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Rouhani unveils 3 domestically-made cars

TEHRAN— During a ceremony on Wednesday, three Iranian-made cars were unveiled in the presence of President Hassan Rouhani, IRNA reported.

The ceremony, which was held after a cabinet meeting, was also participated by First Vice President Es'haq Jahangiri and Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Reza Rahmani.

Speaking to the media on the side-

lines of the ceremony, Rahmani said the pre-sales of these cars has been started and they will be distributed to the market soon.

The new cars are 90 percent domestically made and just a few of their parts are imported, the minister said adding that based on the planning underway manufacturing of those imported parts will be indigenized in the present and coming years. →4

Iranian students grab colorful medals at IPITEx 2020

TEHRAN — Iranian students won gold and silver medals at the Bangkok International Intellectual Property, Invention, Innovation and Technology Exposition (IPITEx 2020) which was held on February 2-6 in Bangkok, Thailand.

In the field of medical inventions, the Iranian team including Shahriar Shariati and Adel Ahmadi Fariman grabbed a silver medal and Fatemeh Ebrahimi Monfared won a gold medal.

In the field of medical equipment, information technology and electronics, the Iranian team consisted of Amir Abbas Mohammadi Koushki, Majid Nouri, Faezeh Karegari, Zahra Ghosavi, Ghazal Sohrabi, Negar Ataee and Ariana Nouri won the gold medal, ISNA news agency reported on Wednesday.

Moreover, Zahra Naderi, Maysam Pooryousefian and Ali Nouri won the silver medal and placed second. →9

Sanders calls Saudi rulers 'murderous thugs'

PRESS TV — US Senator Bernie Sanders, the leading Democratic presidential candidate, has condemned Saudi Arabia's regime during a town hall meeting, calling the country's leaders "murderous thugs."

"For years, we have loved Saudi Arabia - our wonderful ally; the only problem is the people who run that country are murderous thugs," Sanders said on Tuesday, according to Middle East Eye.

The Vermont senator described Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman as a "billionaire dictator."

The senator also reiterated his stance that the United States should not ignore the needs of Palestinians and blasted the "right-wing racist government that currently exists in Israel."

He also pointed to the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip. →10



ARTICLE

Fatemeh Salehi
Mehr News Agency
journalist

Why does Saudi Arabia need to hold talks with Iran?

Recently, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, who traveled to Germany to attend the 2020 Munich Security Conference, said, that after the martyrdom of commander Soleimani, we received a message from Saudi Arabia calling on talks with Iran. Zarif also reiterated that although he replied to the Saudis' response, he received no further messages.

Following the remarks by the Iranian foreign minister, Saudi Foreign Minister, Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud claimed that Riyadh had not sent any private messages to Tehran.

On the issue of talks between Iran and Saudi Arabia, we should note a few points:

First, Saudi Arabia is trying to compare the dialogue between Riyadh and Tehran with the US-Iran negotiation, and is constantly changing its stance on Iran, given the regional situation.

The nature of the negotiations between Iran and the U.S. differs from that between Iran and Saudi Arabia. Iran has repeatedly stated that it is willing to hold talks with the Saudis without any preconditions, as the proximity of the two countries is in favor of stabilizing the region and reducing tensions.

Second, the Saudis have always set mostly general and vague preconditions for starting talks with Iran, such as the need for Iran to change its behavior in the region. The foreign policies of the countries are defined by their foreign interests, so Saudi Arabia expects to change all of Iran's behavior and policies in the region, which is totally inappropriate.

Third, Saudi officials have been at odds over developments in the region; on the one hand, they know that the U.S. and the West cannot provide the country's security forever, which led Riyadh to the dialogue with Tehran, and on the other hand, they are still looking forward U.S. support. The recent regional developments have led Saudi Arabia to face new calculations in the region.

Fourth, remarks by Zarif indicates that the Saudis are deeply afraid of escalating tensions in the region. →7

Prof on women's rights, Iran-U.S. tensions and Majlis elections

By Salman Parviz

Dr. Hakimeh Biria is an assistant professor at the University of Tehran at the Faculty of Islamic Education and Thought. She is also a mother of four children. She was with her father in Canada for one and a half years and went to Houston, Texas and eventually to Louisiana for her studies.

Returned to Iran in 2009 and completed her Ph.D. in American Studies from the University of Tehran. Her research has been focused on U.S.-Iran relations and Islamophobia in the West. She has also had some research on women's portrayal in Western media.

The following is an excerpt from the interview with Dr. Biria:

Question: You have graduated from Tehran University with a PhD in American studies. Also studied in U.S., with a BA from Univ. of Houston

and MA from Louisiana State University in mass communication. Please comment on women's right in the Islamic Republic compared to other Islamic countries and also the West.

Answer: There are those in the West who make an allegation against the Islamic Republic with regards to women's rights. This position is indicative of an oppression that is actually made in the West against Islam in general. Many people have misunderstandings against Islam. Islamic Republic is hurt by such propaganda.

Does Islam oppress women? So if you go back to the words of Imam Khomeini, you see that they always talk very highly about women's position, stating there is no difference between men and women's position status wise.

They both (genders) have a chance to grow spiritually and materially including academically

Fajr visual art festival offers new ideas with high creativity

By Manijeh Rezapoor

TEHRAN — New ideas and high creativity are what sparkle in paintings on view at the 12th Fajr Festival of Visual Arts underway at the Saba Art and Cultural Institute in Tehran.

"I liked the paintings on display at the festival such as the collection of paintings with the embossed patterns. I believe they enjoy high creativity," Tayyebeh Imani, an art student who was visiting the exhibition, told the Tehran Times on Wednesday.

"I also liked the calligraphy works on show but I believe the calligraphic paintings are more attractive and innovative," she stated.

Fatemeh Gerami, an artist who is participating in the festival with her Persian miniature

named "Day and Night", agreed that the displayed paintings are also the highlight of the exhibit.

"I am a graduate of art in the field of miniature, however, I believe the paintings are very good and creative," she said.

She also noted that she believes some of the miniature works being shown are worth much more than their asking prices at the exhibit.

"The delicacy and time consuming work of miniature is worth more than the price asked for some works. But perhaps the artists have chosen such low prices for their works," she added.

A section dedicated to collections of photos on the recent floods in the provinces of Sistan-Baluchestan and Khuzestan is another

highlight of the festival. Basically there is no truth behind such a statement and allegation that women are oppressed in the Islamic Republic.

In action, women have been oppressed in many societies and in history, in Europe, Asia, Africa, etc. That has nothing to do with the Islamic Republic.

In actuality, before the 1979 Islamic Revolution of Iran, women had been oppressed because of the fact that for decades there were people who were trying to make them lose their Islamic identity. So we are talking about a different kind of oppression.

The full-fledged oppression of women in the West, including sexualization and objectification of women, trying to use women for the purpose of selling things in society. Women have become tools for selling in a system of capitalism. Islam's idea is to bring women out of such an oppression. →7

highlight of the festival.

Photos by Mohammad Abbasi, Keivan Jafari, Pejman Molai and Mohammad Ahangar depict the hardship the people of the regions have been through in the floods.

Life still goes on in some of the photos, while desperate moments and moments of hope are spotlighted here and there in the photos.

The organizers have also paid tribute to the people killed in the unintentional downing of the Ukrainian plane by Iran in January in an installation set. The organizers have also dedicated a hall to displaying artworks on Quds Force commander Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, who was assassinated in a U.S. airstrike in Baghdad. →12

Projection mapping in Tehran sends sympathy to Chinese battling coronavirus

TEHRAN — In a ceremony on Tuesday night, a projection mapping was carried out on the iconic Azadi Tower in Tehran to convey the message of sympathy with Chinese people fighting coronavirus.

The ceremony was held in the presence of Chinese Ambassador to Iran Chang Hua, ISNA reported.

An outbreak of the disease, originating at a seafood market, occurred in the central Chinese city of Wuhan; which killed at least 2,000 people and infected 75,000 in China so far. →9



PERSPECTIVE

By Amir Miri
Tehran Times journalist

Dialogue, tolerance missing in West Asia

Today almost all news channels speak about chaos, violence, terrorism and war in West Asia and North Africa.

In certain countries in the West Asia region people are also fed up with bitter wrangling and lack of toleration for opposition voices. Such incidents have put people in an unfavorable condition.

Corruption and bad governance are also taking tolls. Lack of enough jobs and no hope for the future, especially among the young population.

Now people ask about the solution. For example in Lebanon and Iraq people demonstrate in the streets, seeking change of governments and better governance.

The Middle East is known for diversity of religions and ethnicities. For example, Lebanon has more variety in culture and religion than China. This while China has more than 1.3 billion people and Lebanon only 6 million.

According to Pew Research Center and Fearon list, the Middle East has one of the most diverse regions of the world in terms of the culture and ethnicity.

This diversity, more or less, exists in all countries. Diversity is not bad at all if people could express their ideas freely.

Diversity can help democracy to be dynamic, but the situation in the Middle East is different. Unfortunately, this diversity in the region has turned into a threat and increased danger of civil war.

Many groups do not want to listen or tolerate different voices. It is a big problem. They should learn to listen to each other.

■ **What is the first step?**

Tolerance for oppositions' voice, free parties and effective strong constitutions that protect democracy are remedies for the problems afflicting countries in the Middle East.

These countries need new constitutions based on respect to all ethnicities and cultures.

A couple of years ago the Russians announced that they have prepared a series of drafts for a new constitution to solve these problems. However, it should be noted that the model of democracy in the Middle East is different from other parts of the world. →2



© ISNA/ Mona Hoobehfekar

Iranian military experts reassembling damaged black box of Ukrainian plane: defense minister

POLITICAL d e s k TEHRAN — Defense industry experts have been assigned to reassemble and analyze details of the black box flight recorder of the ill-fated Ukrainian passenger plane, Iranian Defense Minister Amir Hatami announced on Wednesday.

“The black box has been badly damaged. The defense industries have been asked to reassemble the black box and then analyze it,” Hatami said after a cabinet session.

Experts are now trying to reassemble the black box, he added. The Ukrainian Boeing 737-800 went down just minutes after taking off from Tehran’s Imam Khomeini international airport on the morning of January 8. It was mistakenly downed by the Iranian military.

Under global aviation rules, Iran has the right to lead the investigation.

Plane manufacturers and experts say few countries are capable of analyzing black boxes.

After detailed investigations the Iranian military announced on January 11 that the plane had been mistaken for a cruise missile by the IRGC Aerospace units. The incident took place nearly four hours after Iran fired missiles at a major U.S. airbase in western Iraq in retaliation for the January 3 assassination of top Iranian General Qassem Soleimani. The military had been put on high alert due to the situation.

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

Tehran to host Dutch FM on Friday

POLITICAL d e s k TEHRAN — Stef Blok, the Dutch minister of foreign affairs, is scheduled to pay an official visit to Tehran on Friday to confer with the senior Iranian officials on bilateral ties as well as key regional and international developments.



In his two-day visit, Blok is planned to hold meetings with his Iranian counterpart Mohammad Javad Zarif and also President Hassan Rouhani.

Blok is also slated to travel to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) this week to discuss tensions in the region.

Iran and the Netherlands hold regular diplomatic talks every six months.

In November 2019, Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Seyed Abbas Araqchi paid an official visit

to the Netherlands to participate in another round of political talks between the two countries.

During his visit, the Iranian diplomat met with his Dutch counterpart and the foreign minister of the country.

Austrian foreign minister due in Iran to discuss JCPOA

Austrian Foreign Minister Alexander Schallenberg plans to travel to Iran on Saturday to hold talks with senior officials of the Islamic Republic on the latest efforts to save the 2015 nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Schallenberg will arrive in the Iranian capital of Tehran on Saturday and hold talks with President Hassan Rouhani and Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, Austria’s German-language daily newspaper Die Presse said.

The trip is in connection with the European Union’s efforts to mediate the nuclear dispute between Iran and the U.S.

In remarks last month, Schallenberg had said, “When the belligerents aren’t willing to approach the negotiating table, we can bring the negotiating table to them.”

In May 2018, U.S. President Donald Trump pulled his country out of the nuclear deal.

Iran and the remaining parties launched talks to save the JCPOA after the U.S. withdrawal, but the three EU parties to the deal – France, Britain and Germany – have failed to ensure Iran’s economic interests.

The EU’s inaction forced Tehran to stop honoring certain commitments to the nuclear deal.

Iran maintains that the new measures are not designed to harm the JCPOA but to save the accord by creating a balance in the commitments.

(Source: Tasnim)

Dialogue, tolerance missing in West Asia

1 → The most important principle is respect and recognition of all individuals, ethnicities, and religions.

The best system for these countries is a federal government like Germany that is regularly monitored by parliament. However the most important thing in a democracy is to devise a mechanism for listening to different voices. Democracy entails elections and election entails existence of political parties.

In the first step, the constitution should provide free election and let all people decide about their future. The constitution should classify all political movements to a number of parties based on their own ideas and preferences, where each party represents a group of people, from communists to religionists. In such a situation the youth are lured by extremist groups like al-Qaeda, al-Nusra, or Daesh.

For example, the Muslim Brotherhood should be given a chance to contest elections in Muslim Arab nations. Communists should also be given such a chance.

Such parties or groups should clarify their position without fear. These parties should be active. Each province should also have its own parliament.

Of course, human rights and fundamental freedoms should not be jeopardized by any of these groups, something that the Supreme Court does in Pakistan.

As a result, the new constitutions could help strengthen national unity and protect democracy.

Hearts beat for election

Shamkhani: Iran cannot remain strong without a strong parliament

POLITICAL d e s k TEHRAN — Iran’s heart is beating for parliamentary election on Friday. Officials wish an enthusiastic turnout at this sensitive juncture in history.

The election is taking place as Iran is dealing with unprecedented illegal sanctions imposed by the Trump administration in line with his “maximum pressure” strategy against the Islamic Republic.

The cruel economic pressure on the Iranian citizens, which Donald Trump himself has called “economic war” and “unprecedented in history” are primarily intended to disappoint the people and make them lose hope of the system.

However, despite all these economic hardships, people are expected to make ill-wishers of Iran’s dignity disappointed.

Presidential chief of staff Mahmoud Vaezi has said boycotting election has “no result”. He also believes that high turnout would be a nail in the coffin of the “maximum pressure” campaign.

He also has said election is an issue of “Iran’s interests and security”.

■ “Anyone who wants a ‘strong Iran’ should participate in the polls”

Ali Shamkhani, secretary of Iran’s Supreme National Security Council (SNSC), has called for a high turnout in the polls, saying the country cannot remain powerful without a strong parliament.

“A strong Iran without a strong parliament is an unachievable dream,” said Shamkhani in a tweet on Wednesday.

“In a religious democracy, political participation is the only way to form a strong parliament,” he said.

He added that any Iranian who wants a “strong Iran” should participate in the polls.

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

57,918,000 Iranians are entitled to vote in the Friday elections. A little more than 29 million voters are men and 28,800,000 are women.

2,900,000 Iranians are potential first-time voters.

The eligible age to vote has been 18 since January 2007.



Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Leader of the Islamic Revolution, said on Tuesday that if more people vote in the elections the next parliament will be “stronger”.

“The more people attend ballot boxes, Majlis will be stronger,” Ayatollah Khamenei said in a meeting with a large number of people from East Azarbaijan province to mark the anniversary of Tabrizers’ uprising against the Pahlavi regime on February 18, 1978.

Iran has been a flag bearer of democracy in the Western Asia region since the Constitutional Revolution in the early 1900s. It was for this reason that President Hassan Rouhani said on Monday that Iran has set the bedrock for democracy and elections in the region.

■ “Massive turnout will enrage U.S.”

Speaking at the cabinet on Wednesday, Rouhani said the current year’s elections bear added significance in the light of the fact that Iran has come under intense sanctions pressure, noting that a high voter turnout can reflect the popular stance against the extremists in Washington.

The president went on to say that an inclusive and enthusiastic popular turnout in the parliamentary elections will “enrage” the United States, stressing the significant role of the legislative chamber in helping the

government’s efforts to counter sanctions.

Iran can triumph over the U.S. pressure campaign through perseverance and strength, Rouhani added.

People forming long queues at polling stations is what will “upset” and “enrage” the U.S., the president said, adding that Washington will be delighted to see a low voter turnout, Press TV reported.

Rouhani called Majlis a significant body as it passes laws that could last for decades, thus affecting the country’s future.

Rouhani called the sanctions “a terrorist American action” against the Iranian people, adding that the current American officials have been emboldened in their attempts to pressure Iran through support by the Israeli regime and the region’s reactionary states.

