with executives from the Touring and Automobile Club of Iran, which was held at the Laleh International Hotel in Tehran on Friday.

Commenting on the purpose of his trip to Iran, Garrido said that his was aimed to get to know Iranian [tourism-related] authorities, adding, "We are determined to seriously focus on new plans to reach tourism goals of our two countries."

"Aside from all the political and security issues that exist, I, as a representative of the private sector of my country's tourism, would like to have agreements between the private sectors on both sides because the Iranian market has enormous potential in this sector."

He noted that the Spanish Confederation of Travel Agencies represents 7,000 tourist agencies and four tour operators.

All Spanish travel agencies operate under CEAV's supervision and they will work [to help] boost tourism between the two countries, he added.

Touring and Automobile Club of Iran Director Hossein Arbabi, for his part, expressed satisfaction over having "good" cultural relations between Tehran and Madrid from the past to the present, adding, "These relations and proceedings that are rooted in the history and civilization of the two nations will be continuing in the future."

Tehran conference seeks to boost Iran-Azerbaijan tourism ties

TOURISM DESK **TEHRAN** – Iran and Azerbaijan held a professional conference in Tehran on Saturday, during which high-level tourism officials, hoteliers, airline directors, and chief tour operators explored avenues to broaden tourism ties between the two neighbors.

Representatives from Iran's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Ministry, State Tourism Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan as well as envoys and diplomats attended the conference held at Parsian Azadi International Hotel. The event discussed issues related to visa requirements, joint exhibitions, accommodation, air travel, tourism infrastructure amongst others.

Addressing the audience, Tehran's ambassador to Baku Javad Jahangirzadeh referred to the development of tourism relations between the two countries, saying, "During the past two years I have not heard any complaints from Iranian tourists during their visits to Azerbaijan and this shows the seriousness of this country in attracting Iranian tourists."

The envoy thanked Azeri officials for their efforts to ease issuance of on-arrival visas at airports and visa-simplification rules in Nakhchivan. He also expressed hope that visa requirement to be simplified



Travelers visit the picturesque interior hall of the 19th-century Nasir al-Molk Mosque in Shiraz, southern Iran.

"Such affinity is seen in terms of architecture, archeology and history, especially in the south, central parts of Spain and Iran."

"These commonalities prompted us to hold joint exhibitions both at the Archeological Museum of Alicante (MARQ) and the National Museum of Iran," Arbabi said.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Arbabi said, "I believe that it is not necessary to halt tourism cooperation between the two countries till normalization of the existing situation and the events taken place in the past few months... By the way, now there

are the time and ground to define mutual tourism plans..."

Iran's tourism has experienced a decline since early January when a U.S. drone strike assassinated top Iranian general Qassem Soleimani and in an act of retaliation, Iran fired missiles at U.S. targets in Iraq on January 8. The worse came to worst when a Ukrainian airliner was accidentally shot down by Iran's air defense as it was on high alert in the tense aftermath.

Iran's tourism minister on January 12 said that the country's tourism industry has suffered a setback but it will certainly return to "normal", in remarks referring

to the tragic crash. Ali-Asghar Mounesan said, "These events are a major blow to tourism, but we will leave it behind by the means of new plans and we will definitely return to normal."

The Islamic Republic boasts hundreds of historical sites such as bazaars, museums, mosques, bridges, bathhouses, madrasas, mausoleums, churches, towers, and mansions, of which 22 being inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list

Under the 2025 Tourism Vision Plan, Iran aims to increase the number of tourist arrivals from 4.8 million in 2014 to 20 million in 2025.



People walk toward an Iran-Azerbaijan border crossing gate

for overland journeys.

For his part, Fuad Nagiyev, chairman of Azerbaijan's State Tourism Agency, reminded that his country hosted over 250,000 travelers during the past year, naming Iran as its biggest source of tourism.

"Measures are being taken to facilitate traveling of Iranian tourists through removing visa requirements... [for instance] Iranian citizens have been allowed to enter Nakhchivan without needing to obtain a visa as of December 1, 2019," he added.

Iran was named the second most pop-

ular destination for Azerbaijani tourists in 2019, according to data collected from travel agencies.

Georgia, Iran, Russia, Turkey and Ukraine were the top five travel destinations for Azeri citizens in 2019, Azernews reported.

Azerbaijani citizens spent most money in Russia (\$343.6 million), followed by Iran (\$308.4 million), Georgia (\$286.5 million), Turkey (\$278.3 million) and the UAE (\$38.1 million), according to the report.

The Islamic Republic abolished visa requirements for Azerbaijani nationals some three years ago, while Iranians still have to obtain visas to visit the country.

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.

Tourism hit from coronavirus will carry into 2021, travel experts say

Even as infections of the novel coronavirus seemed to be slowing at one point last week, the effects of the epidemic on the global tourism industry were accelerating rapidly.

The impact of the pneumonia-like disease caused by the COVID-19 virus is already being felt across Asia, where leisure and business travel contributed \$884 billion to gross domestic product in 2017, the most recent year for data compiled by the World Travel and Tourism Council. (Estimates for 2018 are about \$1 trillion.) For China alone, inbound tourism brought in \$127.3 billion in 2019, its tourism bureau says.

But as the diagnoses tick upward again, travel agents, operators and hoteliers are bracing for months, if not a full year, of economic disruption from the outbreak, with long-term effects that may ripple well into 2021.

"The numbers of trip cancellations — not just to China but to the entire continent of Asia — is growing every day," says Jack Ezon, founder and managing partner of luxury travel agency Embark Beyond. "People are put off. Sadly, a lot of them are just saying, 'I don't know if I want to go anywhere right now.' Or, in many cases, 'I'll just go next year.'"

So far, almost 75 percent of his travelers have canceled their February and March departures to Southeast Asia, which the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention still considers to have a lower, level one risk for the coro-

navirus. "They're worried about being anywhere close to the outbreak," he says, "or of getting stuck with canceled flights if other hubs become infected." A full 100 percent of the honeymoons his agency had booked to the region have been canceled and rebooked for alternate destinations, including the Maldives, southern Africa, and Australia.

Hilton Chief Executive Officer Chris Nassetta told investors on Tuesday that he expects the impact of the contagion to last anywhere from six to 12 months: "Three to six months of escalation and impact from the outbreak, and another three to six on recovery," he said. He estimated the cost to his company could be from \$25 million to \$50 million.

Weather, weather, weather

Why so long? When it comes to leisure travel, the biggest question usually revolves around location, location, location. Once that's been decided, weather dictates all.

"North Asia you can do year-round, but Southeast Asia is much more challenging," says Catherine Heald, co-founder and CEO of Asia-focused travel specialist Remote Lands. "Thanks to monsoons and very hot temperatures in most of that region," which last roughly March through September, "people aren't looking seriously at rebooking until the fall," she says.

For families, school schedules can complicate plans. "We had one family looking at traveling over spring

break, and they won't have that same window of time until next year's spring break," she says. "They're rebooking for 2021." The same logic applies for those who specifically wanted to see cherry blossoms in Japan or flowers blooming during treks in Nepal — common reasons to plan a spring trip.