A high electoral turnout, Rouhani noted, would mandate the parliament to join the government and the judiciary in efforts to defeat the U.S. bans and resolve domestic problems.

“We should all stand alongside one another... We should resolve the problems together,” he added. “That day when the U.S. despairs, its maximum pressure will have no effect. It will surrender, come to the negotiation table, and accept the word of truth.”

Intelligence chief assures Iranians of full security in Friday elections

POLITICAL d e s k TEHRAN — The intelligence minister announced on Wednesday that there is no security concern over the Friday parliamentary elections as the entire relevant bodies have done their best to prevent any possible mishap.

“The entire bodies, involved in restoring security to the elections, have kept it via complete intelligence-security supremacy,” Mahmoud Alavi said after a session of the cabinet of ministers.

He further said that the intelligence and security forces will continue their mission till the end of elections.

Also on Wednesday, Tehran Police Chief Brigadier General Hossein Rahimi said around 14,000 police forces protect the security of 4,552 polling stations in the metropolis.

The nationwide votes for the parliament and the midterm election of the Assembly of Experts will be held simultaneously



on February 21.

The campaigns for the Assembly of Experts election had already begun on February 6.

A total of 7,148 candidates, including from religious minorities, are running for the parliament. There are 290 seats in the parliament up for grabs.

In capital Tehran, 1,453 candidates are contesting for 30 parliamentary seats.

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

Also people in five provinces - North Khorasan, Khorasan Razavi, Fars, Tehran and Qom - are going to vote for candidates vying for seven vacant seats in the 88-member Assembly of Experts, a high-ranking body that is constitutionally tasked to elect and monitor leader of the Islamic Revolution.

Members of the assembly are directly elected to office by people for an eight-year term.

UN chief calls on Iran, Russia and Turkey to find political solution to Syrian crisis

By staff and agency

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has called for an immediate cease-fire in Syria, urging Turkey, Russia and Iran to find a political solution.

In an interview with AP published on Tuesday, Guterres said that the suffering of Syrians is “horrible”.

Over the past week, thousands of desperate families have been fleeing the war in western Aleppo, many of them leaving their homes for the third or fourth time in a seemingly futile search for safety, the Independent reported.

At the same time, inside the city itself, crowds of government supporters took to the streets to celebrate the rout of rebel forces and terrorists on its outskirts, and the Syrian army announced a strategic victory in the long-running battle for Aleppo.

According to Al-Masdar News, Saadallah Al-Jabri Square in Aleppo witnessed a mass gathering to celebrate the victories of the Syrian army, including the capture of the last terrorist-held areas in the northwestern part of the city.

Sheikh Ahmad Wais, the Imam of the famous Al-Hassan in the Al-Hamdaniyah District, told Sputnik Arabic that the victory of Aleppo is a prelude to the great victory that will be achieved over all of Syria’s occupied territories.

Government troops captured more than 30 villages in the western countryside of Aleppo over the weekend. In doing so, they put the country’s second city out of reach of rebel and terrorist fire for the first time in years and cemented control of the former commercial hub’s link to the capital, Damascus.

In a televised address on Monday, President Bashar al-Assad promised to push on further with the offensive.

“This liberation does not mean the end of the war, and does not mean the end of the schemes nor the end of terrorism or the surrender of enemies,” he said.

“But it means that we rubbed their noses in the dirt as a prelude for complete victory and ahead of their defeat, sooner or later.”

Government forces are pushing further into the last bastion of Idlib and western Aleppo, which is controlled by both opposition and terrorist groups who have united to fight off the attack, among them the extremist Hayyat Tahrir al-Sham.

The UN has called on Russia and Turkey, which backs a number of rebel groups and has its own forces stationed in Idlib, to agree to broker another ceasefire to allow humanitarian groups to assist those in need.



who meets with Zarif would be reflecting the U.S. position with Iran.

“Trump and Pompeo are afraid of a senator hearing facts from the Iranian

foreign minister,” Zarif told reporters after a cabinet meeting.

He said this wasn’t his first face-to-face chat with an American lawmaker in the last 20 years.

Murphy said meeting Zarif was important because it is “dangerous not to talk to one’s enemies,” adding: “I have no delusions about Iran — they are our adversary.”

Tehran and Washington came close to an open conflict in January, when a U.S. drone strike in Iraq killed Iran’s top general. Iran retaliated with missile strikes on a base housing U.S. troops in Iraq.

Tensions have been escalating steadily

First Vice-President Es’haq Jahangiri also said on Wednesday that a parliament which is supported by high votes will be more effective in settling the country’s problems.

On his Tuesday remarks, Ayatollah Khamenei also said that voting is a “civil right” that will strengthen the country.

“Election is a civil right, public Jihad, and divine test that if accompanied with massive participation of people it will bring glory and respect to the Islamic establishment and protect the country against plots,” the Leader stated.

Ayatollah Khamenei said that both the enemies and friends of Iran will monitor participation of the people in the elections.

He added that the enemies want to see the results of their pressure on Iran and the country’s friends are monitoring the process of elections worriedly.

■ “Participation in elections strengthens diplomacy”

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Wednesday that participation in the elections is the “biggest reinforcement for diplomacy” to counter the United States’ policies.

Zarif also wished that the Guardian Council would have approved more parliament hopefuls.

“We all had other preferences. Maybe we thought if eligibility of more candidates was confirmed, the people would have more options. However, today is not the time for such issue. Today is the time to tell the United States that its policy of maximum pressure has failed,” he told reporters on the sidelines of a cabinet meeting.

He added, “As the Leader stated, the United States must see and know that its sanctions have been ineffective and the people participate in the elections.”

He also said that as the people showed in funeral of General Qassem Soleimani that they do not tolerate the U.S. coercion and defend their country, their participation in the elections will be the “best sign of this defense”.

Zarif also said that the people’s participation in the elections will strengthen his team in arena of foreign policy and help them counter the U.S. sanctions more resolutely.



On Tuesday, a Turkish delegation ended two days of talks with Russian officials in Moscow with no statements made.

Amid the fight to liberate Idlib, Iranian Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani met the Syrian president in Damascus on Sunday. The two officials said Syria and Iran determined to do their best to put an end to the evil phenomenon of terrorism in the war-hit Syria.

Larijani said, “Iran will continue supporting Syria in the war on terrorism.”

Zarif: Trump and Pompeo afraid of a senator hearing facts from Iranian FM

TEHRAN — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Wednesday that he believes his recent meeting with a U.S. senator had spooked the Trump administration because it was an opportunity to talk directly to “the American nation.”

Zarif met last week with Sen. Chris Murphy on the sidelines of an international security conference in Germany.

The Connecticut Democrat defended the meeting on Tuesday after his actions were questioned in conservative media, and as President Donald Trump suggested they may have violated U.S. law. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said he hoped anyone

who meets with Zarif would be reflecting the U.S. position with Iran.

Congressional committee says Trump's justification for Soleimani assassination 'continues to change'

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — United States House Foreign Affairs Committee has slammed U.S. President Donald Trump's justification for assassinating Iranian General Qasem Soleimani.

In a tweet on Tuesday, the House Foreign Affairs Committee said the Trump administration "continues to change their story".

"There was a lack of a specific, immediate threat to U.S. forces or other personnel that would merit the killing of Soleimani," the committee said.

It added, "We look forward to @SecPompeo's public testimony before the committee and American people February 28th."

The Trump administration has made several contradicting statements as it explains why the U.S. assassinated Soleimani.

According to Aljazeera, the White House added to its ever-evolving list of justifications for murdering Soleimani last week when in a memo addressed to Congress, it did not specifically cite the "imminent threat" the Trump administration had previously said the Iranian general posed in justifying its January attack.

In a legally-mandated memo, the White House told Congress, "The purposes of this action were to protect United States personnel, to deter Iran from conducting or supporting further attacks against United States forces and interests."

Although the notice references that the threat of "further attack existed", the memo makes no mention and gives no evidence of the "imminent attacks" the Trump administration initially gave as a justification for killing Soleimani.

In another tweet on February 15, the House Foreign Affairs Committee said, "The White House's official report directly contradicts the President's false assertion that he attacked Iran to prevent an imminent attack against United States personnel and embassies."

Democratic Representative Eliot Engel, chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, slammed on February 14 the Trump administration over assassination, arguing a new report justifying the attack undermines the argument that the operation was in response to an imminent threat.



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

"To make matters worse, to avoid having to justify its actions to Congress, the administration falsely claims Congress had already authorized the strike under the 2002 Iraq war resolution," the New York Democrat added. "This legal theory is absurd."

Congressional Democrats, and even some Republicans, have complained top administration officials haven't adequately outlined the imminent threat that justified the provocative move of assassinating Soleimani or shown an adequate legal justification.

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

In an interview with CNN aired on Saturday, veteran U.S. diplomat Joseph Nye said Trump revoked an executive order signed by President Gerald Ford by directing the Pentagon to assassinate Soleimani.

"By assassinating of a high official in a third country when you are not at war, you are revoking what Gerald Ford had done after Vietnam which says we are not to get

into the business of assassination. I don't think we really want to drop that norm," Nye said.

"What happens for example if Secretary [Mike] Pompeo goes to Baghdad and somebody shoots him? We'd have no right to complain if we've shot Soleimani."

He noted, "We gave up assassination after the Vietnam war after Gerald Ford signed an executive order. I am not sure that Trump thought through what it means if you drop that moral principle."

Wendy Sherman, the former undersecretary of state for political affairs who led the U.S. negotiating team that concluded the Iran nuclear agreement, has said that assassination of Soleimani was an extraordinary risk.

"I think the president took an extraordinary risk and I don't think we've seen the end of that risk yet," WUSF News quoted her as saying in a news conference before the Ringling College Library Association Town Hall lecture series.

She added, "After he [Soleimani] was murdered by the United States government, they [the Iranian people] were in the streets protesting America. That's not in our national security interest."

She said that the assassination of

Soleimani and the subsequent retaliation by Iran against U.S. troops in Iraq brought the two countries close to war.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has said that the assassination of Soleimani by the U.S. was a flagrant violation of international law.

"If we are talking about the latest swirl of U.S.-Iranian escalation with which the current year started, then our position is known. We condemn any actions that contradict the principles of the UN Charter and lead to increased tensions in the region. The Pentagon attack on the airport in Baghdad organized on January 3, which killed the commander of the special forces of [Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps] IRGC of Iran [Qassem] Soleimani, became a flagrant violation of international law," UrduPoint quoted Lavrov as saying on Monday in an interview with the Italian La Stampa daily.

The Russian foreign minister pointed out that it was a civilian airport, emphasizing that "these actions on the part of Americans are beyond the limits."

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

Iran retaliated to the attack on January 8 by firing dozens of ballistic missiles at a major U.S. airbase in western Iraq, dealing a great blow to the U.S. that it is invincible.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Feb. 14 that Trump was misled to believe his country would get away with the assassination of General Soleimani.

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

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

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

November's unrest death toll to be announced in coming days: government

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Government spokesman Ali Rabiei said on Wednesday that the death toll resulting from the widespread November protests will be announced in the coming days, ISNA reported.

Rabiei said the Iranian Legal Medicine Organization is responsible to announce the death toll, but further investigations by security bodies were needed before making the announcement.

"I think in the coming days the exact statistics of the Aban (November) incidents would be release by relevant bodies," he added.

Widespread protests erupted in Iran in November 2019 after the government announced an increase in the price of gasoline, a subsidized commodity that is still cheaper in Iran than other countries in the world.

Protests turned violent in some cases. A number of banks and government buildings were set ablaze. Some rioters even tried to put oil pipelines and refineries on ablaze.

Soon after the protests erupted, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei supported the government's decision, putting an end to doubts and possible moves to reverse the decision.

Ayatollah Khamenei urged the authorities to take good care of the affected people and assuage the hardship caused by the move.



■ Government will do its utmost not be put on FATF blacklist

Also asked about the Paris-based Financial Action Task Force (FATF), Rabiei said the government is doing everything it can with that regard.

"According to the economy minister's report today, most countries, including Europe, China, Russia, Turkey, South Africa and other friends of Iran, supported us and only the U.S., Saudi Arabia and Israel opposed

Iran," the spokesman said.

"The same countries that are sponsoring terrorism tried the most to put Iran in the [FATF's] blacklist," he added.

He said the government continues its efforts so that the Islamic Republic reaches the best decision. "Our effort is aimed at not entering the black list, but if we do, it would be possible to exit," Rabiei said.

On the latest developments surrounding the downed Ukrainian plane's black box, the spokesman wondered why the other sides have not sent the necessary software to decipher the contents of the black box.

"However, we will continue our measures along with Ukraine," he said. "The government has decided that the deciphering of the black box take place outside Iran with Iran's presence if it would not be possible to do so inside Iran."

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 Qassem 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.

We won't oblige Lebanon to accept aid from Iran: Larijani

TEHRAN (MNA) — Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani has said Iran is interested in expanding cooperation with Lebanon, but at the same time it does not oblige the Arab country to accept assistance.

Larijani made the remarks in an interview with 'Lebanon 24' while he was in Beirut on Sunday.

He emphasized that the Lebanese nation is the only party that can solve the problems

of its own country. He added that the Lebanese people will reach 'the safety of the shore' whenever they decide, but putting trust in countries such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE would be a mistake, because "their words would be nothing more than empty promises."

Larijani then said economic cooperation between Iran and Lebanon depends on the request of the Lebanese government, stressing

that this requires continuous coordination, communication and cooperation between the two sides, and that "we will not force anyone to take any measure in this regard."

Regarding regional issues, Larijani stated that, contrary to certain assumptions, the Islamic Republic of Iran has no intention to infiltrate a country, adding "Iran's presence in Iraq and Syria is no secret matter, but rather it is at the official request of their respective

governments."

Larijani further dismissed claims of Iran having a military base in Syria, adding "interference in the internal affairs of an independent state has never been part of Iran's principles."

He also added that those claims of US-Russia coordination to prevent the spread of Iran's influence in the region were completely unfounded.

Someone should talk to Iran, U.S. senator says amid Trump anti-Iran approach



(Press TV) — Despite U.S. President Donald Trump's anti-Iran approach, Senator Chris Murphy says "someone should," talk to Iran.

The Democratic senator made the comment in a Medium post published Tuesday after reports that he met with Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif.

"I think it's dangerous to not talk to your enemies. Discussions and negotiations are a way to ease tensions and reduce the chances for crisis," he said. "I cannot conduct diplomacy on behalf of the whole of the U.S. government, and I don't pretend to be in a position to do so. But if Trump isn't going to talk to Iran, then someone should."

The meeting has faced backlash from Trump and his top diplomat, Mike Pompeo.

"If they met, I don't know what they said. I hope they were reinforcing America's foreign policy, not their own,"

Pompeo said during a news conference in Ethiopia.

The U.S. president went even further, suggesting that the Connecticut lawmaker's move was a violation of U.S. law.

"Senator Murphy met with the Iranians; is that a fact? I just saw that on the way over. Is there anything that I should know? Because that sounds like, to me, a violation of the Logan Act," Trump said.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi has said that the meeting was part of the country's "general diplomacy."

Tensions between Iran and the U.S. have risen in the wake of Trump's anti-Iran campaign in the wake of his withdrawal from an internationally backed nuclear deal.

Tehran has vowed to resist the U.S. economic war after scaling back its commitments under the deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

Guardian Council predicts good election turnout

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Abbasali Kadkhodaei, the spokesman for the Guardian Council, has predicted a good turnout at the Friday parliamentary polls, saying the average participation of people in previous elections has not been below 50 percent.

"Economic problems affect the turnout, but our prediction is that we would have a good turnout at the Esfand 2 (February 21) elections," Kadkhodaei said on Wednesday, Mehr reported.

He said the Guardian Council follows the rules and regulations with regard to vetting the candidates.



"The Majlis has passed the electoral law and the Guardian Council follows the electoral law," he remarked.

He ruled out claims that the council has political leanings, saying, "This claim was brought up in previous terms as well, but the formation of the Majlis and presidency in previous terms shows that the Guardian Council has never had a political view."

"The Guardian Council judges with regard to political factions with closed eyes (without leanings)," Kadkhodaei said. "The criterion is the candidates' records."

Kadkhodaei noted that the council does not view the elections as a corporation with political parties as its shareholders.

Iran's 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 Friday.

Election campaigns for 290 seats in the parliament officially started from Feb. 13.

The candidates had eight days to campaign. 24 hours before the elections, campaigns must be stopped.

Almost 58 million out of a population of 83 million people are eligible to vote. Nearly three million will be first-time voters.

Earlier this month, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said, "Those who love dear Iran and its credit 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.

Speaking on Tuesday, Ayatollah Khamenei said this week's parliamentary elections take place at a critical time of U.S. attempts to drive a wedge between the Iranian nation and government.