Heald's clients are among the most likely to help the industry rebound. So far her company has seen fewer cancellations than her competitors because of the way she targets leisure and high-spending travelers. An average trip with Remote Lands costs \$1,500 per day for two people, which makes her a purveyor of bucket-list vacations — trips that people are desperately hoping to realize.

"People spend a lot of time and money planning these trips," she says. "They want to make it happen."

Her workaround so far has been to simply reroute airfares through unaffected hubs, replacing routes through Hong Kong or Shanghai with connections in Seoul or Dubai. The cost, she says, can range depending on availability of fares and type of tickets booked.

"On a scale from 1 to 10, the disruption to our business has been about a 2 or 3," Heald says, explaining that travelers' willingness to postpone, rather than cancel, keeps her balance sheets mostly intact.

(Source: The Japan Times)

UN honors Iranian scientist Mirzakhani for her world-altering, trailblazing career

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** – The United Nations Women, a UN entity for gender equality and women's empowerment, have honored seven women scientists, including Iran's Maryam Mirzakhani, who have made significant contributions to the field of science, highlighting their world-altering and trailblazing careers.

"They've discovered life-saving remedies, devised world-altering inventions, and produced far-reaching research, but in many cases their invaluable advances are minimized or neglected," the UN Women website wrote on the International Day of Women and Girls in Science, February 11.

Maryam Mirzakhani, Iranian-born genius mathematician and Stanford University professor, obtained her BSc in mathematics (1999) from Sharif University of Technology, Tehran.

Later, she earned her PhD from Harvard University and was a leading scholar on the dynamics and geometry of complex surfaces. In 2014, she became the first female winner of the Fields Medal, the



most prestigious award in mathematics. Although Mirzakhani passed away in

2017, her invaluable contributions to the field of mathematics endure, and her trail-

blazing career has paved the way forward for many women mathematicians to come.

Here are six other women scientists who have been honored by the UN entity.

Tu Youyou, a pharmaceutical chemist whose visionary research on malaria treatment is rooted in ancient Chinese medicine; Kiara Nirghin, winner of 2016 Google Science Fair for creating a super absorbent polymer that can retain over 100 times its mass; Katherine Johnson, a mathematician whose calculations have been essential to U.S. space exploration. Marie Curie, a physicist and chemist whose radioactivity research laid the foundation for modern nuclear science, from X-rays to radiotherapy for treating cancer and the first woman to win the Nobel Prize; Marcia Barbosa, a Brazilian physicist known for her research on the complex structures of the water molecule; and Segenet Kelemu, a molecular plant pathologist whose cutting-edge research is dedicated to helping the world's small-holder farmers grow more food and rise out of poverty.

35 countries attend Khwarizmi International Festival

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** – This year, over 100 projects from 35 different countries have been submitted to the 33rd Khwarizmi International Festival, IRNA reported on Saturday.

The annual festival is an opportunity for both Iranian and foreign participants to put their scientific achievements on display. Khwarizmi International Award is dedicated to recognizing outstanding scientific achievements made by researchers, inventors and innovators from all over the world.

Ali Eliassi, secretary of the festival, said that 14 laureates, 10 from Iran and 4 from other countries, will receive the awards during the ending ceremony which will be held on Monday with President Hassan Rouhani in attendance. Selected foreign projects are from Australia, China,

South Korea and the United States and in the fields of electricity, chemical technology, materials and metallurgy, electricity and computers and biotech and medical base, he explained.

■ Khwarizmi International Award

According to Khwarizmi official website, in 1987, the leading Iranian Research Organization for Science and Technology (IROST), affiliated to the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology, decided to institute an award, which acknowledges the Iranian outstanding achievements in the field of science and technology.

IROST proposed the creation of the Khwarizmi Award in memory of Abu Jafar Mohammad Ibn Mousa Khwarizmi, the great Iranian mathematician and astronomer (770-840 C.E).



One-third of all plant and animal species could be extinct in 50 years, study suggests

In just 50 years' time, a third of all plant and animal species on our planet could be wiped out due to man-made climate change, US scientists have warned.

The damning new study of humanity's impact on ecosystems around the world examined recent extinctions due to climate change, along with rates of species movement and various projections of future climatic conditions.

The researchers said their study is probably the first to estimate broad-scale extinction patterns due to the climate crisis by using data from recent climate-related extinctions and from rates of species movements.

It is the latest research to paint a bleak picture of future biodiversity on Earth, as other scientists have warned our species is responsible for bringing about a sixth mass extinction event.

The research team, from the University of Arizona used data from 538 species at 581 sites around the globe and focused on species which had been studied at the same place at least 10 years apart.

They found 44 per cent of the 538 species had already gone extinct at one or more of the sites they had earlier inhabited.

They also generated climate data through measurements taken at the time of the earliest survey of each site and at more recent surveys.

"By analysing the change in 19 climatic variables at each site, we could determine which variables drive local extinctions and how much change a population can tolerate without going extinct," said Cristian Román-Palacios of the department of ecology and evolutionary biology at the University of Arizona.



"We also estimated how quickly populations can move to try and escape rising temperatures.

"When we put all of these pieces of information together for each species, we can come up with detailed estimates of global extinction rates for hundreds of plant and animal species."

The study identified maximum annual temperatures – the hottest daily highs in summer – as the key variable that best explains whether a population will become extinct.

But the researchers found average yearly temperatures showed smaller changes at sites with local extinction, even though average temperatures are widely used as a proxy for overall climate change.

"This means that using changes in mean annual temperatures to predict extinction from climate change

might be positively misleading," said Professor John Wiens, also of the University of Arizona.

The researchers said previous studies have focused on species dispersal – or migration to cooler habitats – as a means for animals and plants to "escape" from warming climates.

But the new research indicates most species will not be able to disperse quickly enough to avoid extinction, based on their past rates of movement.

Instead, they found many species were able to tolerate some increases in maximum temperatures, but only up to a point.

About 50 per cent of the species had local extinctions if maximum temperatures increased by more than 0.5C, and 95 per cent if temperatures increase by more than 2.9C.

Projections of species loss depend on just how much warmer the local climate will become in the future.

"In a way, it's a 'choose your own adventure'," Professor Wiens said. "If we stick to the Paris Agreement to combat climate change, we may lose fewer than two out of every 10 plant and animal species on Earth by 2070.

"But if humans cause larger temperature increases, we could lose more than a third or even half of all animal and plant species, based on our results."

The paper's projections of species loss are similar for plants and animals, but extinctions are projected to be two to four times more common in the tropics than in temperate regions.

"This is a big problem, because the majority of plant and animal species occur in the tropics," Mr Román-Palacios said. (Source: The Independent)

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → ع

8-year-old boy battling cancer achieves dream of becoming a fireman

Arian, an eight-year-old boy suffering from cancer, got to fulfill his wish of becoming a firefighter.

Arian celebrated his eighth birthday on Friday with Ahvaz city's officials, citizens and firefighters in attendance. He was appointed as a commander of operations for one day, IRNA news agency reported on Saturday.

At a symbolic ceremony, a fire alarm was sounded and the young commander while dressed in full firefighters' uniform, was dispatched to the scene along with firefighters and eight fire engines.

Arian's firefighting operations were well done and the little boy's wish of becoming a fireman finally came true thanks to Ahvaz fire department.