The Leader also described elections as a contributor to the strength of the country and called for a high turnout to foil Washington's "evil intentions".

Saudis have provided arms to Jaish ul-Adl terrorists: general

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — The commander of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Ground Force says Saudi Arabia has provided a Pakistan-based terrorist group conducting acts of terror against the Islamic Republic with at least three plane loads of weapons and equipment.



Brigadier General Mohammad Pakpour made the remarks on Tuesday, when he said members of the so-called Jaish ul-Adl terrorist group operating on southeastern borders of Iran are well-armed.

This shows that the terrorists enjoy the "all-out backing of the U.S., Saudi Arabia and their regional allies," Pakpour said, according to Press TV.

The general added that the IRGC Ground Force had dealt a "heavy blow" to the terrorists despite the Saudi support.

The Jaish ul-Adl terrorist group, which is based in Pakistan, has been behind several bomb attacks and kidnappings in the southeast of Iran.

On October 15, 2018, the Jaish-ul-Adl terrorist group infiltrated Iran from the Pakistani side of the border and took hostage 14 border guards, local Basij forces, and IRGC members.

Jaish al-Adl was founded after its parent group, the al-Qaeda-affiliated Jundullah, was dissolved following the capture of its leader, Abdolmalek Rigi, by Iran in 2010.

Over the past years, Iranian security forces and border guards have engaged in several clashes with terror groups, many of whom tried to enter the country from Pakistan and Iraq to carry out attacks.

Last year, top Iranian general Qassem Soleimani, who was assassinated by the United States earlier this year, warned the Pakistanis to be aware of attempts by Saudi Arabia to ruin their country through its "money".

"Our concern is that why the Pakistani government and people let the Saudis provide Takfiris with money which will cause the world's confrontation against Pakistan," the general lamented.

Soleimani said Iran does not want mere condolences, but concrete action from neighboring Pakistan, asking, "Can't you, as a nuclear-armed state, deal with a hundreds-strong terrorist group in the region?"

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	478755.1
IFX	6206.67

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	45,354 rials
GBP	54,604 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$58.14/b
WTI	\$52.95/b
OPEC Basket	\$57.24/b
Gold	\$1,611.85/oz
Silver	\$18.42/oz
Platinum	\$1,016.65/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

TEDPIX surpasses 478,700 points

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), ended 6,634 points higher at 478,754 at Wednesday, IRNA reported.

As reported, over 5,065 billion securities worth 34.582 trillion rials (about \$823.3 million) were traded at TSE.

The first market's index rose 3,479 points and the second market's index climbed 19,502 points at this exchange on Wednesday.



The index 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.

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.

Iran, Kazakhstan to jointly build an industrial, commercial complex in Aktau SEZ

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iran and Kazakhstan inked an agreement to jointly build an industrial, commercial complex in Kazakhstan's Aktau Special Economic Zone.

As reported by the Embassy of Kazakhstan in Tehran, the project to construct the mentioned complex worth €15 million is aimed to facilitate exporting Iranian goods to Kazakhstan and Central Asia and vise-versa.



The complex will be located in a 5-hectare area on the Kazakh part of the Caspian Sea.

The agreement to build the complex was signed between SEZ "Sea Port Aktau" and Qazvin Chamber of Commerce during a visit of a delegation of officials from SEZ Aktau lead by the board chairman of the Special Economic Zone Bekbol Orynbassarov to Iran's Qazvin Province.

As a follow-up of a recent meeting of the Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Iran Askhat Orazbay with officials of Qazvin Province, on February 18, a visit of the officials of the Special Economic Zone "Sea Port Aktau" to Qazvin was organized with a support and facilitation of the Kazakh Embassy in Tehran.

Within the framework of the visit a meeting was held with the Deputy Governor of Qazvin Province on Economic issues Issa Qobadi and representatives of the local business, a meeting was held with the President of Qazvin Chamber of Commerce Mehdi Bakhshandeh and the members of the chamber as well as site visits to the leading companies of the province and Anzali Port were organized.

Iran's export to EAEU climbs 72% in 10 months

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — The value of Iran's exports to the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU)'s member states rose 72 percent during the first ten months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-December 21, 2019) compared to the same period of time in the past year, the spokesman of Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) announced.

Mentioning the significant growth of trade between Iran and EAEU since implementation of the free trade agreement (FTA) between the two sides on October 27, 2019, Rouhollah Latifi also announced that the weight of Iran's export to those countries increased 114 percent during the mentioned ten-month period, IRNA reported.

According to the officials, Iran exported 2.683 million tons of commodities worth over \$861 million to the EAEU member states during the first ten months of the present year.

Iran's import from the EAEU has also risen to 2.563 million tons valued at \$1.1 billion in the mentioned time span, indicating five percent fall in worth and 41 percent rise in weight, year on year.

After several years of negotiations, Iran and



Eurasian Economic Union finally reached a free trade agreement in 2018 based on which about 862 commodity items are subject to preferential tariffs.

The interim agreement enabling forma-

tion of a free trade area between Iran and the EAEU was signed on May 17, 2018 and officially came into force on October 27, 2019.

Iran is a very important market in the region and development of ties with this country

is of high significance for the EAEU members (Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan).

The free trade agreement between Iran and this union has laid the ground for the expansion of trade ties between the two sides.

Iran signing the agreement with the bloc has increased the country's exports to the EAEU member states significantly, which is a turning point for the Islamic Republic to boost its export under the sanctions time.

Iran-EAEU free trade agreement is also an opportunity for Iran to reach its goal of boosting exports to its neighbors, something that the country is seriously pursuing.

While the FTA has facilitated Iran's trade with EAEU member states, it should be considered that it is a limited agreement valid for three years, so traders should take the most advantage of the current condition.

Although, the interim agreement is planned to come to a fully-functional agreement between the EAEU and Iran, as the minister for trade of the Eurasian Economic Commission has said that the temporary agreement between Iran and EAEU can be turned into a permanent one after three years.

Domestic production to create jobs for youth, industry min. says

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iranian Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Reza Rahmani says promoting domestic production is going to create new job opportunities for the country's youth which constitute the majority of the country's 80-million population, IRNA reported.

"The most important characteristic of domestic production is creation of employment for young people, the youth joblessness nowadays is considered one of the main problems in the country," the minister said on Wednesday.

Speaking in a specialized desk on promoting domestic production in the petrochemical industry, Rahmani said: "Domestic production has a significant impact on the boom of industry, the prosperity of universities and scientific centers, economic self-sufficiency, and many other macro-economic and development variables."

He further stressed that developing the country's domestic production must be seriously pursued whether the country is under sanctions or not.

The minister mentioned some of the country's improvements in the industry, mining and trade sector, saying that his ministry is seriously pursuing the develop-



ment and support of domestic production in a variety of areas.

Back in January, Rahmani announced that the industry ministry's programs for the promotion of domestic production are going to save \$10 billion for the country in the next two years.

Since the U.S. re-imposed sanctions on Iran to pressure the country's economy, Iran has been taking all necessary measures to mitigate the impact of the sanctions and counter the U.S. actions.

Improving and boosting domestic production has been one of the major strategies that Iran has been following in the past two years in order to increase its independence.

To this end, the industry ministry has established domestic production desks for various sectors like auto industry, motor bike, petrochemical, telecommunication, construction and etc.

Rouhani unveils 3 domestically-made cars

1 → These cars are complying with the world's modern standards and their fuel consumption is considerably lower than the previously manufactured vehicles, he further emphasized.

As recently announced, Iranian carmakers have prepared some incentive packages to encourage investment making by the auto parts manufacturers.

Offering these incentives is in line with promotion of indigenizing the manufacturing of auto parts.

Purchasing the domestically-made auto parts at the same price of the similar imported parts and making the purchase guarantee deals with the auto part manufacturers are some of these incentives.

In mid-May last year, industry minister issued a directive on "strengthening domestic manufacturing of imported auto parts".

Addressing two of his deputies, Farshad Moqimi, deputy for industrial affairs, and Mohammad-Baqer Ali, the board chairman of Iran's Industrial Development and Renovation Organization (IDRO), Rahmani put emphasis on using the highest potential of human resources for strengthening domestic manufacturing of auto parts which are currently imported to the country.

He said the policy of domestic manufacturing of auto parts should be seriously followed up, and in this due the capable manufacturers should be seriously supported.



TPO hosts 1st meeting of Iran-UAE Commodity-Country Desk

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) held the first meeting of its Commodity-Country Desk on trade with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) chaired by Farzad Piltan, the director-general of TPO's Office of Arabian and African Countries.

As reported by the website of TPO on Wednesday, the meeting was mainly focused on the challenges and strategies for developing business cooperation with the Arab nation.

"In the meeting ways of boosting mutual trade were discussed with representatives of government agencies and major exporting and importing companies doing business with the UEA and the chairman and members of the Board of Directors of

the Iran-UAE Chamber of Commerce", Piltan said.

In addition to introducing the potentials of the UAE market; problems and solutions for the development of exports to the mentioned region were also presented at the meeting.

"It was also decided at the meeting to take the necessary measures for removing barriers in the way of trade with the UAE," the official added.

During the years of economic sanctions against Iran, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has benefited a lot from trade with Iran, as the neighbor country had turned into a number one trade partner of Iran through acting as a broker buying products and services from different countries and selling them to Iran.

Seminar on introducing Pakistani market to be held by TPO next month

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) plans to hold a seminar on introducing the markets of Pakistan on March 9.

As published on the website of TPO, the seminar to be held at the place of the organization in Tehran is aimed at making Iranian businessmen and traders acquainted with the potentials for doing business in the markets of the neighboring country and having more vigorous presence in those markets.

TPO has previously held similar gatherings on introducing markets of some other countries and is planning to hold some more seminars in this field. It is mainly in line with the country's approach of bolstering non-oil exports.

In last April, an Iran-Pakistan business

forum was held at Tehran during the Pakistani prime minister's visit, in which the two sides emphasized the necessity of using all available opportunities to expand bilateral trade relations.

The business forum, which was held by Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA) in cooperating with the Embassy of Pakistan in Tehran, was attended by a number of Iranian and Pakistani officials including Imran Khan, Iranian Transport Minister Mohammad Eslami, TCCIMA Head Masoud Khansari, and some businessmen from the both sides.

Imran Khan along with a delegation visited Iran in a two-day stay at the invitation of Iranian President Hassan Rouhani to strengthen political and trade ties between the two countries.

Tehran to host seminar on trade with Russia in early March

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA) is going to hold a seminar on trade with Russia with the aim of familiarizing Iranian businessmen with procedures of the Russian customs.

As reported by the TCCIMA portal, the seminar which also aims for identifying and resolving challenges in trade with Russia, is due to be held on March 2.

The event will be held to explore the mechanisms and

procedures of bureaucracy in Russian customs, the challenges and problems as well as the current customs procedures in this country.

This one-day seminar is going to cover a variety of topics such as the Russia's import declaration and its differences with the Iranian export declaration, valuation of export goods, how to clear perishable goods, temporary entry of goods into Russia for repair, attendance at exhibitions and projects, as well as the exchange of goods and certificates.



PEDEC to use skid-mounted facilities to accelerate projects

ENERGY **TEHRAN** — Petroleum Engineering and Development Company (PEDEC) inked an agreement with the Academic Center for Education, Culture and Research (ACECR) for cooperation in designing and constructing a skid-mounted processing unit to be used in South Azadegan oil field's development project.

Speaking in the signing ceremony on Tuesday, PEDEC Head Touraj Dehqani said designing such equipment could be a positive step for accelerating development projects of the country's joint-fields, Shana reported.

According to the official, the field development projects are among the most costly projects, in which up to 70 percent of the project is dedicated to drilling and preparing the wells, about 20 percent to pipelines and collecting units, and up to eight percent is pertaining to the processing and sweetening units.

Although drilling is a great part of any field development project, but since Iran has all the necessary equipment in this area, it proceeds quite smoothly and on schedule, the problem, however, is in processing and



sweetening steps.

"The technical complexities of this sec-

tor may even delay the implementation of a development project for many years; this is

more important with regard to shared fields and high risk reservoirs," Dehqani explained.

He pointed to the rapid construction of the skid-mounted facilities as a positive feature, saying that the skid-mounted processing unit was first used in the South Azadegan field.

"The first unit didn't take more than a year to execute," he stressed.

South Azadegan is one of the five major oilfields Iran shares with Iraq at the western part of Iran's southwestern region of Karoun, known as West Karoun fields.

West Karoun holds great importance for the country's oil industry since according to the latest studies, its in-situ deposit is estimated to be 67 billion barrels containing both light and heavy crude oils, and therefore it could have a big impact on Iran's oil output increases in the future.

With the fields fully operational, their output could add 1.2 million bpd to the country's oil production capacity.

Having an estimated 67 billion barrels of in-situ oil, West Karoun fields definitely deserve the spotlight which has been put on them recently.

'Oil Ministry determined to upgrade oil sector standards'

ENERGY **TEHRAN** — Iran's deputy oil minister for engineering, research and technology affairs said Oil Ministry is taking serious measure for improving standards in the oil industry, Shana reported on Tuesday.

"The issue of updating standards and increasing the quality of the certification body in the oil industry is being seriously pursued," Saeed Mohammadzadeh said.

Speaking in the closing ceremony of a gathering of startups and knowledge-based companies active in oil industry on Tuesday, Mohammadzadeh said: "One of the most important tools used to support knowledge-based and startup companies is the research and innovation regulation, which has fortunately been approved by the ministry."

These regulations will be able to provide a framework for the presence of different startups and knowledge-based companies in the oil industry by accepting risks and presenting guaranteed purchase for their models, the official said.

Iranian Oil Ministry has been taking serious measures to encourage the private sector to participate in the country's oil and gas projects and in this regard keeping up with the global standards has been a serious issue when handing over various projects to non-governmental entities.

Back in December 2019, Mohammadzadeh had said that Oil Ministry is utilizing the high scientific capacities of the country for implementation of its projects.

"Today, the Oil Ministry is conducting 26 research projects through cooperation with 16 top universities and research institutes of the country, and given that these major universities benefit from the contribution of a network of universities, so research measures of Oil Ministry are in fact applying a vast scientific potential in the country", the official said.

Through this cooperation, universities help development of oil industry and Oil Ministry helps elevation of scientific status in the country, he noted.



Sound Energy to proceed with micro LNG project

Sound Energy -- a Moroccan focused upstream gas company -- has announced that it will focus on pursuing a micro LNG production plan for the TE-5 Horst field within the Tendirra production concession.

On 6 November last year, the company entered into non-binding heads of terms agreement (HOA) with a company specializing in energy asset development and investment (the 'purchaser') in relation to a proposed sale of a substantial proportion of the company's interest in the Eastern Morocco Portfolio.

Under the terms of the HOA, Sound Energy claims it had granted the purchaser an exclusivity period expiring on 14 February 2020 to complete due diligence on the Eastern Morocco Portfolio and to finalize a binding sale and purchase agreement (SPA) for the proposed transaction.

In this latest statement, Sound Energy claims that, although the purchaser has confirmed the satisfactory conclusion of its technical and commercial due diligence, it has not yet demonstrated proof of funds required in order to advance the proposed transaction and nor has an SPA been finalized. As a result, Sound Energy

claims that talks are continuing with the purchaser, but these discussions are no longer exclusive, and there can be no guarantee that the proposed transaction will proceed, or if it will be successfully concluded.

Whilst Sound Energy claims that it has continued to pursue the full field development plan underpinning the Tendirra production concession award centered around a 120 km pipeline infrastructure (as announced on 6 September 2018), the company claims that it now plans to prioritise early first cash flows from the concession. As a result, the company now plans to pursue a micro LNG production plan for the TE-5 Horst field within the concession ahead of the full field development plan being implemented.

■ The micro LNG production

The implementation of the micro LNG production plan will require, amongst other things, the agreement of the company's joint venture (JV) partners in the concession.

According to the statement, Sound Energy will, therefore, seek to advance the development of the TE-5 Horst field through a fast-track, cost-efficient, micro

LNG project, with first LNG delivery targeted for next year.

The proposed micro LNG production plan will be advanced alongside workstreams related to the full field development plan (including ongoing negotiations with Morocco's Office National de l'Electricité et de l'Eau Potable in relation to a gas sales agreement and discussions in relation to full field development plan funding solutions). It will involve gas being processed and liquefied, with the resulting LNG transported to industrial customer sites in Morocco.

In the statement, Sound Energy claims that it views this micro LNG production plan for the TE-5 Horst as an attractive route to generating early cash flows from the concession. The larger full pipeline led development plan can then be added to this initial plan at a later date, given the longer timescales involved in its implementation.

The company is currently holding talks with industrial customers and distributors in Morocco regarding the long-term offtake of LNG from the concession. In addition to this, negotiations with equipment providers and potential funding partners

for the micro LNG production plant are also being carried out.

Subject to Sound Energy's JV partners in the concession agreeing to proceed with the micro LNG production plan, the company expects that it will be in a position to take a final investment decision (FID) on this development solution in 2Q20, which would enable first LNG delivery during 2021.

Mohammed Seghiri, Sound Energy's Acting Chief Executive Officer, said: "While discussions with the potential purchaser continue, the board has been active in considering and refining in parallel other options to monetise its asset at Tendirra. We continue to believe that we have a valuable position in the Moroccan energy sector encompassing a significant discovery in Tendirra with exciting additional exploration upside potential.

The micro LNG development plan has been identified as an initial and rapid development strategy to prioritise early monetisation of the existing gas discovery, which can in turn facilitate a larger ultimate development. I look forward to reporting further on our progress in due course."

(Source: lngindustry.com)

With over 2 weeks left before OPEC meets, where next for oil?

It was never meant to be like this. At least not in the way the Saudis had imagined it.

After breaking up the last OPEC meeting back in early December, Saudi Energy Minister Abdulaziz bin Salman might not have imagined he would be under duress to hold the next one ahead of schedule.

Yet, here are the Saudis and the rest of the producer members of OPEC, waiting on their key ally Russia to greenlight what seems the most important production cut yet for the cartel. It's incredible, but every output reduction debated by OPEC in the past five years has been primed as a do-or-die for the group.

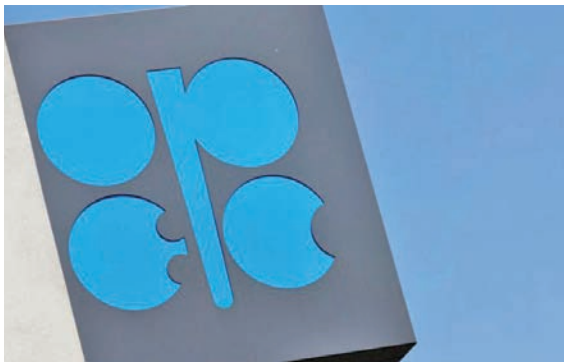
Current negotiations about the cut of 600,000 barrels per day to stave off the demand lost to the COVID-19 epidemic certainly won't be the last.

The speculation in the market is that OPEC+ — which groups the cartel's original 13 members and 10 non-member oil producers led by Russia — will agree on a cut anytime in the next few days or at the worst when the alliance meets as scheduled on March 5-6.

Most in the market seem to think Russian President Vladimir Putin is just playing mind games by stretching his decision on this, in order to get as much leverage as possible when the cuts are divided up among the different producers.

Putin hasn't said a word himself about the cuts, preferring to let the Kremlin's spokesman state the concerns of Russian industry over the past week-and-a-half, as the Saudis stewed on his indecision and oil prices fell deeper into bear territory before last week's rebound.

While the Kremlin didn't say it either, the media made it clear that Moscow's energy insiders were unhappy with any more cuts being demanded of Russian oil producers, arguing that any reduction will only benefit U.S. oil drillers who have no alliance whatsoever with OPEC and can pump away and export as they like.



■ The country's oil rig

Indeed, despite all talk earlier this year of a slowdown in U.S. shale oil output, the United States cranked out a new record high above 13 million bpd, despite the country's oil rig count remaining at least 20% lower than a year ago.

"Putin will once again overrule his energy executives at the 11th hour, and sign on the dotted line when the (OPEC+) ministers meet on March 5," Helima Croft, head of global commodity strategy at RBC Capital Markets, said in a note last week.

Putin's "public hand-wringing" before OPEC "may be effectively deployed in negotiations, to reduce Russia's overall output obligations" to the cuts, she said.

But, of course, what really matters to OPEC is what will happen to the market between now and when they can safely get an "aye" from Putin on the cuts.

After last week's surprise rebound — in which those who were long the market managed to claw back some 5% on Brent and more than 3% on WTI from four days of continuous gains — crude has turned weak again. After drifting lower in

Asian and European trading amid Monday's Presidents' Day holiday in the U.S., the market was down again in Tuesday's early afternoon trade in Singapore.

■ The norm for the market

Oil bulls even survived a huge U.S. crude stockpile build last week. But such inventory gains should be the exception rather than the norm for the market to continue staying up, said traders.

"It's hard to imagine a situation where oil prices would go up every day over the next two weeks while waiting for OPEC+ to get its act together," said Tariq Zahir, managing member at the oil-focused Tyche Capital Advisors in New York. "You're bound to get volatility, and more down days are likely to compensate for last week's unexpected upside."

Thus comes the question: Could oil see another crash in the near term?

As much as the bulls are longing for Brent's return to \$60 and WTI to \$55, there are bets too that the UK benchmark could slip to around \$50 and its U.S. peer to about \$45.

Much of that gloom is based on the continued unknowns from the COVID-19 virus and how much further the pandemic could decimate demand in China.

On Tuesday, China announced new figures for the outbreak, putting the number of cases at 72,436 — up nearly 1,888 from a day before — and the death toll at 1,868, up 98 from 1,770.

"Worldwide growth is already impacted and supply chains could become more impacted. Whether this will be a V-shaped recovery remains to be seen," Tyche Capital's Zahir said, referring to last week's rebound.

"There's no doubt that as China continues to struggle with the coronavirus, it will continue to experience a demand drop in crude that could only get more significant by the day," Zahir said.

(Source: investing.com)

Oil rises amid hope for short economic hit from coronavirus outbreak

Oil prices rose on Wednesday, with Brent gaining a seventh straight day, amid broad optimism as new coronavirus cases fell for a second day in China and concerns rose over supply after a U.S. move to cut more Venezuelan crude from the market.

Brent crude LCOc1 was up by 51 cents, or 0.9%, at \$58.26 a barrel by 0732 GMT, while U.S. oil CLc1 was up 55 cents, or 1.1%, at \$52.60 a barrel.

China is still struggling to get manufacturing going again in the world's second-largest economy, after imposing stringent city lockdowns and travel restrictions to contain the virus that has now killed more than 2,000 people, but investors remain optimistic that the economic fallout may be short-lived.

S&P Global Ratings said it expected that coronavirus will deliver a "short-term blow" to economic growth in China in the first quarter.

Official data showed that new cases in China fell for a second straight day, although the World Health Organization (WHO) has cautioned there is not enough data to know if the epidemic was being contained.

Brent has risen nearly 10% since last week falling to its lowest this year so far, most recently supported by a U.S. decision on Tuesday to blacklist

a trading subsidiary of Russia's Rosneft (ROSN.MM) that President Donald Trump's administration said provides a financial lifeline to Venezuela's government.

The Swiss subsidiary "has been Venezuela's primary conduit for brokering cargos, which find their way predominantly to refineries in India and China," said Stephen Innes, chief market strategist at AxiCorp.

"Throttling this Asian supply channel will provide some support for oil prices," he said.

Prices have also been supported by hopes that the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and its allies will deepen supply cuts.

The grouping, known as OPEC+, has been withholding supply to support prices and meets next month to decide a response to the downturn in demand resulting from the coronavirus epidemic.

OPEC+ wants to "prevent the emergence of a large supply overhang caused by slumping demand amid the health crisis centered in China, the world's biggest importer of crude oil," Eurasia Group said in a note.

But in the U.S., which is not party to any supply cut agreements, crude oil production has been rising as shale output grows. Shale production in the U.S. is expected to rise to a record 9.2 million barrels a day next month, according to the Energy Information Administration.

(Source: reuters.com)

A new world record for the conversion of solar energy to electricity using quantum dots

The development of next generation solar power technology that has potential to be used as a flexible 'skin' over hard surfaces has moved a step closer, thanks to a significant breakthrough at The University of Queensland.

UQ researchers set a world record for the conversion of solar energy to electricity via the use of tiny nanoparticles called 'quantum dots', which pass electrons between one another and generate electrical current when exposed to solar energy in a solar cell device.



The development represents a significant step towards making the technology commercially-viable and supporting global renewable energy targets.

Professor Lianzhou Wang, who led the breakthrough, said: "Conventional solar technologies use rigid, expensive materials. The new class of quantum dots the university has developed are flexible and printable.

"This opens up a huge range of potential applications, including the possibility to use it as a transparent skin to power cars, planes, homes and wearable technology. Eventually it could play a major part in meeting the United Nations' goal to increase the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix."

Professor Wang's team set the world record for quantum dot solar cell efficiency by developing a unique surface engineering strategy. Overcoming previous challenges around the fact that the surface of quantum dots tend to be rough and unstable — making them less efficient at converting solar into electrical current.

"This new generation of quantum dots is compatible with more affordable and large-scale printable technologies," said Professor Wang.

The "near 25 percent improvement in efficiency we have achieved over the previous world record is important. It is effectively the difference between quantum dot solar cell technology being an exciting 'prospect' and being commercially viable."

The "world needs to rapidly reduce carbon emissions and this requires us to invest much more in research to improve existing energy-generation technologies and develop entirely new ones," he said.

"Harnessing the power of fundamental technological and scientific research is a big part of this process — and that's what we're focused on at UQ."

(Source: phys.org)

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➡ The headscarf, or the hijab, has been a mandatory part of women's dress in Iran since the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Many people in the West, including Iranian diaspora, think mandatory hijab is an infringement on women's right in Iran as well as some Islamic countries. Having spent your childhood in the West, you have seen both cultures. What is your opinion?

A: You can look at both ways as placing restrictions on women. Freedom of covering. If you go to the West you actually see a different sort of infringement on women's freedom. Women are forced not by law necessarily, but by culture and pressure from the society to dress in a certain way, which brings me back to the objectification and sexualization of women.

This objectification and sexualization is portrayed as an important part of empowerment of women in the West. In the West a woman is considered empowered according to those standards of appearance.

In the Islamic Republic we want men and women to work side by side together. The reason is that we want the society to be free of objectification and sexualization.

The idea that hijab is a hindrance in the way of women's empowerment is a colonialist/orientalist trope with a political agenda. You see women in Muslim societies have played an active role in standing up against colonialism and later forms of foreign domination of their countries. What gave them the power and energy to play such a role was their Islamic identity. One can see the most perfect example of such women's empowerment in the course of the Islamic revolution. In some places as in Mashhad, women are forerunners of the revolutionary cause. Later on, during the eight year holy defense, you see many women who send their husbands and sons to the war front and persevere after their martyrdom. They become the messengers who try to bring the message of their martyrs to the wider society. They show unbelievable patience and resilience. Hijab is a symbol for this sort of women's empowerment in Muslim societies: women who are so powerful that they can overcome unbelievable levels of hardship on the way to achieve their goals.

All this has made hijab, to use the words of one

Prof on women's rights, Iran-U.S. tensions and Majlis elections

“We are at a turning point in the Islamic Revolution. The Western media is encouraging Iranian citizens not to show up in the polls.”

of United States' think tank experts, a minefield for those powers who wish to achieve domination over the Muslim world. So in my view, the pressure that is exerted on Iran to abandon an Islamic law is very much political. It is similar to the French colonialists' attitude and behavior toward practicing Muslim Algerians. The French made two sorts of attempts to overcome this so-called minefield. First, they used force to humiliate Muslim women who were wearing hijab. They also used propaganda campaigns to make Algerian women to adopt a non-Islamic identity.

In 2010 report from American Psychological Association about sexualization of girls in U.S. in which many psychological problems were reported for women. We have similar reports in Britain, Australia and other Western countries, where researchers say this is hurting children's lives. Because we are in a situation where girls are being told that their identity is not complete without sexualization.

The other part is that this sort of quasi empowerment is being imported to third world countries, especially Muslim countries.

■ What about women's presence in the work force and the educational sector? We know the number of women in graduation program in national universities exceeds that of men. Any statistics?

A: Let me just make note of some statistics with regards to the progress made in women's position in society in Iran compared to the pre-revolution era. Before the revolution, women comprised only 1 percent of university professors. Today they make up 20 percent of university faculty members. In 1355 (Iranian calendar year), two years before



the victory of the revolution, just about six percent of university graduates were female. Today the statistic stands at 44 percent. We had about 3,500 female physicians before the revolution. This number stands at over 60,000 today. Today we have about 30,000 specialist female doctors compared to only 597 prior to 1979. Women have progressed in literature and in sports as well.

■ It is reported that for U.S. president a war with Iran will ruin all chances of re-election in November. Both sides have said that war is not a solution. However, Iran has vowed revenge for the murder of major general Qassem Soleimani and

Iranian missiles landed in a U.S. base in Iraq. Do you think there is a chance of war between Iran and the U.S. in the future?

A: I think the American government realizes it is not in the same situation it was two decades ago. It is experiencing a decline in power in all the dimensions of hard and soft power. As a result, you see the American response to the flurry of Iranian missiles to its bases in Iraq was not a military one. They imposed some more sanctions adding to the "maximum pressure" which is intended to increase the gap between the Iranian people and the government. This is because the most important

power of the Islamic Republic is the people. That is what the U.S. is attacking actually.

■ During the 2016 parliamentary election turnout was 62 percent. This Friday 57 million Iranians are eligible to vote and about three million are first-time voters. As you know the leader and president have asked for a high turnout for parliamentary elections on Friday. However many people are frustrated because of the hope for better economy they had pinned on the outcome of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Now the nuclear plan is almost dead, or at least there is very little chance for its survival. What connection do you see between the JCPOA and the upcoming parliamentary election turnout?

A: Iranian people are often unpredictable in Western power's eyes. That is they show a sort of willful ignorance in this regard. Who expected so many people would turn up for Gen. Soleimani's funeral in Iran and as well as Iraq. Who expected the people to turn up in millions for the 41st anniversary of the victory of the Revolution? This is while the same people who show up for such events are the people who are under the most economic pressure.

The Iranian people are more resilient than what the U.S. government thinks. At the same time because of such a "maximum pressure" and the dire economic situation in today's Iran, you might predict less than 60 percent participation this time. I don't want to make a prediction though.

People are coming to the realization that you should not have any expectations from the United States for help to come out of the economic problems of the country.

Both the public and the political elites have realized that you should put all your hope in your own capabilities. What happened with the JCPOA clarified for many Iranian people and elites that we should not depend on foreign assistance for progress.

We are at a turning point in the Islamic Revolution. The Western media is encouraging Iranian citizens not to show up in the polls. We have to wait till Friday to find out.

Inshallah people are going to this election with a clear view and know that their vote counts, irrespective of which faction wins.

➡ Whenever military tensions are heightened in the region the Saudis reduce their provocative actions against Iran, but once the situation is settled down they resume their actions. The most notable sample of this behavior is Saudi Arabia's reaction to the assassination of Gen. Qassem Soleimani, as it was trying to not take a provocative stance against Iran.

Fifth, Saudi Arabia needs to restore its ties with Iran to deal with the regional cases, which are as follows:

The Yemeni case: the first issue is the attrition warfare in Yemen that began in March 2015 with the invasion of the Saudi-led coalition and has continued until now. A war that had nothing but destruction for the Yemeni people and defeats and lots of military costs for the Saudis.

The Syrian case: With its recent actions toward Damascus, Saudi Arabia has shown that it is seeking to improve its relations with Syria, a country that has strong ties with Iran and is a part of the axis of resistance. In this regard, Syria's permanent representative to the United Nations, Bashar Al-Jaafari, recently attended a special ceremony held in honor of the Saudi Minister

Why does Saudi Arabia need to hold talks with Iran?

of State in New York, Fahad Bin Abdullah Al Mubarak, which drew lots of controversy.

Diplomatic sources in New York said the Saudi delegate to the UN, Abdullah bin Yahya al-Muallami had intentionally met with Bashar al-Jaafari during the visit, which was unexpected for the attendees. During their celebration Saudi officials expressed their love for Syria and said that it remained in their hearts, adding that what had occurred between the two countries was nothing but a summer cloud that will inevitably pass.

The old competition with Turkey, especially over Libya: Ankara has become a relentless rival to Riyadh in all aspects these days, and this issue has been worsened following the Persian Gulf crisis, Saudi Arabia's cut of relations with Qatar and the assassination of Jamal Khashoggi inside the Saudi consulate in Istanbul. Saudi Arabia needs to improve its relations with Iran to be able to prevent Turkish influence, especially in African

countries and Libya.

The Persian Gulf crisis: improving relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia can undoubtedly be helpful in settling the crisis between Saudi Arabia and Qatar, as Doha has gotten closer to Tehran and Ankara since the crisis.