آرزوی آتش نشان شدن پسر ۸ ساله مبتلا به سرطان برآورده شد

آرین، پسر هشت ساله مبتلا به بیماری سرطان، که آرزوی آتش نشان شدن داشت، برای یک روز فرمانده عملیات آتش نشانی شد و به آرزویش رسید.

به گزارش ایرنا، آرین روز جمعه سالروز هشت سالگی خود را با حضور جمعی از مسئولان، شهروندان و نیروهای آتش نشان شهر اهواز جشن گرفت، و از سوی رئیس سازمان آتش نشانی و خدمات ایمنی اهواز برای یک روز به فرماندهی عملیات منصوب شد.

در مراسمی نمادین، آژیر خطر عملیات اطفای حریق به صدا درآمد و این فرمانده خردسال به همراه نیروهای آتش نشان و هشت دستگاه خودروی اطفای حریق به محل حادثه اعزام شدند. و عملیات اطفای حریق به فرماندهی آرین به خوبی انجام شد.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“-ful, -fully”

■ **Meaning:** full

■ **For example:** She plays wonderfully.

PHRASAL VERB

Pull up

■ **Meaning:** to stop the vehicle that you are driving

■ **For example:** He pulled up in front of the gates.

IDIOM

Dive in headfirst

■ **Explanation:** If you begin something enthusiastically, without thinking about the possible consequences

■ **For example:** Tony accepted the project without calculating the time it would take; he always dives in headfirst!

Antarctica temperature exceeds 20C for first time

A record high temperature of 20.75C has been registered in Antarctica, exceeding the 20C mark for the first time.

The measurement was made on 9 February by Brazilian scientists at a monitoring station on Seymour Island, situated off the coast of the Antarctic Peninsula.



This is the second time in one week that a record temperature has been set for the region.

On 6 February, an Argentinian research station at Esperanza, on Antarctica's northwest tip, measured 18.3C, which was the highest reading for the continent since March 2015.

The previous record for the Antarctic region – everywhere south of 60 degrees latitude – was 19.8C, taken on Signy Island in January 1982.

Brazilian scientist Carlos Schaefer, part of the team on Seymour Island, said that he had "never seen a temperature this high in Antarctica" – but warned that the recording was just one reading and could not be used to predict wider trends.

"We can't use this to anticipate climatic changes in the future. It's a data point," he told AFP. "It's simply a signal that something different is happening in that area."

Although the recordings made on 6 and 9 February need to be confirmed by the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO), they remain consistent with broader trends across the Antarctic peninsula and nearby islands, which have warmed by almost 3C over the past 50 years.

Roughly 87 per cent of glaciers along the peninsula's west coast have also retreated during this period, according to the WMO.

There has been an "accelerated retreat" over the past 12 years due to global warming, the organisation adds.

The past 20 years have seen an erratic fluctuation in recorded temperatures across the peninsula – a narrow stretch of land that stretches out into the South Atlantic Ocean.

Scientists on the Brazilian Antarctic programme have attributed this to influential shifts in ocean currents and El Nino events, saying: "We have climatic changes in the atmosphere, which is closely related to changes in permafrost and the ocean. The whole thing is very interrelated."

Last month was also Antarctica's warmest January on record.

The region stores about 70 per cent of the world's freshwater in the form of snow and ice. Sea levels would rise by 50 to 60m if it were all to melt, according to scientists.

(Source: The Independent)

WORDS IN THE NEWS

Congestion charging starts in London

(February 17, 2003)

Motorists in London will have to pay for the pleasure of driving through the capital from today. The new congestion charge hopes to encourage more people to use public transport, thereby reducing traffic and pollution in the city. This report from Rachel Ellison:

This is the Mayor of London's big moment. The introduction of the **Congestion** Charge was his idea and he's been prepared to **stick by it**. The new charge of £5 a day has caused outrage from builders, florists and other small businesses, which operate in and around London. But broadly speaking, Londoners are in favour of new congestion charge. Their city's become a dirty, polluted and overcrowded capital. Taxi drivers say their **takings are down**, simply because the traffic's so heavy, they can't drive from A to B.

It's hoped that the new Congestion Charge, which applies on weekdays between seven am and six-thirty pm, will encourage more people to use public transport. **To that end**, the mayor's put three hundred new **'bendy' buses** on the road and says he'll **pour money** from increased ticket sales on the tube, back into the underground network. Public transport, though, is **a sore point** for Londoners. The three million of them who use the tube to go to and from work are fed up with dirty, delayed and overcrowded trains. **Squashing** even more people onto a hundred-and-forty-year-old network, could, they fear, **cause the whole system to crack**. A recent accident has closed the Central Line indefinitely, making some **commutes** pretty chaotic.

Well, chaos or not, whatever happens is of interest to other major cities around the world. New York, Boston and possibly Paris are watching London to see if the congestion charge works.

■ Words

Congestion: if there is congestion in a place, then it is overcrowded

to stick by it: if you stick by something, you do it without changing your mind even when you are criticized

takings are down: they are making less money

To that end: in order to achieve that aim (of encouraging people to use public transport)

'bendy' buses: long, single deck articulated buses which bend in the middle

pour money: spend a high proportion of the revenue

a sore point: it's a subject that is likely to make them angry if you mention it

Squashing: forcing

cause the whole system to crack: make the system break down so that it can't be mended

commutes: journeys from the outskirts of a city to the centre to go to work

(Source: BBC)

Iraqi PM-designate pledges to name ‘independent’ cabinet this week

Iraq’s Prime Minister-designate Mohammed Tawfiq Allawi has vowed to announce this week his cabinet made up of “independent” and “impartial” figures.

“We’re nearing a historic achievement: completing an independent cabinet of competent and impartial people, without the intervention of any political party,” he said in a post on his Twitter account on Saturday.

He also pledged to “submit the names of these ministers within the current week.”

Allawi, who was appointed as Iraqi premier in early February, has until March 2 to submit his cabinet to a parliamentary vote.

“We hope members of the parliament will respond and vote on them in order to start implementing the people’s demands,” he emphasized.

The appointment of Allawi followed an ultimatum by President Barham Salih, who said he would pick a new premier himself if political parties did not agree on a candidate.

Since October, Iraqis have staged street protests in several cities over unemployment and a lack of basic services, demanding the removal of the ruling political elite as well as early elections.

The demonstrations, however, took a violent turn later, with some participants vandalizing public property and opening fire on demonstrators during the mayhem.

Reports say more than 550 people have been killed and about 25,000 injured in the course of the violent protests.

The anti-government protests also led to the resignation of prime minister Adil Abdul-Mahdi in late November.

Upon his appointment, Allawi expressed support for the rallies and pledged justice for those killed in the violence.

(Source: Press TV)

EU must develop ‘appetite for power’: Borrell

European Union governments need to be willing to intervene in international crises or risk prolonging paralysis in their foreign policy, the EU’s top diplomat said on Sunday.

The EU is the world’s largest trading bloc but it often fails to speak with one voice on foreign policy because its policy-making requires consensus among members. EU governments are divided on issues from Libya to Venezuela.