The point is that some parties will certainly be dissatisfied with the close relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia and will make every effort to obstruct it.

The U.S. knows that if this happens, Saudi Arabia will certainly not be able to take explicit positions in support of Washington against Iran, as it did in the past, and it will become at least a neutral country in the conflicts between Tehran and Washington, if not a friend to Iran. Therefore, the U.S. will lose its most important Arab ally in the region.

The Zionist regime is nowadays busy persuading the Arab parties to accept the Deal of the Century and normalizes

relations with the Arab and African states. Israel does not want to lose its supporter in the current situation, which secretly agreed with the Deal of the Century and normalization of relations.

The UAE is not happy about the improvement of Iranian-Saudi ties, as it is not in line with its interests. An Iraqi media reported that in the wake of the resumption of relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran, the UAE, which considers an important role for itself in regional cases such as Yemen, Libya, Iraq and Sudan, and is regarded as a soft power will be pushed back. The UAE plays a key role in preventing Saudi-Iranian relations, and wherever it fails, the Zionist regime sometimes assists it and continues to play that role.

Turkey, whose political relations with Iran have witnessed ups and downs in various periods of time and given the interests of both countries, cannot be happy about improving the Iranian-Saudi relations. This issue could be heavily in Saudi Arabia's favor as Riyadh and Ankara are competing with each other in regional and extra-regional states.

If only Qassem Soleimani were peshmerga commander, PUK official says

TEHRAN (Tasnim) — A leading member of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) lauded Lt. General Qassem Soleimani for his modest cooperation with the Iraqi Kurdistan Region in the war against ISIS, wishing that the Iranian martyr were the commander of Kurdish Peshmerga forces.

Mahmoud Sangawi is a senior official of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), the military commander in charge of Garman region in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region, and a major field commander in the war against ISIS terrorist group.

Sangawi admits to have fought against the Iranian IRGC forces for a period of time in the past, highlights his close ties and friendship with Iranians in recent years, and maintains that such friendly relations must continue.

When the ISIS terrorist group attacked the Iraqi Kurdistan Region, Sangawi worked in cooperation with the Iranian forces in the fight against the Takfiri terrorists. It was then that he met Lt. General Qassem Soleimani.

In an interview with the Tasnim News Agency in Sulaymaniyah, the Kurdish commander has talked about his memories of cooperation with General Soleimani.

What follows is the full text of the interview:

■ Thank you for your time, Mr. Sangawi. Let us begin the conversation with an introduction and your background.

A: I'm Mahmoud Sangawi, born in 1952. I entered politics in 1967 after membership in the Kurdistan Democratic Party. I was a Peshmerga member and a member of the Kurdistan Democratic Party until 1974. After the failed revolution of Kurds, I returned to our own region and became a member of the Kurdistan Marxist Society in 1976, whose name changed to the "Society of Sufferers of Kurdistan" later. I have been a member of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan since 1977, and have taken part in all of the regional developments following the 'Anfal' operation.

In that era, the Ba'athist regime (of Saddam) had begun to clear people from our villages, and the situation was so dire that people were being sentenced to death at a distance of only 10 meters from the main road. I can recall that thousands of people from the destitute and impoverished population of Kurdistan were buried alive in southern Iraq.

I have served in various military ranks since 1978. In 2000, I was elected as a member of the leadership council of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, and was chosen as a member of the political bureau of the party in the third congress. In the most recent congress, namely the fourth congress, I received the second highest number of votes of the Patriotic Union. At present, I am a member of the general leadership council of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, and the commander of the first line of Peshmerga forces in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region in the fight against Daesh (ISIS).

■ You have long experience of military battles and, as you mentioned, you have faced a lot of challenges throughout these years. What was the difference between the fight against Daesh in the past recent years and the other crises? What challenges did the war on Daesh pose to you, in terms of difficulty and extensiveness?

A: Our previous battles were mainly partisan warfare. We



were attacking the enemy, and returned to our positions after the operation. Before the Anfal genocide, we had fought other wars as well. For instance, we fought against the well-equipped Ba'athist army with light weapons for several months. Even though the Ba'athist regime was in possession of chemical weapons, we stood against them and suffered hundreds of casualties, but the war on Daesh was by far more difficult.

■ How come?

A: Because Daesh was a ferocious force, and such savage force had also many supporters that provided it with a broad range of weapons and even unmanned aircraft. They even used chemical weapons against us, but we resisted while we had only light weapons. Our heavy weapons dated back to the time of fight against the regime of Saddam, when we had taken the arms as the spoils of war.

Daesh was a trained force, which had sadly deceived people in different parts of the world in such a way that people imagined they had been battling against heresy alongside Daesh forces. They (Daesh) misrepresented us as the front of heresy and themselves as the followers of Islam. But they are not Muslims, because they killed a large number of people, kidnapped the wives and daughters of people, and destroyed many regions and cities. But our forces made sacrifices and defended their territory, nation and dignity. We sacrificed many martyrs and suffered heavy casualties in this path, but stood firm against them (Daesh), and later, various countries came to help us so that we could defeat Daesh.

However, Daesh has not been completely dismantled yet. Although it does not have control over any region — particularly in the regions under the control of the Kurdistan Peshmerga forces where Daesh is not capable of taking any action — they (Daesh forces) have unfortunately taken action in the other parts of Iraq

and are killing people. Recently, you saw that they (Daesh forces) attacked a village near Khanaqin, killed a father and his son, and injured a number of others. They (Daesh forces) are constantly engaged in activities in the regions of Khanaqin, Diyala, Kirkuk, and even Mosul, and are taking terrorist and military action against the Iraqi forces.

They (Daesh forces) would have destroyed our region as well if they had entered the Kurdistan Region. They deem that it is lawful to shed our blood. They deem that our sisters, wives and daughters could lawfully come into their possession. Everything on this land is deemed to be their lawful possession, and they want to eliminate us. Daesh was not our enemy alone, but an enemy of humanity. However, it showed the highest degree of enmity towards the Kurds and Shiites.

They (Daesh forces) were also a dangerous enemy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, but the Islamic Republic could stand against them outside its border, and did not allow any harm to the Iranian soil with the efforts it made and the martyrs it sacrificed.

■ When did you become familiar with the Iranian forces throughout the years of your military struggle? And at which junctures have you worked in cooperation?

A: I had even fought against the (Islamic Revolution) Guards Corps forces of Iran at one juncture, and the scars from the Iranian bullet wounds are left on my face. But later we made peace with each other, and now it has been a long time we have had friendly relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran. I have taken part in many operations alongside the Iranian forces, and have also mentioned these in my diaries.

We and Iranians are friends, and believe that whatever force comes to this region will leave one day. But we and Iranians will remain together and won't separate from each other. As I told before, although we had some troubles in the past, we have been working in close and friendly cooperation with each other for years, as the longest years of our life were passed in friendship with the Islamic Republic of Iran, and we will keep to this path.

■ When Daesh launched an attack on the Iraqi Kurdistan Region, the leaders of the Region asked various countries, including Iran, for help. According to reports and as acknowledged by the Kurdish leaders, Iran was the first country to help the Kurdistan Region, and General Qassem Soleimani was also the first person to come here. Why did Iran receive such request, and how effective was the Iranian assistance in the fight against Daesh?

A: The Iranians cooperated with us effectively. Daesh was certainly a threat to everybody, so that they (Iranians) defended themselves and also the Iraqi Shiites.

The Iranian military commanders gave us advisory assistance and provided good guidance. Moreover, both we and Iranians were cooperating with the Iraqi Army and the Hashd al-Sha'abi forces in this battle.

Unfortunately, the Iraqi Army forces suffered a big defeat at the beginning of the attack from Daesh, and we remained as the only force fighting off Daesh in the field. When 200 Daesh forces

attacked Mosul, many Iraqi forces laid down their arms, and all of those weapons and equipment fell into the hands of terrorists, from tanks and artillery to Katyusha (rocket launcher) and other ordnance. Daesh, in turn, utilized those weapons against us. It was then that the Islamic Republic of Iran stepped in and rushed to cooperate with us and Iraq.

■ You have fought in different wars for many years and have become a sophisticated commander. What do you think were the main characteristics of General Soleimani as a military commander?

A: I once said in an interview that, if only General Soleimani were the commander and Peshmerga of us Kurds. Because the only thing I noticed about him was deservingness and heroism. He was a sympathetic person, and protected his country very well, and ultimately devoted his life to this goal.

■ How close did you come into contact with him?

A: When we were gearing up for an attack on Jalawla, he (General Soleimani) asked me 'can you recapture the region within three days?' I agreed and said 'I will give you the news of liberation of Jalawla by this time tomorrow.' At the time of return, I saw Qassem Soleimani down the road after Khanaqin. There was a location in which he (General Soleimani) was observing the region through monitors and drones.

At that time, I held a belief that we must besiege Jalawla and not allow any of the Daesh forces to survive. But he (General Soleimani) believed that if you block the enemy's escape, they will continue to fight against you, so that an escape route should be opened to them. I saw him, and he was present in the very same operation zone in the morning of the day when the war broke out in that region.

After the battle against Daesh, I once again visited him at the house of Kak Kosrat Rasul. There was a meeting in order to address the situation in Tuz Khurmatu.

Qassem Soleimani was a high-ranking commander, and had the power to give long-distance orders without going to the battlefield. But he was present in all battlefronts, and stayed with us until we liberated Jalawla, Saadiya and the other areas.

One of the outstanding features I noticed about him was that he had absolute mastery of map reading. He once asked us, "Why do you seldom use a map? Don't you believe in it?" I replied, "We use maps too, but because of our complete familiarity with the region, we don't need it so much."

■ How about in terms of character? What specific qualities of his character have stayed in your mind?

A: He was a serene and graceful person. He never looked for a special position for himself in the areas he went to. He ate like everybody else and took a rest in the very place that the others slept. Even when he got hungry, if there was only some biscuits and carbonated drink, he would have that little food. In a very real sense, he was a person that devoted his life.

In addition to all these qualities, he had great knowledge and analyzed various political and military issues very well. He used to express his views gracefully and calmly, and never got angry. He always tried to treat the other side with respect.

Singapore Airlines slashes flights globally due to virus impact

Singapore Airlines Ltd. will cut more flights across its global network through May as the outbreak of the novel coronavirus discourages people from traveling.

The carrier and its SilkAir unit will reduce flights to cities including New York, London, Frankfurt, Tokyo and Sydney, according to a statement on its website Tuesday.



This photograph taken on March 28, 2018 shows a Singapore Airlines (SIA) Airbus A350 aircraft taking off from Singapore Changi Airport. (AFP/Roslan Rahman)

The company warned Friday that it faces "significant" challenges due to the virus and will make adjustments to its services when needed.

Airlines around the world have cut flights to China and other destinations, with Hong Kong-based rival Cathay Pacific Airways Ltd. reducing its global capacity by 30 percent.

Countries including the U.S. and Singapore have issued restrictions on people traveling from China in an effort to contain the spread of the virus, which has claimed nearly 1,900 lives, primarily in Hubei province.

Singapore has 77 confirmed cases of infection, but no deaths. Singapore Airlines on Monday announced several changes in management that will take effect from April 1.

Last week, the company said net income in the fiscal third-quarter rose 11 percent from a year earlier to \$5314.8 million (\$226 million). The carrier won't match that strong quarterly performance because of the virus, as well as fuel-hedging and potential credit losses, Bloomberg Intelligence analysts James Teo and Chris Muckensturm wrote in a report.

(Source: The Jakarta Post)

S&P warns coronavirus travel restrictions could hurt Dubai's hospitality industry

DUBAI (Reuters) — Dubai's hospitality industry is most at risk in the Persian Gulf Arab states region from being negatively impacted by travel restrictions associated with the new coronavirus outbreak, ratings agency S&P Global said in a research note.

S&P said the travel restrictions could weigh on Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman and Kuwait.

It said the UAE's Dubai, which saw almost 1 million Chinese visitors last year, could see the biggest impact.



ROUND THE GLOBE

Urnes Stave Church

The wooden church of Urnes (the stavkirke) stands in the natural setting of Sogn og Fjordane, Norway.

The stave churches constitute one of the most elaborate and technologically advanced types of wooden construction that existed in North-Western Europe during the Middle Ages. The churches were built on the classic basilica plan, but entirely of wood.



The roof frames were lined with boards and the roof itself covered with shingles in accordance with construction techniques which were widespread in Scandinavian countries. Among the roughly 1,300 medieval stave churches indexed, 28 are preserved in Norway today. Some of them are very large, such as Borgund, Hopperstad or Heddal churches, whereas others, such as Torpo or Underdal, are tiny.

The church expresses in wood the language and spatial structures of Romanesque stone architecture, characterized by the use of cylindrical columns with cubic capitals and semi-circular arches.

The wood carving and sculpted decor of exquisite quality on the outside includes strap-work panels and elements of Viking tradition from the previous building (11th century) which constitute the origin of the "Urnes style", also found in other parts of Scandinavia and North-Western Europe.

These carvings are found on the northern wall with a carved decoration of interlaced, fighting animals. Similar carvings cover the western gable triangle of the nave and the eastern gable of the choir. In the interior of the church, there is an extraordinary series of 12th century carved figurative capitals.

(Source: UNESCO)

Discover Neanderthal tooth, Iron-Age funerary offerings at Tehran show

HERITAGE TEHRAN — The National Museum of Iran in downtown Tehran is showcasing a collection of charming and exquisite delights of Iranian history in an exhibit that comprises photos and documents related to an enigmatic tooth which has been recently proved to belong to a Neanderthal child, as well as Iron-Age funerary offerings for the afterlife!

Discovered in 1999 in a cave called Wezmeh near Kermanshah, west of Iran, the fossilized tooth is probably be the most striking element in the exhibit as it bears the first evidence of Neanderthals once lived in Iran. The tooth was previously thought to belong to a modern human.

"It turns out that a fossilized tooth found decades ago in the Zagros Mountains did not belong to a modern human as previously thought, but rather to a Neanderthal child who lived between 70,000 and 40,000 years ago," ARCHAEOLOGY magazine, a publication of the Archaeological Institute of America, cited as one of the ten most important archaeological findings in 2019.

"A recent reexamination using modern techniques established the new dating and identification. The researchers say it is the first evidence that Neanderthals once lived in this area of present-day Iran. The species roamed across much of Europe and Western Asia before going extinct 40,000 years ago."

According to the Public Relations unit of the Iran National Museum, the results of the study by paleoanthropologists and archeologists at the Iran National Museum, University of Poitiers, University of Bordeaux, Iran's Research Institute for Cultural Heritage and Tourism, and Bioarchaeology



Laboratory of the University of Tehran confirmed the existence of Neanderthals in Iran.

Being held on the sidelines of the 17th Annual Symposium on the Iranian Architecture, which was held on February 18 and 19, the exhibit also features types of

clay works, engraved stones, earthenware, primitive weapons, jewelry and personal belongings, bronze objects such as gauges, mirrors, medallions, buttons, needles, ornaments, types of rings, buckles and Iron objects such as scissors, ILNA reported on Tuesday.

Sections of the show are dedicated to fresh discoveries in Amlash, an archaeological site in northern Iran, which yielded dozens of tombs and catacombs estimated to date back to Parthian (247 BC–224 CE) and Sassanid (224 CE-651) eras based on radiocarbon dating tests.



Religious tourism: Prophet Habakkuk and his tomb tower in Iran

TOURISM TEHRAN — As you know religious tourism, which marks one of the oldest forms of traveling, is exclusively or strongly-motivated by spiritual reasons. It can also be referred to as faith tourism or spiritual tourism.

Iran is a country rich in spiritual tourism. For instance, the holy shrine of Imam Reza (As), the eighth Imam of the Shia Muslims, annually attracts millions of domestic and foreign pilgrims to Mashhad, the capital of Khorasan Razavi province.

The country hosts hundreds of shrines, Imamzadehs, mausoleums, churches and even fire temples amongst other religious destinations which are dedicated to different faiths.

Amongst the lesser-known ones is tomb of the prophet Habakkuk, who lived probably between 605–597 BC. He was a prophet whose oracles and prayer are recorded in the Book of Habakkuk, the eighth of the collected twelve minor prophets in the Hebrew Bible. He is revered by Jews, Christians, and Muslims.

The brick tomb tower, which is capped by a conical dome



in an octagonal pattern, stands tall near Tuyserkan, a historical city in Hamedan province, west-central Iran.

The antiquity of the tower dates back to Seljuk era (1037–1194). The structure is lavishly decorated by the means of

tile and brick works painted by the famous Jewish star.

It's a destination for the faithful, sightseers, anthropologists, holidaymakers and pilgrims of the Jewish faith.