“Europe has to develop an appetite for power,” the EU’s foreign policy chief Josep Borrell told the Munich Security Conference, stressing that did not only mean military power.

“We should be able to act ... not everyday making comments, expressing concern,” he told leaders, lawmakers and diplomats.

With its economic power, the bloc has been able to boast of a “soft power”, but its influence in the world has waned, partly because U.S. President Donald Trump’s “America First” policies have undermined European priorities.

Trump’s decision to pull out of the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, as well as the Paris climate accord, his recognition of Jerusalem as Israel’s capital before a final peace settlement and his criticism of NATO are at odds with European positions.

With new leadership in Brussels, the EU has launched into a flurry of diplomacy since January, particularly on the Middle East.

(Source: Reuters)

U.S. names members of panel for West Bank annexation

➔ 1 Palestinian leaders immediately rejected the plan, with President Mahmoud Abbas saying it “belongs in the dustbin of history.”

They view the deal as a colonial plan meant to unilaterally control Palestine in its entirety and remove Palestinians from their homeland.

■ Palestinians denounce meeting with Israelis

On Saturday, Palestinian factions censured the participation of Palestinian figures in a meeting in Tel Aviv, organized by the so-called Israeli Peace Parliament whose members are former representatives of a variety of political parties and former Knesset members.

Twenty former members of the Palestinian Authority participated in the Friday meeting held under the banner “Yes to Peace,” “No to Annexation” and “Two States for Two People.”

Former Palestinian Authority economy minister Bassem Khoury, former health ministers Fathi Abu Mughlieh and Sameeh al-Abed, former local governance minister Hussein al-A’raj and former prisoners affairs minister Ashraf al-Ajrami were among the Palestinian representatives.

Denouncing the meeting, Hamas resistance movement said it was a “blow to all Palestinian positions rejecting U.S. President Donald Trump’s recently unveiled plan for Mideast peace.”

Hamas spokesman Hazem Qassem said the gathering was a form of “normalization” with Israel that is rejected by all Palestinians.

“These meetings encourage some parties in the region to normalize their relations with the Zionist entity,” Qassem said, adding, “They also weaken the movement of solidarity with our Palestinian people.”

He also criticized the Palestinian Authority for allowing such meetings despite threats by its leaders to cut all ties with Israel.

Senior official of Palestinian Islamic Jihad movement Ahmed al-Mudalal also strongly condemned the meeting.

“How can we convince the world to reject normalization when some of us are promoting it and involved in it?” he exclaimed. “These meetings are intended to support Trump’s ‘Deal of the Century.’”

The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) denounced the meeting as a “stabbing of the Palestinian people.”

It further called on the Palestinian Authority to dismantle the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)’s committee for interaction with Israeli society, which is responsible for organizing meetings between Palestinians and Israelis.

“Participation in normalization meetings with hostile Zionists proves that the Palestinian leadership is not serious about renouncing the Oslo Accords, halting security coordination [with Israel] and suspending all meetings with the Zionist entity,” the PFLP added.

Al-Ahrar (The Free), a group of Fatah members in the besieged Gaza Strip, said the meeting was a “national and immoral crime” which violated the Palestinian Authority’s position against the Trump plan.

“The meeting encourages the occupation and the U.S. administration to continue their steps to implement the Trump plan,” the group said.

(Source: Press TV)

Yemen’s air strikes ‘kill 31 civilians’ after Saudi jet crash



airstrikes, the latest of which killed at least 31 civilians in Yemen’s al-Jawf province Friday, calling it a war crime.

“The international community’s silence

on these war crimes has emboldened their perpetrators to kill more civilians,” Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said in Tehran on Sunday.

The United Nations office in Yemen said preliminary field reports indicated that “as many as 31 civilians were killed and 12 others injured in strikes that hit al-Hayjah area” in al-Jawf province.

The health ministry in al-Jawf province said women and children were among those killed, Yemen’s al-Masirah TV reported. They were attacked as they gathered near the wreckage of a Saudi warplane shot down on Friday evening.

Mousavi strongly condemned “the criminal attack by the Saudi-led coalition forces and offered commiserations to the bereaved families and the oppressed Yemeni people,” IRNA news agency reported.

“Over the past several years, we have repeatedly witnessed that whenever Saudi-led coalition forces or their allies suffer humiliating defeats in the battlefield, they react by cowardly slaughtering women, children and civilians with American weapons,” Mousavi said.

“Yesterday’s crime in Jawf province is just one example among dozens of their war crimes,” he added.

(Source: agencies)

Rockets strike near U.S. embassy in Iraq

U.S. military rejects Iraqi demand, offers partial withdrawal

Several rockets landed near the embassy of the United States in Iraq’s capital early on Sunday, U.S. and Iraqi military officials said, in the latest of a series of attacks against U.S. assets in the country.

The rockets struck an Iraqi base hosting U.S. troops and other coalition forces in Baghdad’s heavily fortified Green Zone, an area that is home to foreign embassies and government offices.

According to Colonel Myles B Caggins III, a spokesman for the U.S. military operation in Iraq, the attack - which took place just before 3:30am (00:30 GMT) - caused no casualties and only minor damage.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack.

■ U.S. military rejects Iraqi demand

Meanwhile, the U.S. military has offered senior Iraqi

security officials plans for a partial withdrawal of troops from Iraq, reneging on an earlier promise to leave the Arab country, online news website Middle East Eye (MEE) reports.

It cited unnamed sources as saying that a meeting was held in great secrecy between the two sides in the private residence of the Canadian ambassador to Jordan in Amman last week.

A representative of the U.S. military told the Iraqis that Washington was prepared to leave positions in or near Shia-majority areas, such as Balad airbase which houses U.S. personnel about 80 kilometers north of Baghdad.

The Iraqis were told that Washington could even consider reducing its troops in the capital Baghdad, the report said.

However, the U.S. side categorically dismissed withdrawing from Ain al-Asad, the biggest U.S. airbase in Anbar province.

“We cannot even start talking about withdrawing [from

Ain al-Asad]. Withdrawal is out of the question,” the U.S. representative said.

Ain al-Asad airbase came under missile fire from Iran last month, in response to the U.S. assassination of top Iranian commander Gen. Qassem Soleimani, and the second-in-command of Iraq’s Popular Mobilization Units (PMU) Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis at Baghdad international airport on January 3.

About 5,300 American forces are deployed across Iraq. Two days after the assassination, the Iraqi parliament approved a motion, calling for the withdrawal of all American forces.

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

(Source: agencies)

NATO rejects France’s offer to extend nuclear protection to whole Europe

NATO’s chief has rejected a call by France’s President Emmanuel Macron to put the country’s nuclear deterrence capabilities at the center of defense strategies adopted by the European Union (EU) members.

Speaking at the Munich Security Conference on Saturday, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg dismissed Macron’s call for a European “strategic dialog” about the role of France’s nuclear weapons and said a “tried and tested” deterrent was already in place.

Hailing France as a “highly valued ally” whose nuclear capabilities contributed to NATO’s overall security, Stoltenberg said, however, that Europe was already protected by what he called nuclear deterrence by the atomic weapons of member states Britain and the United States.

“We have to remember that we have a European nuclear deterrent today — 28 allies deliver that every day and it’s not only a promise, but it’s something that has been there for decades,” Stoltenberg told reporters at the international conference. “It’s tried and tested, we exercise it, and it’s institutionalized, and it is the ultimate security guarantee for Europe.”

Britain’s departure from the EU last month has made France the bloc’s only nuclear power, but Paris has refused to put its nuclear deterrence capabilities under the auspices of the EU or NATO.

In a major speech in Paris last week,



Macron claimed France’s nuclear arsenal now had “a European dimension” after Britain’s exit from the EU.

The French president also reiterated his previous calls for Europe’s defensive autonomy from the U.S. and the reduction of reliance on other world powers.

“The issue is not for Europeans to know whether they must defend themselves with or without Washington,” Macron said during the speech. “But our security derives also, inevitably, from a greater capacity by Europeans to act autonomously.”

Stoltenberg clashed with Macron last year after the French president said NATO was suffering from “brain death,” and described the US-led military alliance as strategically and politically defunct.

US President Donald Trump has been a fierce NATO critic, mostly accusing other military alliance members of not paying their “fair share.”

(Source: AP)

Qatar says talks to end PGCC crisis were suspended in January

Qatar’s foreign minister has said efforts to resolve a years-long Persian Gulf diplomatic crisis were not successful and were suspended at the start of January.

The discussions began in October last year over a rift that saw Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Bahrain, along with Egypt, severing political, trade and transport ties with Qatar in June 2017. The quartet continues to impose a land, air and sea blockade on Qatar, accusing it of “supporting terrorism” - a charge repeatedly and vehemently rejected by Doha.

“It’s been almost three years,” Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani said on Saturday at the Munich

Security Conference in Germany. “We were not perpetrators and are open to any offer to resolve this problem,” he added.

“Unfortunately efforts did not succeed and were suspended at the beginning of January and Qatar is not responsible for this.”

In early December, the Qatari foreign minister had said that the parties had “moved from a stalemate” in the dispute, but later said it was “too early” to talk about real progress.

On Saturday, he did not elaborate further on the suspension of talks despite signs in recent months pointing to a possible thaw in relations between Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

In December, Qatar’s then-Prime Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Nasser Al Thani attended an annual Persian Gulf

Cooperation Council (PGCC) summit in Riyadh, its highest representation at the meeting since 2017.

The six-member bloc is comprised of Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, Kuwait and Oman.

“The work of the PGCC has been affected by this crisis, and we hope to overcome many challenges next year,” Sheikh Abdullah said at the time, after the closed-door gathering in the kingdom’s capital. His attendance came after the three Persian Gulf blockading countries took part in a regional football tournament held in Qatar in November, reversing at the last minute an earlier decision to not participate.

(Source: al Jazeera)

Trump plan will impact border demarcation: Nasrallah

Nasrallah hailed resistance of Iranian nation

➔ 1 Nasrallah first commemorated the martyrs of the resistance, and praised the recent martyrs of the Resistance; Hajj Qasem Soleimani and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis and their companions.

Congratulating the anniversary of the Islamic Revolution of Iran, Nasrallah said, “Iran has resisted with the help of God and the presence of its faithful nation, despite all military, security, economic, media and

psychological wars, and sanctions,” adding this is the message that the ones awaiting collapse of the Islamic establishment should get.

“The assassination of Hajj Qasem Soleimani and the so-called ‘Deal of the Century’ have been designed to facilitate the US and Israeli domineering policy in the region,” Nasrallah said.

“The martyrdom of Hajj Qasem Soleimani has caused the whole region, the axis of

Resistance, and Iran enter a new and critical phase,” he added.

Referring to Trump’s so-called plan of ‘Deal of the Century’, he said, “In fact, this is not a deal, it’s a dictation which its failure depends on the resistance of Islamic states.”

“The Deal of the Century is a Zionist plot to end Palestinian causes,” he added.

Trump announced the so-called ‘deal of the century’ plan in January, alongside

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. It grants Israel Jerusalem as its capital and hands over large tracts of occupied land to the envisioned Israeli state – including land Lebanon claims as its territory.

Around 860 square kilometers of sea remain disputed, which extend along the edge of three maritime blocks being eyed for oil and gas exploration.

(Source: agencies)

Iran center Haddadi optimistic about 2020 Tokyo

S P O R T S TEHRAN — Iran national basketball team center Hamed Haddadi is optimistic about getting good results in the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo.

Team Melli will represent Asia in the prestigious competition after 12 years. The Persians booked their place in China in September in the 2019 FIBA World Cup.

In the 2008 Olympics in Beijing, a young and relatively unknown Haddadi had a coming-out party in the world stage which opened an opportunity for him to play in the NBA.

He parlayed his impressive performance to an NBA contract with the Memphis Grizzlies after averaging 16.6 points while also leading the entire Olympic tournament with 11.2 rebounds and 2.6 blocks.

“I know that we will have a difficult task in the Olympics but will do our best to get the good results. A total of the best 12 teams will be there but we also want to show we are a team to beat,” Haddadi said on the sidelines of the Iran basketball training on Sunday.

“We could have won eventual champions Spain in the 2019 FIBA World Cup but lost the match just in the final two minutes. We need maturity to keep leading in the competitions. You should not make mistakes against the big teams because they will punish you,” he added.

Iran prepare to meet Syria and Qatar at the 2021 FIBA Asia Cup Qualifiers.



Team Melli play Syria and Qatar on Feb. 20 and 23 in Tehran’s Azadi Hall in Group E. “Our players have trained in the past four days and we are ready for the Asia Cup qualification,” Haddadi concluded.



Behnam Seraj appointed Sanat Naft coach

S P O R T S TEHRAN — Ex-Persepolis forward Behnam Seraj has been appointed as new head coach of Iranian top-flight football club Sanat Naft on Sunday.

He took charge of the Abadan-based football club until the end of the season.

Seraj replaced Dragan Skocic who left Sanat Naft in early February to lead Iran national football team.

Seraj, who started his playing career in Sanat Naft, began coaching job as assistant coach of the team in 2013.

Sanat Naft have garnered 30 points from 20 matches and sit seventh in Iran professional league (IPL), 11

points behind leaders Persepolis.

Alireza Mansourian had been also shortlisted to take charge of the team but Sanat Naft officials opted to appoint Seraj as their coach.

The Persian Gulf Pro League, formerly known as the Iran Pro League, is the highest division of professional football in Iran.

The league was also known as the Persian Gulf Cup from 2006. It is the top-level football league in Iran since its foundation in 2 November 2001. Each year, the top finishing team in the Persian Gulf Pro League becomes the Iranian football champion, and the lowest finishing teams are relegated to Azadegan League.

Iran win six medals at Karate 1-Premier League

S P O R T S TEHRAN — Iranian athletes claimed six medals at the Karate 1-Premier League event in Dubai, the UAE.

Zabihollah Poorshab won Iran’s only gold medal after beating Kazakhstan’s Daniyar Yuldashev 8-5 in the men’s under-84kg division.

Poorshab had previously defeated his countryman Mahdi Khodabakhshi in the all-Iranian semi-final 3-2. Khodabakhshi also claimed a bronze, beating Kazakhstan’s Igor Chikhmarev 1-0.