Sources quite unanimously assert that almost nothing is known about Habakkuk, aside from what is stated within the book of the Bible bearing his name, or those inferences that may be drawn from that book.

For almost every other prophet, more information is given, such as the name of the prophet's hometown, his occupation, or information concerning his parentage or tribe. For Habakkuk, however, there is no reliable account of any of these. Although his home is not identified, scholars conclude that Habakkuk lived in Jerusalem at the time he wrote his prophecy. Further analysis has provided an approximate date for his prophecy and possibilities concerning his activities and background.

Narratives say that Habakkuk's main prophecy was directed against the kingdoms of Babylon, Persia and Media, which were later to grow into world powers, conquering some Mediterranean lands and the rest of the ancient world.

Discover Istakhr, ancient royal residence near legendary Persepolis



A general view of Istakhr

TOURISM TEHRAN — The ancient city of Istakhr, which was once a royal residence for Sassanid kings of Persia, is located in the vicinity of the UNESCO-registered Persepolis.

From one point of view, its history stretches back to 224 CE, when a Persian nobleman named Ardashir, son of Papak, son of Sasan, dethroned the lawful ruler in Persia, Artabanus IV, king of the Parthian Empire.

As one of his residences, according to livius.org, the new ruler chose Istakhr: situated near Persepolis, the capital of the Achaemenids, it allowed the new Sasanian dynasty to identify itself with a glorious past. The builders of Istakhr often reused architectural elements from the monuments of Persepolis. The Achaemenid royal tombs of Naqsh-e Rostam are not far from Istakhr too.

The city itself was not completely new: human occupation had started as early as the fourth millennium BC, and the site was

certainly occupied in the Bronze Age, by the Achaemenids, by the Seleucids (who used it as a mint town), and by the Parthians.

The city, which had strong walls, repulsed the first Arab attack in c.644, but was captured and sacked in c.650. Although the site was not really abandoned, most people moved to Shiraz (which was founded in 684).

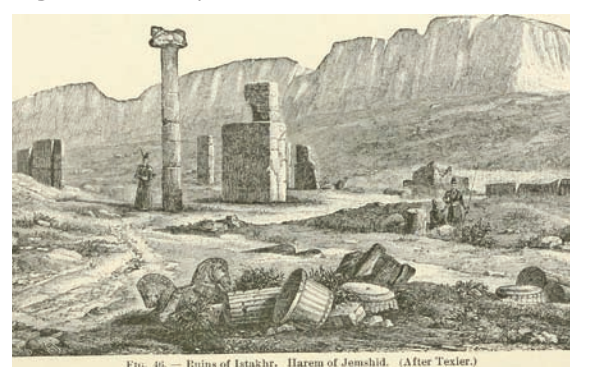
Once, as an Islamic town, it was enclosed by fortification walls with rounded towers.

According to the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, the geographer Istakhri wrote that in the tenth century, its houses were built of clay, stone or gypsum-according to the wealth of their owners.

The ancient trash pit at Istakhr proved to be a very valuable source of finds. The entire site is perforated by a number of refuse, sewage or storage wellholes. The holes are often "locked" by caps of brick or stone, and therefore an approximately contemporaneous mixture of broken and discarded pots, personal ornaments, stone and bronze objects, and a large amount of coins was preserved in them.

Among the kinds of pottery excavated from the Islamic stratum, molded ware is found very frequently. These light-green vessels were not only of very high quality but also manifested a unique method of pottery making. The upper and lower halves, with their sculptured decorations, were always molded separately; the two halves, often showing the same pattern, were then joined together.

Also from the Islamic period, but less frequent, are pitchers with floral designs in red, yellow, and black. Unfortunately, excavations of the site produced only a few of the famous and very rare lusterware vessels with their metallic sheen over a golden-yellowish body. There is considerable controversy about this pottery and whether it was produced in Iran or imported from Mesopotamia.



A drawing from the ruins of Istakhr in the 19th century

Among other finds were clay figurines of animals. There were also stone and bronze objects, such as lamps, small vessels, and a number of utensils used in daily life. Also found were objects of iridescent glass and personal ornaments ranging from clay to gold.

Today, Istakhr is nothing but a plain full of sherds, scattered architectural remains, and a few ruins. The walled-in area measured 1,400 x 650 meters and was surrounded by a ditch that was connected to the river Pulvar.

Under the Sasanians, Iranian art experienced a general renaissance. Architecture often took grandiose proportions, such as the palaces at Ctesiphon, Firouzabad and Saravan.

Amongst most characteristic and striking relics of the Sassanids are rock sculptures carved on abrupt limestone cliffs, for example at Shapur (Bishapur), Naqsh-e Rostam, and Naqsh-e Rostam. Metalwork and gem engraving became highly sophisticated.

What sustainable aviation fuel means for greener airplane travel

The fresh air of the snow-covered Swiss mountains reverberated to the howl of private jet engines earlier this year as the planet's movers and shakers descended on Davos for the annual World Economic Forum.

But while those engines were thirstily burning up aviation fuel, the net environmental impact of their exhaust emissions wasn't as bad as it might have been in previous years.

The reason: many of them were powered by something called SAF, or sustainable aviation fuel.

SAF is derived not from fossil-based oil or gas, but by refining organic or waste substances -- the use of which means less harm

to the planet.

For the delegates, the SAF was supplied as part of an apparently successful experiment to prove the logistic possibilities of delivering the fuel at Zürich Airport.

Which is all great news, particularly given the climate crisis focus of the Davos meeting and the presence of young campaigner Greta Thunberg.

So why aren't we all flying on jets powered by this seemingly magical fuel?

There's few reasons right now, the chief among them being something you might expect when dealing with anything connected to Davos. Firstly, it's expensive. Zurich Airport says

it's 3-4 times the cost of conventional fuel.

It's also in short supply -- but maybe not for long.

Going electric... but not yet

For anyone hoping to fly while keeping their carbon footprint to a minimum, the dream at the moment is to board a futuristic electric aircraft, which will zip across the planet leaving only turbulence in its wake.

These are certainly on their way. Short-range electric airplanes could enter service later this decade if battery power density is improved.

But larger, longer-range commercial airplanes will still need to use liquid fuel for the foreseeable future -- which means SAF is still

on the table.

That, says Boeing's Paul McElroy, is because passengers want to travel greener but the weight and power requirements of commercial passenger airplanes require the capacity only liquid fuel-based engines can deliver.

"Sustainable fuel represents a significant opportunity for commercial aviation to reduce its carbon emissions so that flying remains a responsible choice for travelers," says McElroy, who leads the communications team for Boeing's 777 ecoDemonstrator, an aircraft that serves as a flying test bed for sustainability projects.

(Source: CNN)

UN supports Iran's resistance economy plans

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — The United Nations supports Iran's resistance economy programs, Ugochi Daniels, UN resident coordinator and representative of UN secretary general in Iran has said.

The notion of resistance economy was introduced by the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in 2013 to refer to an economy based on higher production and self-sufficiency, greater investment from oil incomes, financial reform, greater transparency and "knowledge-based" industries.

"I was very interested in the government's emphasis on creating economic, social and developmental infrastructure in the villages," said Daniels in a specialized workshop on employment in rural areas held in Tehran on Tuesday.

Daniels lauded the performance of the vice-presidency for rural development and deprived areas, highlighting the positive aspects of government focus on development and job creation in rural areas. "Creating jobs in rural areas and establishing a high council of villages and nomads is very important in



this regard," she noted.

The UN also supports rural development and employment, she said, expressing pleasure that the vice presidency is working with the United Nations on employment and rural development.

The United Nations program is to support sustainable and comprehensive development around the world, she noted, highlighting, the UN has over 75 years of experience in assistance and support 200 countries.

"Our experience shows that targeted investment for the underprivileged areas will improve the countries' condition," she added.

"Based on what we have as a worldwide experience, the UN wants to support Iran's resisting economy on the basis of its plans. So we will support job creation and social development, as well as vulnerable people and household heads," she explained.

Therefore, Iran can count on the UN for its goals of assisting rural employment, she noted.

She went on to add that 80 percent of the villagers have migrated to the cities, but this pattern should be reversed.

Projection mapping in Tehran sends sympathy to Chinese battling coronavirus



1 → On February 14, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi appreciated his Iranian counterpart Mohammad Javad Zarif for being the first foreign minister who sent sympathy to the Chinese people since the outbreak of

the novel coronavirus.

"You are the first foreign minister who sent sympathies to the Chinese people since the outbreak of the novel coronavirus, which fully reflects the profound friendship between the people of the two countries, who support each other and tackle difficulties in a co-operative manner," said Wang.

In a tweet in Persian language on February 13, Chinese Ambassador to Tehran Chang Hua thanked Iranian people for sympathizing with the Chinese in their campaign against coronavirus.

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

Meanwhile, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Geng Shuang on February 14 announced that many foreign ambassadors and representatives to China have said on social media platforms that they stand with China in this fight against the virus.

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

The World Health Organization proposed an official name for the illness caused by the new coronavirus: COVID-19. The acronym stands for coronavirus disease 2019, as the illness was first detected toward the end of last year.

According to the WHO, coronaviruses (CoV) are a large family of viruses that cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such



as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-CoV) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS-CoV). A novel coronavirus (nCoV) is a new strain that has not been previously identified in humans.

More than 1,200 landfill sites at risk of spilling into sea

More than 1,200 coastal landfill sites are in danger of spilling their contents into the sea — leading to a pollution time bomb around the UK coastline.

Powerful storms and rising sea levels mean once-hidden waste could be exposed to pollute oceans and beaches, according to coastal policy expert Mark Stratton.

"One of the biggest risks of doing nothing at these sites is that the defences will fail and you'll potentially have former landfill either

eroding out onto the foreshore or leaching into the water. Alongside that there's a potential impact on human health depending on what's in the sites," he said.

He told BBC's Inside Out South West that in a few locations, such as Essex, erosion is already eating away at the sides of landfill sites, exposing decades-worth of human detritus.

This could lead to dangerous pollutants, along with plastics such as microbeads and microfibres, leaking into the marine environment.

Research released last year by Queen Mary University of London found that the contents of the sites constituted a "significant contamination risk".

The government is currently reviewing coastal and flooding erosion policy. One of the things it is looking at is what to do with defunct landfill sites. "We're on a journey in terms of raising the profile of the issue but what we don't have at the moment is a funding mechanism that directly deals with coastal contamination

from former landfill sites," said Mr Stratton, from the Eastern Solent Coastal Partnership.

"The current funding mechanism is focused towards the protection of homes from flooding and erosion so where you have these coastal sites with very limited development behind them it's very difficult to justify the funding.

"We've been lobbying for change for a number of years to try and broaden out what the funding can be used for."

(Source: The Independent)

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → B

DOE not convinced to transfer water from Caspian Sea

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

Over the past few years Iran has faced recurrent drought spells and low precipitation and the value of water has become more tangible, Khabaronline quoted Farshchi as saying on Saturday.

She further explained that water transfer from the Caspian Sea to central Iran has been a matter of interest for some years now and in the [Iranian calendar year of] 1389 (March 2010-March 2011) various research and studies on the issue were conducted.

سازمان محیط زیست؛ برای انتقال آب خزر مجاب نشده ایم

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

به گزارش روز شنبه خبرآنلاین پروین فرشچی در خصوص وضعیت آبی کشور گفت: طی این سالها با خشکسالی و کمبود بارش روبه رو بودیم، بنابراین ارزش گذاری آب ملموس تر مطرح شده است.

معاون محیط زیست دریایی سازمان حفاظت محیط زیست درباره مسائل مطرح شده در خصوص انتقال آب خزر به فلات مرکزی گفت: این موضوع از سالها پیش مطرح بوده و در سال ۱۳۸۹ نیز مطالعات گوناگونی در این حوزه صورت گرفته است.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“extra-, extro-”

■ **Meaning:** outside or beyond

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

PHRASAL VERB

Think back

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

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

IDIOM

Cool as a cucumber

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

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

Iran confirms first 2 test positive for coronavirus

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — Iranian authorities confirmed on Wednesday two cases of the new coronavirus, the first in the country.

Kiyanoush Jahanpour, a health ministry spokesperson, said both cases were in the city of Qom and the patients had been put into isolation.

"The next stages of testing are underway and the final results of these tests will be released to the public once they have been determined," he added, ISNA reported.

Iran has not previously confirmed any cases of the coronavirus.

The new virus emerged in China in December. Since then, more than 70,000 people have been infected globally, with more than 2,000 deaths being reported, mostly in China.

Iranian students grab colorful medals at IPITEx 2020

1 → Amir Abbas Mohammadi Koushaki also won the special prize and the most prestigious prize in the world exceeding 60 countries from Korean Intellectual Property Office (KIPO) and became one of the top three inventions of the world championship.

One of the selected projects was the "smart driving gloves with the ability to display and control traffic", which is equipped with LCD and can issue a fine bill.

In addition, the "smart bracelet" for people with Alzheimer's disease was another successful projects presented by the Iranian team, which is capable of controlling, tracking and storing patient information.

Bees may struggle in winds caused by global warming, study finds

A hardworking honey bee might feel aggrieved to be tricked into a garden shed to feed from a fake flower. Worse, she is blasted by a cheap household fan. And then timed to see how many fake flowers she can visit in 90 seconds.

But the honey bees' tormentors are trying to help them: their ordeal is a controlled experiment that reveals how high wind speeds significantly reduce the efficiency of their foraging.

The study by University of Sussex researchers raises fears that bees and other flying pollinators may struggle in the higher and more frequent winds caused by global heating.

The bees, which usually feed on wild flowers after leaving their hives in the campus gardens, were lured into the shed with sugar water feeders. Only one bee was allowed in at a time, and their visits to artificial flowers were videoed and timed under different fan speeds, which mimicked calm and windy days.

With no wind, the bees on average took nectar from 5.45 flowers during their 90-second time trial. When wind speeds were increased, this fell to an average of 3.73 flowers. Over the course of a day, a bee's capacity to supply its colony with food would be significantly curtailed.

Researchers also examined the indirect impact of higher winds by moving the flowers.

The findings reveal that, while flower movement did not appear to have an effect on the bees, the movement of air from the fans made them much more hesitant to take off from a flower, with time taken ranging from an initial 0.05 seconds to 54 seconds.

Georgia Hennessy, lead author of the research published in the journal *Animal Behaviour*, said that one possible reason for the wind causing hesitancy was that small increases in wind speed reduced the bees' body temperature, so they require longer to warm up the flight muscles required to take off.

(Source: The Guardian)

WORDS IN THE NEWS

Developing countries oil

(February 26, 2003)

The possibility of war in Iraq has already affected the economy, leading to higher oil prices, lower share prices and a weaker dollar. But how might developing countries be affected if the war does happen? This report from Andrew Walker:

Most developing countries import oil. So the persistence of relatively high oil prices - partly due to the international tension over Iraq - is very unwelcome to them. It is particularly **an issue** for those that have **made large strides** in industrial development, the **sector** of the economy that tends to consume the most energy. Thailand and Korea are examples of countries whose economies clearly suffer from high oil prices. How much **damage they sustain**, depends on how much higher prices go and how long they stay high.

Developing countries would also suffer if a war **undermines** economic performance in the rich countries. These are important markets for the goods produced by developing nations. **Weaker rich economies** would also undermine the prices of the **commodities** that many people in the developing world depend on for their livelihood. And then there are the **foreign nationals** working in the Persian Gulf region, many of them from South or East Asia, who send money home to their families. A war might persuade some to return or disrupt their employment in the region. Some developing countries might be better off - those that produce oil. In the Persian Gulf there will be some gains from oil prices to **offset** the regional disruption. Elsewhere, Venezuela, Russia and oil producers in Africa could make a lot more money while prices remain relatively high.

Words

an issue: an important problem or subject that people are discussing

made large strides: progressed quickly

sector: an area or part of something

consume: use

damage they sustain: harm that they suffer

undermines: weakens or affects in a negative way

weaker rich economies: Economies that are considered to be rich, but which could be weakened by the effects of war

commodities: a formal word for things which are sold for money

foreign nationals: people who were born in another country or have the legal right to live there, but live in another country or area

offset: balance or lessen the negative effects - in this case, the higher oil prices

(Source: BBC)

Australian MPs have no doubt Assange held as 'political prisoner'

PRESS TV — Two Australian MPs who have visited Wikileaks founder Julian Assange in a high-security prison in the British capital, London, have described him as a "political prisoner," expressing doubt that the whistleblower can receive a fair trial in the United States, where he is wanted for publishing classified US documents incriminating America in potential war crimes.