Shima Alesaaadi earned a silver medal,



losing to world number one Xiaoyan Yin from China 3-1 the women’s under-61kg kumite final.

Earlier on the day, Bahman Askari, Sara Bahmanyar and Rozita Alipour had also won three bronze medals.

Askari defeated Turkey’s Erman Eltemur 2-0 in the men’s under-75kg bronze medal match.

Bahmanyar came third by defeating Aicha Sayah from Morocco 3-2 in the women’s under-50kg and Alipour finished in third place after a 3-1 win over her Russian rival Nailiya Gataullina in the

women’s under-61kg.

The competition brought nearly 600 fighters from 85 countries together.

Karate will make its Olympic debut in Tokyo.

Spain won the competition winning two gold medals, three silvers and one bronze.

Italy came second with two golds, one silver and one bronze.

Turkey claimed two gold and four bronze medals to sit at third place and China finished in fourth place with two golds.

Iran won one gold, one silver and four bronze medals to finish in fifth place.

Preview MD2 - Group B: Pakhtakor (UZB) vs Shahr Khodro FC (IRN)

The second away trip in their debut AFC Champions League campaign takes Islamic Republic of Iran’s Shahr Khodro FC to Tashkent where they face Pakhtakor FC on Matchday Two of Group B on Monday.

The task ahead for coach Mojtaba Sarasiaei’s men is a daunting one against a Pakhtakor FC side that have won each of their nine home encounters against Iranian opponents in the AFC Champions League, keeping five clean sheets in the process. The Uzbek side had previously defeated another IR Iran side - Naft Tehran - in their debut campaign in 2015, and Shahr Khodro will hope to avoid the same fate.

The Mashhad-based side reached the group stage after edging Bahrain’s Riffa SC 2-1 in the Preliminary Round 2 then holding Qatar’s Al Sailiyah to a goalless draw before emerging victorious on penalties in the Play-off.

For Monday’s hosts, a return to the AFC Champions League knock-out stages for the first time in a decade is the ultimate objective, but for now Pakhtakor will aim to build on their 2-1 victory over Shabab Al



Ahli last week to reach six points.

The 2018-19 Uzbek Super League winners are appearing in the competition for the 14th time, a record very few teams can match but that record has not translated into much success so far, with Pakhtakor’s best result in the AFC Champions League being their back-to-back semi-finals in the very first two editions of the competition.

Pakhtakor (UZB) v Shahr Khodro (IRN)
Venue: Pakhtakor Stadium, Tashkent
Kick-off: February 17, 19:00 UTC+5

(Source: the-afc)

Preview MD2 - Group A: Al Ahli Saudi FC (KSA) vs Esteghlal FC (IRN)

Al Ahli Saudi FC and Esteghlal FC of Islamic Republic of Iran will aim to build on their opening matchday draws when they meet in Group A of the 2020 AFC Champions League on Tuesday.

The two sides had picked up their first points on the road last week, with Al Ahli settling for a draw at Al Wahda FSCC, having led until the 90th minute.

Esteghlal, meanwhile, walked away from Al Shorta’s den with their first point of the campaign in another 1-1 draw.

Both teams are in the AFC Champions League group stage for the 11th time in their history, but Al Ahli boasts a significantly better record, advancing to the knock-out stages on seven occasions, to Esteghlal’s four.

Al Ahli’s best performance in the competition came in 2012, when they went all the way to the final, before losing to Korea Republic’s Ulsan Hyundai 3-0 in the final.

Esteghlal’s best run came a year later, when they reached the semi-finals and lost to 4-2 on aggregate to FC Seoul.

Unlike their opponents, the Tehran gi-



ants are former continental champions, with two Asian Club Championship titles to their name.

In 1970, they defeated Hapoel Tel Aviv 2-1, and 21 years later, they tasted glory again, edging China PR’s Liaoning FC with the same scoreline in the 1990-91 final.

Al Ahli Saudi FC (KSA) v Esteghlal FC (IRN)

Venue: Jaber Al Ahmed International Stadium, Kuwait City

Kick-off: February 17, 18:30 UTC+3

(Source: the-afc)

Uganda’s Cheptegei smashes 5km world record

Uganda’s world 10,000m champion Joshua Cheptegei has broken the 5km road world record by 27 seconds in Monaco.

The 23-year-old ran 12 minutes 51 seconds to smash the previous record, set by Kenya’s Rhonex Kipruto en route to victory at January’s Valencia 10k.

“I had sub-13 minutes in my mind so when my legs felt good I decided to really go for it,” said Cheptegei.

France’s Jimmy Gressier finished second in Monaco with a European record of 13:18.

Nick Goolab finished third in a new British record of 13:27, the Belgrave Harrier bettering the mark held jointly by Mo Farah and Rob Denmark by three seconds.

In December, Cheptegei ran 26:38 to break the 10km



road world record, which had stood for almost 10 years, but that mark was bettered last month by Kipruto, who set new records at both 5km and 10km in his victory over the latter distance in Spain.

Cheptegei’s record-breaking time is subject to official World Athletics ratification procedures, as are Kipruto’s.

The Ugandan beat the most recently ratified 5km record of 13:22, set by Robert Keter in Lille on 9 November, and also the fastest time ever recorded for the distance, Sammy Kipketer’s 13:00 in Carlsbad, USA, in 2000.

The 5km only became an official world record event in November 2017.

(Source: BBC)

Sri Lankan Dilan Perera to officiate Pakhtakor, Shahr Khodro match

TASNIM — Hettikamkanamge Dilan Perera from Sri Lanka has been chosen to officiate the match between Pakhtakor of Uzbekistan and Iran’s Shahr Khodro in the 2020 AFC Champions League.

The Iranian team is scheduled to meet Pakhtakor on Monday in Group B.

Shahr Khodro started the campaign with a 2-0 loss against title holders Al Hilal, while Pakhtakor defeated Shabab Al Ahli of the UAE 2-1.

Hettikamkanamge Dilan Perera, 40, is a Sri Lankan professional football referee.

He has been a full international for FIFA since 2004. Perera has refereed some matches in AFC Champions League.

Iran’s weightlifter snatches silver in Asian Champs

IRNA — Iranian weightlifter Hossein Pakar in the weight category of 67kg grabbed a silver medal in the snatch in the 2020 Asian Junior Weightlifting Championships underway in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

Pakar could lift 124kg weight in the first round.

He also lifted 131kg and 135kg weights and received a silver medal.

Indonesian rival lifted 136kg weight and stood on the first place.

South Korean lifter ranked third and grabbed a bronze medal.

NBA All-Star Game MVP Award is now the Kobe Bryant MVP Award

The MVP award for the NBA All-Star Game is now the Kobe Bryant MVP Award, according to an announcement by Commissioner Adam Silver on Saturday.

“Kobe Bryant is synonymous with NBA All-Star and embodies the spirit of this global celebration of our game,” Silver said. “He always relished the opportunity to compete with the best of the best and perform at the highest level for millions of fans around the world.”

Bryant was an 18-time All-Star who won a record-tying four All-Star Game MVP awards, the NBA said. He was named All-Star Game MVP in 2002, 2007, 2009 and 2011.

He was the youngest player to ever play in an All-Star Game at 19 years old in 1998.