On Tuesday, Australian MPs Andrew Wilkie and George Christensen visited Assange in Belmarsh Prison in east London in an attempt to check on his well-being and lobby for his release.

They said they had been left in "absolutely no doubt" that Assange was a "political prisoner," adding that his detention for engaging in "legitimate journalistic practices" was "madness" in the first place.

"The US is determined to extradite Assange to get even," Wilkie argued at the gates of Belmarsh, adding that the solution to bringing Assange's incarceration to an end "must be political."

He called the fact that the UK was even considering having a court case to consider Assange's extradition to the US rather than telling the administration of US President Donald Trump to "back off" was simply "madness."

Assange was arrested in London in April last year after he was expelled from the Ecuadorian Embassy — where he had taken refuge for seven years — due to pressure from Washington. The activist is still fighting the US bid to be extradited from Britain.

The 48-year-old Australian citizen is currently serving a 50-week sentence in the United Kingdom before he will be extradited to the US on espionage charges related to his work.

Assange used WikiLeaks to publish secret documents online, including classified military and diplomatic files in 2010 about US bombing campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq that proved highly embarrassing to the US government.

He now faces a maximum sentence of 175 years in prison in the US if convicted of all of the charges brought against him there.

"It is completely and utterly unacceptable" for Assange to be facing espionage charges in the US for his role in revealing war crimes committed by the US, Wilkie said.

"I do not know that there is a way that Julian fairly and justly could ever be imprisoned, could ever be extradited," said Christensen, adding that "He's one of ours... He's not a Brit, he's not an American, and he should be returned home."

The two Australian MPs further said it was evident that the WikiLeaks co-founder was under "a lot of pressure," adding that there was no doubt he had suffered "prolonged exposure to psychological torture."

Separately on Tuesday, a spokesman for Assange said that he was no longer being kept in solitary confinement and his health was improving.

"I saw him about 10 days ago; he has improved thanks to the pressure from his legal team, the general public, and amazingly, actually from other inmates in Belmarsh Prison to get him out of isolation," Kristinn Hrafnsson said.

Earlier, a group of doctors representing 117 physicians and psychologists from 18 nations had called in a letter for an end to what they described as "the psychological torture and medical neglect of Julian Assange."

His father, John Shipton, said Assange's long confinement had damaged his health and said he feared that sending his son to the US would be akin to a "death sentence."

"His situation is dire, he has had nine years of ceaseless psychological torture where false accusations are constantly being made," he told reporters.

Assange's supporters expressed concern about the state of his health after he appeared disoriented during a court hearing in October last year.

The mainstream media in the West have all but ignored the WikiLeaks founder's story.

'Racist' editorial gets 3 Wall Street Journal reporters fired from China

PRESS TV — China has expelled three reporters working for The Wall Street Journal over a "racist" editorial, calling the country "the Real Sick Man of Asia."

The country's foreign ministry said Wednesday that it was canceling the visas of three journalists over the racist headline about the coronavirus epidemic.

"The Chinese side has lodged stern representations with WSJ and made our solemn position clear," foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said in a statement. "China demands the WSJ recognize the severity of its mistake, make an official apology and hold the persons involved accountable. Meanwhile, we reserve the right to take further actions."

The Beijing-based Foreign Correspondents Club of China called the move "an extreme and obvious attempt by the Chinese authorities to intimidate foreign news organizations by taking retribution against their China-based correspondents."

"China has evicted fair and talented journalists who have worked hard to bring unbiased, informative reports to their audiences and to understand China," the association said in a statement.

The February 3 opinion piece was penned by Walter Russell Mead, a scholar at the conservative Hudson Institute and a professor at Bard College in New York.

Mead himself said at the time that "#Coronavirus won't be the last black swan to manifest in China, and its financial markets may be a greater danger than the wildlife markets."

U.S. Senator Sanders calls Saudi Arabia's rulers 'murderous thugs'

→ 1 Sanders made similar remarks during a presidential debate in December, when he called Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu a "racist" and said US foreign policy cannot be only pro-Israel, but must be "pro-Palestinian" as well.

Sanders has also been a relentless critic of President Donald Trump, repeatedly calling him a liar and the "most dangerous president" in US history.

The senator has jumped out to a double-digit lead over his closest rivals in the Democratic presidential contest, while former US vice president and previous front-runner Joe Biden has seen his support drop by 11 points, according to a new NBC News/Wall Street Journal poll released Tuesday.

The survey also shows former New York Mayor Mike Bloomberg gaining ground in the Democratic race in the past month.

Iraq's Sunnis ready for battle with the Great Satan

By Damir Nazarov

In an interview with channel Alahad tv, the leader of Asaib Ahl al-Haq Sheikh Khazali stated that people in three Sunni provinces (Ninevia, Anbar and Salah ad Din) expressed a wish to join resistance operations against American troops.

It is known that Sunni – Shia partnership inside Iraq already has productive cooperation experience. That Islamic solidarity has appeared in battles with ISIS and blocking ambitions of Kurdish separatism. Now it's the time for joint actions against foreign invaders. Sunni supporters of Islamic resistance are divided into several categories - kitting on the basis of tribalism, cooperation with Sunni religious body, establishment of local councils (for example Anbar Liberation council) and integration in Shia fractions of Islamic resistance. For instance, there are a number of Sunnis in organizations such as Asaib al-Haq, Badr, Kataeb Hezbollah, Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba, Jund al-Imam, Brigades Imam Ali, Kataeb al-Shuhada. There are also some known facts of cooperation between leader of Anbar and Muqtad



* - photo of the Sunni mufti of Iraq, Sheikh Abdul-Mahdi al-Sumadai, with the martyrs Suleimani and Muhandis.

Israeli policy of assassinations cannot terrorize Palestinians to accept Trump's deal: Nakhala



PRESS TV — The secretary-general of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad resistance movement says the Tel Aviv regime's plan to return to "the policy of assassinations" against distinguished figures of Palestinian resistance groups in the Gaza Strip cannot terrorize Palestinians to acknowledge US President Donald Trump's so-called deal of the century on the decades-old Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

"The policy of assassinations will not make the Palestinian people give up their rights, nor will it manage to break up the resistance front. We will respond to any assassination in time, and any act of aggression against our people in the Gaza Strip will be met with resistance that the occupation [Israel] has not experienced before," Ziad al-Nakhala said in a televised speech broadcast live from Gaza City on Wednesday afternoon.

He added, "The threats of enemy leaders will not intimidate us, nor will make us accept what they have crafted and called the deal of the century. They will not make us relinquish our historical rights in Palestinian lands and al-Quds (Jerusalem)."

"Oslo Accords bore nothing for Palestinians other than humiliation"

Nakhala also censured the Oslo Accords signed between the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the Israeli regime more than two decades ago, stating that the set of agreements brought nothing for Palestinians other than humiliation, shame and delusions.

"We presented our history as well as our children, and sacrificed them on the altar of delusion of peace. We reaped nothing other than despair that was represented by the deal of the century," he pointed out.

The Oslo Accords -- consisting of Oslo

I and Oslo II accords -- were signed by the late chairman of the PLO, Yasser Arafat, and former Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, respectively in Washington DC, in 1993 and Egypt in 1995. The purported goal of the accords was to achieve peace based on the United Nations Security Council resolutions 242 and 338, and to realize the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination.

The senior Palestinian official also lambasted some Arab and Muslim countries for supporting and acknowledging Trump's proposal in the eye of the international community.

Nakhala then called upon all Palestinian resistance movements to join forces, and tirelessly protect Jerusalem al-Quds and the Palestinian cause from liquidation.

"The US decision to declare al-Quds as the capital of Israel was not surprising, given that America is the sponsor of the Zionist project ever since its inception (back in 1948). It is a full partner to this project, and is in fact spearheading the Western project in our region," he underscored.

On January 28, Trump unveiled his so-called deal of the century, negotiated with Israel but without the Palestinians.

Palestinian leaders, who severed all ties with Washington in late 2017 after Trump controversially recognized Jerusalem al-Quds as the capital of the Israeli regime, immediately rejected the plan, with President Mahmoud Abbas saying it "belongs to the dustbin of history."

Palestinian leaders say the deal is a colonial plan to unilaterally control historic Palestine in its entirety and remove Palestinians from their homeland, adding that it heavily favors Israel and would deny them a viable independent state.

Turkey's Erdogan threatens 'imminent' Syria operation, sparks Russian warning



PRESS TV — Turkey has threatened to launch an "imminent" operation in Syria's Idlib Province if Damascus fails to withdraw behind Ankara's military positions, sparking a warning from Russia.

"Like our previous operations, we say our operation may happen suddenly one night," Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said, referring to three cross-border incursions his country has so far waged in northern Syria.

Speaking at a meeting of the ruling Justice and Development (AK) Party's parliamentary group in Ankara on Wednesday, Erdogan stressed that Turkey was determined to make Idlib a secure zone "no matter the cost."

He also noted that several rounds of talks between Ankara and Moscow on the situation in Idlib had failed to reach "desired results."

"The talks will continue, but it is true that we are far from meeting our demands at the table," Erdogan said. "Turkey has made every preparation to carry out its own operational plans. I say that we can come at any point. In other words, the Idlib offensive is only a matter of time."

"An operation in Idlib is imminent. We are counting down, we are making our final warnings," he added.

The Turkish president has previously said his country may use military force to drive back Syrian forces unless they pull back by the end of February.

Reacting to Erdogan's threat, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov issued a warning.

"If we are talking about an operation against the legitimate authorities of

Sadr, a prominent anti-imperialism fighter. Similar cooperation's used to be directed against takfirists and also in order to form a political block in parliament of Iraq. But now after Great Satan in Baghdad murdered Suleimani and Muhandis, you can be sure of reviving the alliance between Sadr and a number of Anbar heads against the invaders.

No doubt, that killing Suleimani, a legendary general and his faithful associate - al Muhandis has mobilized not only Iraq's Shia but also Sunnis who are supporters of Islamic outlook.

Mentioned martyrs were "building new Iraq", where the main component was Islamic ideology. A special priority in partnership between IRGC and its Shia allies in Iraq still is Sunni direction. Here is the place where prominent Tehran projects of madhab's unity, resurgence of the Islamic civilization and organized resistance against enemies are being implemented.

Losing both the head of "Al Quds forces" and Hashad al-Shaabi will make no difference to IRI's policies in Iraq, it's quite the opposite. Now Iraq's return to Islam direction is moving along more rapidly.

Libya talks need strong signal to resume: Prime Minister Sarraj

PRESS TV — Libya's internationally recognized Prime Minister Fayez al-Sarraj has ruled out the resumption of peace talks aimed at finding a solution to the crisis in the country unless there is a "strong signal" from all international players.

"There must be first a strong signal from all international players who are trying to talk to us," Sarraj told reporters on Wednesday as he visited Tripoli's seaport which was attacked by eastern forces on Tuesday.

The internationally recognized Government of National Accord (GNA) announced late Tuesday it would suspend its participation in talks brokered by the United Nations, which began on the same day in Geneva between representatives of the GNA and its main rival, the eastern-based Libya National Army (LNA).

The reason was a barrage of rockets that hit a port in the capital Tripoli, which has been the target of a months-long offensive by the LNA.

In an attempt to salvage the talks, a source familiar with



the matter said on Wednesday that the UN Libya envoy Ghassan Salame was trying to convince the Tripoli delegation to remain in Geneva and resume indirect talks. The UN also confirmed it.

"Delegations are still here (in Geneva) and Dr Salame

has a meeting today with the head of the GNA delegation," said Jean El Alam, spokesman for the United Nations Libya mission.

"The mission leadership is in contact with the GNA in Tripoli and member states to keep the momentum going," he added.

In a separate statement, the UN mission said it was "expressing its strong and renewed condemnation of the bombing of Tripoli's seaport yesterday by the Libyan National Army."

Libya has since 2014 been divided between two rival camps, the Tripoli-based government of Sarraj, and a camp in the eastern city of Tobruk, supported militarily by rebel forces under the command of Khalifa Haftar.

Numerous attempts to broker peace between the two sides of the conflict have failed.

RIA news agency reported on Wednesday that Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu had met with Haftar and that they had agreed a political settlement is the only option for Libya.

Iran wary of Syria and Qatar threat in FIBA Asia Cup qualifiers

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Qualification for the 2021 International Basketball Federation (FIBA) Asia Cup will kick off on Thursday and Iran will meet Syria and Qatar in Tehran's Azadi Hall on Thursday and Sunday in Group E.

Iran, as one of Asia's powerhouses, will be wary of the threat posed by Syria and multinational Qatar.

"We don't take nothing for granted against Syria and Qatar. As you remember, we defeated Qatar in the 2019 World Cup qualifier 77-75 in a difficult match and Syria lost to Team Melli 68-55 in the 2018 Asian Games and these results show that a couple of tough matches are waiting for us," Iran coach Mehran Shahintab said.

"We've trained well for these two matches and our players are well-prepared. Aaron Geramipour has not been invited for the window and Samad Nikkhab Bahrami suffers an injury and will likely miss the matches but the other players are ready," he added.

The Iran coach also said they have been invited to the international tournaments and the warm-up competitions will help them get ready for the 2020 Olympic Games.

"We've been invited to China for the Stankovic tournament but will not participate in the tournament for the healthy issue. We are invited to a tournament in Japan ahead of the Olympic Games but it will coincide with a tournament in a European country. Armenia have also sent us an invitation for two friendly matches," Shahintab stated.

A total of 24 countries will take part in the qualifiers – divided into six groups. According to FIBA, the top two teams of each group will secure places at the 2021 Asia Cup. Meanwhile, the third-placed team in each group will battle over the four remaining slots in the tournament.

The qualifiers will run until February next year, as teams play both home and



away matches – giving local supporters the opportunity to cheer on their national

squads directly during the matches. The second window of the qualifiers

will be held in November, while the last is scheduled for February 2021.

Iran Greco-Roman team win Asian Wrestling C'ships



S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iran Greco-Roman team won the title of the 2020 Asian Wrestling Championships on Wednesday.

The Iranian wrestlers won three gold and two bronze medals on the second day of the competition in New Delhi, India and claimed the title with 190 points.

Uzbekistan (146 points) and Kazakhstan (136 points) finished in second and third place, respectively.

On Wednesday, Amin Yavar Kavianinejad defeated Kazakhstan's Ibragim Magomadov 8-0 in the final match of the 72kg.

In the 82kg final bout, Mahdi Ebrahimi beat Korean Junhyeong Choi 3-1 and seized a gold medal.

Mohammadhadi Saravi also took a gold medal beating Seyeol lee from Korea Republic 5-2 in the 97kg.

In 60kg, Mehdi Mohsennejad defeated Aidos Sultangali from Kazakhstan 4-3 in the bronze medal match.

Hossein Asadi also grabbed a bronze after defeating Japanese Tsuchika Shimoyamada 5-3 in the 67kg.

Iran had won two gold medals, one silver and bronze on Tuesday.

Pouya Nasserpour (55kg) and Amin Mirzadeh (130kg) had claimed two gold medals.

Pejman Postham (77kg) and Meysam Dalkhani (63kg) had also claimed a silver and a bronze medal respectively.

The championship was classified as a ranking tournament for the Tokyo Olympics by the United World Wrestling – the global governing body of the sport.

The tournament will be played in three categories -- men's freestyle, Greco-Roman and women's wrestling.

We played a perfect match, says Al Sadd's Xavi

Al Sadd SC head coach Xavi Hernandez praised the performance of his side in their 3-0 victory against Sepahan FC in an AFC Champions League 2020 Group D tie at the Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium on Tuesday.

After a scoreless first half, a brace from Hassan Al Haydos after Akram Afif had opened the scoring early in the second period gave Qatar's Al Sadd their first win of the competition, having played to a 2-2 draw with Saudi Arabia's Al Nassr on Matchday One.

Xavi said Al Sadd produced one of their best performances of the season on Tuesday and the victory was important because it was against a top team.

"The team was in their best condition and we had one of our best matches this season," said Xavi. "We definitely deserved this victory."

"The win was against a strong and special team who are favorites to win the group. This victory shows that Al Sadd can go far in the competition."

The 40-year-old Spaniard said his



players struggled in the first half and had to be patient in order to break the deadlock.

"The match was not easy as the first half ended without goals," he explained. "Our players, however, were patient and

they concentrated on transforming their dominance into goals.

"I'm satisfied with what they showed and I always expect such performances from them. I'm happy with what we achieved and hopefully we can continue with the same in the next matches."

Sepahan FC head coach Amir Ghalenoei said crucial mistakes helped Al Sadd win with such big score.

"We knew that our opponents are strong and the match would be very difficult but we never expected such a defeat. We performed well in the first half but we failed to capitalize on our chances."