The Kobe Bryant MVP Award will be presented on Sunday at the end of the 2020 All-Star Game in Chicago.

Bryant and his daughter, Gianna, were among nine people killed when their helicopter, headed to a youth basketball game, crashed on January 26.

Before player introductions on Sunday, Jennifer Hudson will perform a special tribute to Bryant and the other crash victims.

The teams will be captained by LeBron James and Giannis Antetokounmpo. Team Giannis will wear No. 24 and Team LeBron will wear No. 2 — the respective jersey numbers worn by Bryant and Gianna.

(Source: CNN)

Klopp on Manchester City ban: ‘Complete wow!’

Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp said he had sympathy for his Manchester City counterpart Pep Guardiola in the wake of the English champions’ two-year ban from European football dished out by UEFA for allegedly breaching Financial Fair Play rules.

With City’s domestic title challenge all but over -- Liverpool 25 points ahead after beating Norwich City 1-0 away on Saturday -- Klopp said the news on Friday about the European ban for the Manchester club had taken him by surprise.

“It was a shock. Complete wow!” he told Sky Sports after the match. “The only thing I can say is about football. What they have done on the football pitch is exceptional. The rest, I don’t know.

“I really feel for them, Pep and the players, but that is how it is. They can appeal so we will see what happens then. It is obviously serious.

“But the football they played was exceptional and will always be exceptional.”

European soccer’s governing body UEFA said City had committed “serious breaches” of its FFP regulations by “overstating its sponsorship revenue in its accounts and in the break-even information submitted to UEFA between 2012 and 2016.”

City denied any wrongdoing and said they will appeal to the Swiss-based Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS).

When asked about his own team’s success on Saturday, Klopp could only call it “insane.”

Liverpool need 15 more points to wrap-up the Premier League trophy and the only question is when, not if, Liverpool will be crowned as English champions for the first time in 30 years.

“It’s so insane I don’t understand it,” Klopp said. “I’m not smart enough, it’s difficult. Never had that before and I’ve no clue how it happened really. It’s just we are focused on what we are doing and it feels really good.

“It’s outstanding. It’s so difficult. You go in after the game and analyze the game and then say, ‘Oh yeah, yeah, we won the game congratulations.’ It’s outstanding. You count the points and it’s three more. It’s unbelievable.”

Klopp’s side were not at their clinical best against a battling Norwich side who held out for almost 80 minutes before substitute Sadio Mane drilled home a late winner.

“Fabinho coming on was very important for the organization. Sadio was fresh and he helped us to win the game, which was outstanding. I have to watch the goal back but I’m pretty sure it was a fantastic finish,” added Klopp.

“I could tell in all the players faces that they weren’t nervous, they were enjoying it, and if one team was going to score it was going to be us.”

(Source: ESPN)

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GUIDE TO
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

The day an oppressed person prevails over an oppressor is harder than the day an oppressor bullies the oppressed.

Imam Ali (AS)

Revolutionary critics named “Butterfly Swimming” Fajr’s best film

A R T **TEHRAN** — Mohammad Kart’s directorial debut “Butterfly Swimming” took first place in the top six selected by the Association of Islamic Revolution Writers and Film Critics from among the movies screened at the 38th Fajr Film Festival.



A scene from “Butterfly Swimming” by Mohammad Kart.

The film tells the story of Hashem, a gang member whose wife’s swimming video goes viral. Now Hashem and his brother-in-law Hojjat are looking for the person who uploaded the video on the net.

The movie is followed by Saeid Malekan’s directorial debut “Day Zero”, which is about Iran’s intelligence and police operations to arrest Jundallah terrorist group founder and leader Abdul-Malik Rigi.

Amir-Abbas Rabiei’s political drama “The Undercover” about the activities of the Tudeh Party of Iran during the 1980s came third.

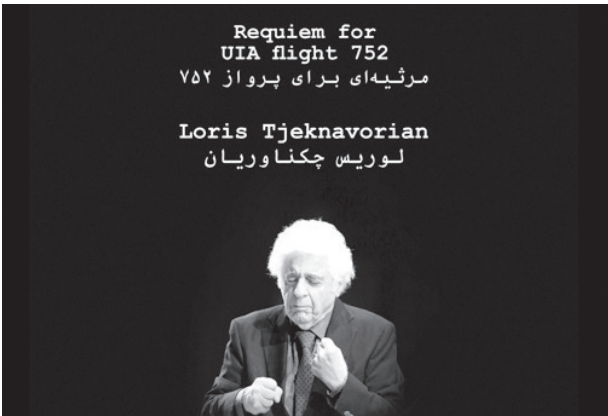
The films are followed by “Exodus” by Ebrahim Hatamikia, “The Sun” by Majid Majidi and “Skin” co-directed by Bahman and Bahram Ark.

The Fajr Film Festival wrapped up last week, honoring “The Sun” as best film.

Iranian musicians release song in memory of UIA Flight 752 victims

A R T **TEHRAN** — A group of Iranian musicians has released a song online in commemoration of the victims of a Ukrainian jetliner, which was hit unintentionally by Iran last month.

Maestro Loris Tjeknavorian is the composer of the song “Requiem for UIA Flight 752” recorded at the Rad No-Andish Art and Cultural Institute in Tehran.



A poster for “Requiem for UIA Flight 752”.

“I was deeply affected by the tragedy, so I decided to express my sorrows through music,” Tjeknavorian said in a press release published on Sunday.

Iranian poet and art expert Yarta Yaran also collaborated on the project by reciting verses of poems from Sadi.

On January 8, A Ukrainian airliner was shot down shortly after taking off from Tehran’s Imam Khomeini airport, killing all 167 passengers and 9 crew members.

The Armed Forces General Staff announced that human error in an air defense system mistakenly targeted the plane.

The incident happened a few hours after Iran fired dozens of missiles at U.S. airbases inside Iraq in retaliation for the assassination of Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani in Baghdad.

Maestro Nader Mashayekhi impressed with youth participation in Fajr festival

1 → “I am not interested in the entertaining aspect of music and I know that music is a tool which can help us achieve our goals, and I think the festival has been successful in gathering different tastes,” he stated.

Mashayekhi further noted that he has seen a few performances at the festival and he thinks that the Tehran Symphony Orchestra was good.

“I think the orchestra under the baton of conductor Nasir Heidarian was good, he knows the repertoire for the orchestra,” he added.

He also said that he liked the performances by the Iranian folk music ensemble Rastak.

The maestro said that he thinks Iranian music is not in a good position in the world.

“I am not talking about traditional music which enjoys its own high position, but representing Iranian music and thoughts has had many problems because of mismanagement,” he said.

Mashayekhi conducted the Art and Culture Orchestra in a performance during the Fajr festival at the Rudaki Hall on Friday.



Maestro Nader Mashayekhi acknowledges the audience after conducting a performance by the Art and Culture Orchestra during the Fajr Music Festival at the Rudaki Hall in Tehran on February 14, 2020. (ISNA/Mona Hubehfekar)

Iranian, Armenian artists display works in Tehran



An art aficionado visits an exhibition of artworks by some top Iranian Armenian artists at Tehran’s Mehrsun Art Gallery on February 14, 2020. (Borna/Sara Abdollahi)

A R T **TEHRAN** — The d e s k Mehrsun Art Gallery in Tehran is showcasing a collection of works by a group of prominent Iranian Armenian artists in an exhibition entitled “Iranahayer”.