"The injury to Soroosh Rafiei affected us and we also made some mistakes," added the 56-year-old coach. "We lost against a strong team but the most important thing for me is to recover for the next matches."

Islamic Republic of Iran's Sepahan, who opened their campaign with a 4-0 win over UAE's Al Ain FC, play Saudi Arabia's Al Nassr next on March 3 while Al Sadd face Al Ain on the same day.

(Source: the-afc)

India recommended as host for AFC Women's Asian Cup 2022

India has been recommended as the first South Asian hosts for the AFC Women's Asian Cup 2022 by the AFC Women's Football Committee which met in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia today as part of the AFC's commitment to grow the women's game.

It was felt that India, who will also have the experience of hosting the FIFA Women's Under-17 World Cup later this year, was best placed among the three bidders – Chinese Taipei and Uzbekistan were the other competing candidates – to maximize the promotion of the women's game.

The stadiums proposed by India – D Y Patil Stadium and Trans Stadia Arena – are also being used in the FIFA tournament. India was the host of the AFC Under-16 Championships in 2016 and the FIFA Under-17 World Cup 2017 and the Committee agreed the country could continue raising the standards of the AFC Women's Asian Cup.

Chairperson, Mahfuza Akhter Kiron said: "This is the most important and prestigious competition in women's football in Asia. The last edition was a major step forward for the women's game in Asia. It was played in Jordan, the first time a West Asian nation had hosted the event. Now

we are looking to build on that legacy.

"India offers the best opportunities to build the event commercially as well as increasing the value and India is also committed to developing the women's game in the country and while all three were strong bids, India stands out."

The Committee decided that the expanded AFC Women's Asian Cup – eight to 12 teams – will be played in three groups of four with a minimum of 25 matches with eight teams qualifying for the newly introduced quarter-finals.

The committee agreed that the minimum length of the competition would be 17 days and that the Administration would be mandated to organise the relevant play-off matches – depending on the AFC slots at the FIFA Women's World Cup 2023.

The dates of the tournament are likely to be in late October and early November 2022 and the match schedule will now be worked out bearing in mind the start of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 and the agreed FIFA release dates.

The Committee also heard of the phased introduction of the AFC Women's Champions League, following the successful AFC/FIFA pilot championship in Korea Republic in



November 2019. The Pilot program will continue in 2020 with a maximum six invited clubs.

In 2021 and 2022, there will be eight invited clubs and by 2023 and 2024, this will grow to a minimum of 12 which will be open to all Member Associations and in 2025, it will be consolidated to 16 teams and by then an AFC Women's Club Competition ranking will have been devised.

(Source: the-afc)

Tractor advance to Hazfi Cup semis

TASNIM — Tractor football team defeated first division Mes Kerman 4-1 in the Iran's Hazfi Cup quarterfinals on Wednesday.

In the match held in Tabriz's Yadegar-e Emam Stadium, Mohammadreza Khanzadeh opened the scoring for the host in the 32nd minute and Ashkan Dejagah and Reza Asadi (penalty) were on target before the halftime.

Mes player Bahram Rashid Farrokhi pulled a goal back in the 59th minute but Saeid Mehri made it 4-1 in the 77th minute.

Esteghlal will also play Sepahan in another quarters. Esteghlal are the most decorated football team in Hazfi Cup, winning the title seven times.

Hazfi Cup is the Iranian football knockout cup competition, run by the Iranian Football Federation.

The winners of Hazfi Cup will be awarded a spot in the AFC Champions League.

The competition was founded in 1975.

Persepolis lost concentration against Sharjah: Yahya Golmohammadi

IRNA — Persepolis football team coach Yahya Golmohammadi says they lost their concentration against Sharjah.

Persepolis were held to a 2-2 draw against the Emirati Club in Group C on Tuesday. The result put the Iranian team in the third place with just one point.

"We wanted to win the match and had a good start but lost our concentration. We went ahead twice but they returned to the match," Golmohammadi said.

"We have conceded four goals in two matches and we need to fix our defensive problems. We could have scored in the second half but missed our chances," he added.

"Without a doubt, we are the favorite to qualify for the next stage. We will host Al Duhail and Sharjah in Tehran and we can beat them with support of our fans. I think we will qualify for the next round if we have a little chance and more concentration," Golmohammadi concluded.

Iran runners-up at Asian Junior Weightlifting C'ships

MNA — Iran finished in second place at the 2020 Asian Junior Weightlifting Championships in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

The Iranian weightlifters finished in second place with 641 points after winning four gold, 10 silver and five bronze medals.



Uzbekistan came first with 694 points and Saudi Arabi finished third with 615 points.

Iran also came fourth at the Asian Youth Weightlifting Championships with 305 points, winning three gold, seven silver and two bronze medals.

Uzbekistan won the title with 738 points, followed by Chinese Taipei (689 points) and India (321 points).

Al Sadd's Al Haydos ruled out for three months

Qatar Stars League champions Al Sadd SC announced that Hassan Al Haydos has been ruled out for up to three months after suffering an injury against Sepahan FC on Matchday 2 of the 2020 AFC Champions League.

Al Haydos scored a brace against Sepahan at Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium on Tuesday before suffering a foot fracture and had to be replaced in the first minute of stoppage time.

The official Twitter account of the Qatari giants said that the 29-year-old forward will miss action for the rest of the season after "sustaining a fracture at the top of his leg." Al Haydos' absence will also be a blow for the Qatar national team who are preparing for their next two matches in Group E of the Asian Qualifiers for the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 and AFC Asian Cup China 2023 next month.

(Source: the-afc)

Shahad replaces Ilic at Al Shorta

Defending Iraq Premier League champions Al Shorta have parted ways with head coach Aleksandar Ilic by mutual consent.

The 50-year-old Serbian has been replaced by Abdulghani Shahad, who took charge of Iraq in the AFC U-23 Championship Thailand 2020, and was presented to the media on Wednesday.

Ilic took charge in August 2019 after the departure of Montenegrin coach Nebojsa Jovovic who steered Al Shorta to the Iraqi league title last season.

Shahad, 51, will be aiming to put Al Shorta back on track in Group A of the 2020 AFC Champions League after the club only collected one point from their first two home matches.

After sharing a 1-1 draw with Islamic Republic of Iran's Esteghlal FC in their opening match, Al Shorta suffered a late 1-0 defeat to UAE's Al Wahda FSCC on Monday.

Their defense of the Iraq Premier League title begins next Saturday against Al Kahraba'a.

(Source: the-afc)

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GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

The result of negligence is regret and the consequence of far-sightedness and determination is soundness.

Imam Ali (AS)

Tehran to host veteran artists expo

A R T TEHRAN — An expo displaying works by veteran Iranian artists will open at the gallery of the Mellat Cineplex in Tehran on Friday.



A poster for an expo of veteran Iranian artists.

"The exhibit aims to review works by veterans to help familiarize younger artists with modern art," reads part of a statement for the exhibit. "It also tries to say that stepping in the right path and getting to know contemporary art will bring a bright future for the artist," it adds.

The expo will showcase works by Jazeh Tabatabai, Parviz Tanavoli, Jafar Nami, Abbas Katuzian, Manuchehr Yekta, Sadeq Tabrizi, Aidin Aqdashlu and several other artists.

Afsun Montazeri and Arash Zolqadr are the curators of the exposition, which will be running until March 6 at the gallery located on Vali-e Asr Ave., off Niayesh Highway.

Current music scene

By Ali Hosseinzadeh

In my opinion, music is an expression of inner feelings and emotions and each individual chooses a music based on their level of understanding.

Sometimes, I hear of critics and their reviews stating that the ambience of the current music scene is, overall, a dismal one and is put under scrutiny.

However, if critics seek with much more care and diligence, they will find that there are many worthwhile musical compositions that are timeless.



However, because of not having the appropriate media and exposure, finding such works has become a difficult task. Because of this lack of exposure and attention, a lot of great music goes unheard, unsupported and eventually end up vanishing.

When there aren't any media outlets whose focus and productivity is solely music, then how can timeless music be created or supported?

In the past, because of the lack in technology, the work pace would be slow, the quality of work would be subpar and mediocre, respectively.

However, nowadays, everything is of better quality in comparison to the past. In this new era, if we don't stay current and with the times, then we will not find a strong musical audience.

Another topic that needs mentioning is in regards to changes within the world of music. From the past to the present and even one generation to the next, the type and style of music has changed.

This is something that has occurred in many countries of the world and not just ours. For example, many countries strive to preserve and promote (Western) classical music.

Even with all their efforts they witness immense waves of musical styles. Such musical waves may seem garish in contrast but many powerful and beautiful songs emerge and gain a huge fan base.

In conclusion, I would like to say that; we must accept that the rate of technological growth has differed from the past. For this reason, we must stay current with time and technology. This is the key to staying relevant among fan base.

Also, instead of expressing dissatisfaction for one another and putting each other under scrutiny, our sole focus should be on raising the bar of excellence of this worthy art.

Fajr visual art festival offers new ideas with high creativity

1 → A painting created by Hassan Ruholamin in memory of Soleimani is on display besides a bust under construction by sculptor Abbas Barzegar and a painting in process by Ali Lavai. The works will be completed before the end of the festival.

A selection of 900 works have been put on view in different sections of painting, photo, sculpture, calligraphy, miniature, illustration, cartoon, graphic design and new media.

Almost 450 works by about 340 artists are competing for the Golden Tooba at the festival. For the first time, the artworks are offered for sale.

"Chaharsu-ye Honar", a new section dedicated to displaying works from galleries in Tehran and other cities, also offers the artworks for sale.

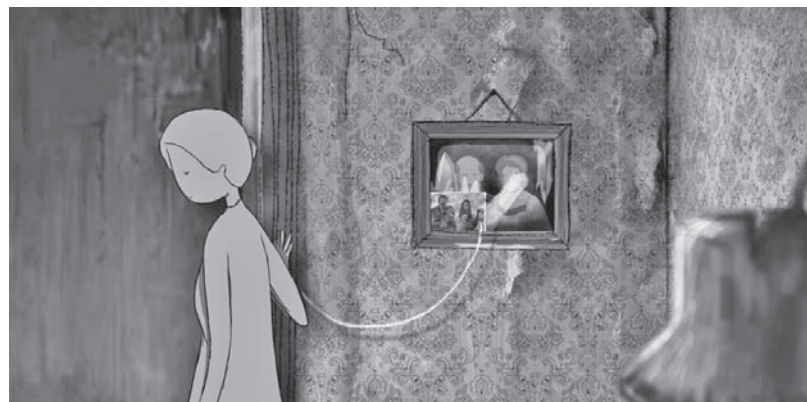
Charkhaneh is the other section of the festival, which discusses the art of photography in other provinces.

The festival will be running until February 24 at the institute located on Mozaffar St., near the intersection of Taleqani and Vali-e Asr Ave.



Art aficionados visit artworks on view during the 12th Fajr Festival of Visual Arts at the Saba Art and Cultural Institute in Tehran on February 18, 2020. (ISNA/Mohammad-Ali Qasemi)

Movies from Iran to screen at Taos Shortz Film Fest



A scene from "Tangle" by Maliheh Gholamzadeh.

A R T TEHRAN — A lineup of nine Iranian films and animations will be screened at the 14th edition of the Taos Shortz Film Fest, which will be held in the U.S. city in northern New Mexico from March 20 to 22.

"The Feast of the Goat" by Saeid Zamanian, "Coming Soon" by Amir-Reza Salari, "Past Continuous" by Shiva Taheri,

"Tangle" by Maliheh Gholamzadeh and "You're Still Here" directed by Katayun Parmar and Mohammad Ruhbakhsh are among the films.

The lineup also includes "Four out of Five" by Bahar Tofiqi, "Residents of the Last Floor" by Amir Jalali, "Bodies" by Morvarid Kashian and "To Be" by Puria Qasempur.



A combination photo shows posters and pictures of the movies selected to be screened during an Iran-Macedonia film festival in Skopje.

Iran-Macedonia film festival opens in Skopje

A R T TEHRAN — A festival of films from Iranian and Macedonian directors opened at the Cinematheque of Macedonia in the North Macedonian capital of Skopje on Monday.

Four films by Macedonian filmmakers and eight movies by Iranian directors have been selected to be screened during the event, the Embassy of Iran in Skopje announced on Tuesday.

The weeklong festival opened with screening "Honeyland", a Macedonian documentary directed by Tamara Kotevska and Ljubomir Stefanov about a woman utilizes ancient beekeeping traditions to cultivate honey in the mountains of North Macedonia. The film represented the country in the 2020 Oscars.

Milcho Manchevski's "Willow", Gjorce Stavreski's "Secret Ingredient" and Teona Strugar Mitevska's "God Exists, Her Name Is Petrunija" are other Macedonian films being reviewed at the festival.

The Iranian lineup includes Ruhollah Hejazi's "The Dark Room", Alireza Motamed's "Reza", Majidreza Mostafavi's "Astigmatism" and Hooman Seyyedi's "Sheeple".

"A Hairy Tale" directed by Homayun Ghanizadeh, "Invasion" by Shahram Mokri, "Here" by Hadi Mohaqqueq and "Divorce Me Because of the Cats" by Mohammad-Ali Sajjadi are also among the Iranian films.

A collection of Sajjadi's paintings inspired by his film is also on view on the sidelines of the festival at the cinematheque.

Belgian, French musicians perform at Fajr Music Festival



French saxophonist Emile Parisien (L) and accordionist Vincent Peirani perform during the 35th Fajr Music Festival at Tehran's Vahdat Hall on February 18, 2020. (YJC/Nasim Aqai)

A R T TEHRAN — The 35th Fajr Music Festival hosted a performance on Tuesday by Belgian pianist Florian Noack and another one by the French duo, accordionist Vincent Peirani and saxophonist Emile Parisien, at Tehran's Vahdat Hall.

Noak performed pieces by celebrated musicians, including Russian composers Anatoly Lyadov, Sergei Prokofiev and Polish musician Frederic Chopin.

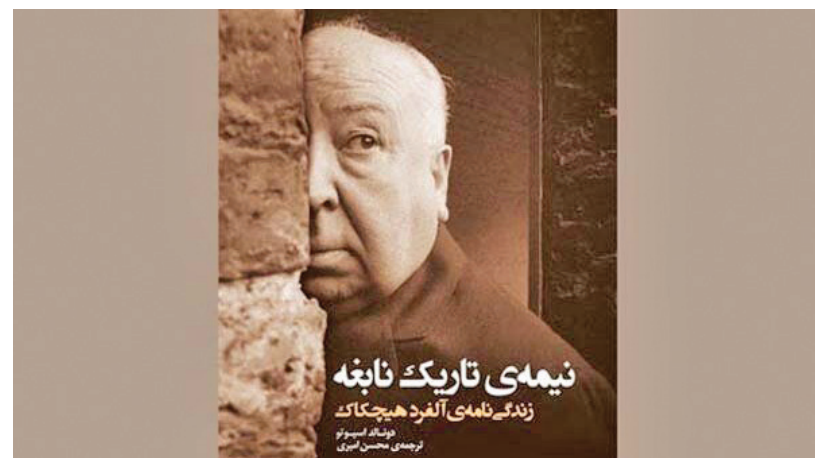
He also performed "Scheherazade" composed by 19th-century Russian composer Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov.

The symphony, which is considered Rimsky-Korsakov's most popular work, is based on the world-famous collection of tales the One Thousand and One Nights.

Peirani and Parisien also performed pieces from their album "Belle Epoque".

Celebrated musicians from seven countries including Tunisian composer, singer and oud player Dhafer Youssef, Italian jazz trumpeter Luca Aquino and Azerbaijani singer Zabita Nabizadeh gave concerts at the 35th Fajr Music Festival, which came to an end last night.

Donald Spoto's biography of Alfred Hitchcock published in Persian



Front cover of the Persian version of "The Dark Side of Genius: The Life of Alfred Hitchcock".

CULTURE TEHRAN — "The Dark Side of Genius: The Life of Alfred Hitchcock", American writer Donald Spoto's biography of British director Alfred Hitchcock has recently been published in Persian.

The Farabi Cinema Foundation is the publisher of the Persian version translated by Mohsen Amiri.

"This is the definitive life story of Alfred Hitchcock, the enigmatic and intensely private director of 'Psycho', 'Vertigo', 'Rear Window', 'The Birds',

and more than forty other films," writes Amazon about the book.

"While setting forth every stage of Hitchcock's long life and brilliant career, Donald Spoto also explores the roots of the director's obsessions with food, murder, and idealized love, and he traces the incomparable, bizarre genius from Hitchcock's English childhood through the golden years of his career in America as one of the greatest directors in the history of filmmaking," it adds.