Armenian Ambassador Artashes Tumanyan, Music Museum of Iran Managing Director Ali Moradkhani and Iranian Artists Forum director Majid Rajabi-Memar attended the opening ceremony of the exhibit on Friday.

Speaking at the ceremony, Tumanyan said that the exhibit features the deep relations between the two nations of

Iran and Armenia.

Armenian Archbishop of Tehran Sebouh Sarkissian, also attending the ceremony, said that the exhibit shows that people of Iran and Armenia have long been friends, and added that the exhibit is a dialogue of the two nations through art.

Setrak Nazarian, Sirak Melkounian, Vahik Hartounian Levon Haftvan and Loris Tjeknavorian are among the artists whose works have been put on display at the exhibit.

The exhibit will be running until April 5 at the gallery located on North Karegar St., near Forsat St.



This combination photo shows some paintings on display at the exhibition “What Is Lost, Exists” underway at Avaye Honar Gallery.

“What Is Lost, Exists”: Artists argue

A R T **TEHRAN** — Thirteen artists are displaying their latest works in an exhibition entitled “What Is Lost, Exists”, which spotlights the problems facing Iranian society.

Over 20 paintings and three sculptures are on view at the exhibit underway at Avaye Honar Gallery.

“Visitors can easily see hopes and lives in progress, as well as people’s sorrows and regrets in the artworks on display at the exhibition,” the gallery wrote in a statement for the showcase.

Most of the works illustrate peoples’ depressed economic situation. A highlight of the exhibition depicts a sad little fishmonger boy who is waiting for a customer in a bazaar.

“Everything has changed overnight, while there is no certain logic in the changes,” said Alireza Asanlu, the curator of the exhibit, who is also the manager of the

Khaneye Aftab Atelier in Tehran.

“It is surprising that we have become accustomed to this situation and there is certainly a reaction toward it,” he added.

“The unconventional situation is what we frequently experienced in the country and the artists chose the topic to depict in their works,” he stated.

Asanlu pointed to the title of the exhibition and noted, “What happens to us and what we experience influence our future and fate.”

“The impacts of the incidents we experience and the decisions made in our individual, social and family life will never diminish,” he said.

Linda Mohammadi, Mahsa Shemshian, Huri Baqeri, Amir Nariman and Zahra Rahimi are among the artists participating in this exhibition, which will run until February 23.

“Comedy Friends” named best play at Hamoon Theater Festival



Sina Shafiei speaks after accepting the award for best playwright from director Mohammad Rahmadian during the 1st Hamoon Theater Festival at the Hamoon Theater in Tehran on February 15, 2020. (Iran Theater/Milad Mirza-Ali)

A R T **TEHRAN** — d e s k “Comedy Friends” by director Amir-Mohammad Ebrahimi was crowned best play at the 1st edition of the Hamoon Theater Festival on Saturday.

The play also brought Ebrahimi the award for best director during the closing ceremony of the festival organized at the Hamoon Theater in Tehran.

“Comedy Friends” is about a young couple who don’t have any friends. They decide to hire another couple as their friends with whom to hang out.

Arvin Shah-Hosseini was picked as best actor for his role in “Disorder” directed by Mohammad Nejad, while Sara Shahrudian was named best actress for her role in “Aman” by Seyyed Mojtaba Jeddi.

Sina Shafiei received the best playwright award for his play “The Godfather”.

The star of the acclaimed Iranian movies “Standing in the Dust” and “The Midday Event”, Hadi Hejazifar, is the founder of the independent festival, which aims to introduce promising troupes and theatrical figures.

Writer AE Hotchner, friend to Hemingway, Newman, dead at 102

NEW YORK (AP) — A.E. Hotchner, a well-traveled author, playwright and gadabout whose street smarts and famous pals led to a loving, but litigated memoir of Ernest Hemingway, business adventures with Paul Newman and a book about his Depression-era childhood that became a Steven Soderbergh film, died Saturday at age 102.

He died at his home in Westport, Connecticut, according to his son, Timothy Hotchner, who did not immediately know the cause of death.

A. E. Hotchner, known to friends as “Ed” or “Hotch,” was an impish St. Louis native and ex-marbles champ who read, wrote and hustled himself out of poverty and went on to publish more than a dozen books, befriend countless celebrities and see his play, “The White House,” performed at the real White House for President Bill Clinton.

He was a natural fit for Elaine’s, the former Manhattan hotspot for the famous and the near-famous, and contributed the text for “Everyone Comes to Elaine’s,” an illustrated history. Hotchner’s other works

included the novel “The Man Who Lived at the Ritz,” bestselling biographies of Doris Day and Sophia Loren, and a musical, “Let ‘Em Rot!” co-written with Cy Coleman.

In his 90s, he completed an upbeat book of essays on aging, “O.J. in the Morning, G&T at Night.” When he was 100, he wrote the detective novel “The Amazing Adventures of Aaron Broom.” At 101, he adapted Hemingway’s “The Old Man and the Sea” for the stage.

He was a memorable storyteller — sometimes too memorable. Hotchner wrote an article about Elaine’s for Vanity Fair that included an anecdote about director Roman Polanski making advances on a woman on the way to the funeral of his wife, Sharon Tate, who was murdered in 1969 by Charles Manson’s followers. Polanski sued the magazine’s publisher, Condé Nast, for libel and in 2005 was awarded some \$87,000, plus court costs, by a jury in London.

The son of a furrier who went broke during the Depression, Aaron Edward Hotchner was born in 1917 in St. Louis, a city he would recall with deep affection despite times so

dire he claimed to have eaten paper to fight hunger. Hotchner wrote about his youth in “King of the Hill,” published in 1972 and adapted 20 years later into a Soderbergh film of the same name.

Clever and determined, Hotchner managed a scholarship to Washington University, where he and Tennessee Williams both worked on the school’s student magazine. Hotchner then joined the Air Force, a time he recalled good-naturedly in the memoir “The Day I Fired Alan Ladd, and Other World War II Adventures.” After the war, Hotchner settled in New York and became an editor at Cosmopolitan, and worked on literary fiction.

One submission was J.D. Salinger’s “Needle on a Scratchy Phonograph Record,” a World War II story the author gave to Hotchner under the condition that nothing — not a comma — be altered. Hotchner, who had been friendly with Salinger, came through — almost. The actual story was printed intact, but Cosmopolitan changed the title to “Blue Melody.”

Salinger never spoke to Hotchner again.



In this Jan. 22, 2019, file photo, Ernest Hemingway’s close friend and biographer, A.E. Hotchner, talks about his friendship with Hemingway at his home in Westport, Conn. A.E. (AP/Kathy Willens)

Around the same time, however, Hotchner lucked his way into literary history. Cosmopolitan wanted Hemingway to write an article about “The Future of Literature” and sent Hotchner to Cuba to track him down. So began a friendship that lasted until Hemingway’s suicide, in 1961. From Spain to Idaho, they hunted, drank and attended bullfights.