

Judiciary chief: Jesus Christ loathes injustices *Page 2*

Para athletes' health, our priority: Khosravi Vafa *Page 3*

Coronavirus: world tourist arrivals fall by more than 70% *Page 6*

Cinéma Vérité honors veteran documentarian Kamran Shirdel *Page 8*



European plot: how to kill an agreement?

Rocket attack on U.S. embassy in Baghdad 'dubious,' Iran says

TEHRAN – Saeed Khatibzadeh, spokesman for Iran's Foreign Ministry, has called a rocket attack on the United States embassy in Iraq "unacceptable" and "dubious". Speaking at a weekly press conference on Monday, Khatibzadeh said, "Unfortunately, Iran's diplomatic places in Iraq had also been attacked. We had pursued a steady policy that targeting diplomatic missions and residential areas is unacceptable."

He added, "But the kind and timing of this attack [on the U.S. embassy], as well as the statement issued by the U.S. secretary of state, show that [the attack] is very dubious. Its timing is dubious. And more importantly, it seems that as if they had already prepared a statement to publish. And I strongly condemn the remarks of the U.S. regime's secretary of state, *Continued on page 3*

TCCIMA to hold Iran-Eurasia economic diplomacy meeting in late Jan. 2021

TEHRAN – Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA) plans to hold an Iran-Eurasia economic diplomacy meeting on January 27. The meeting will be held in collaboration with the country's chambers of commerce, the joint chambers of Iran-Russia, Iran-Kazakhstan, and Iran-Armenia, as well as the related government organizations and institutions. The prospects of economic cooperation

between Iran and the members of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and the challenges and opportunities of the mutual economic relation between the two sides will be explored in the mentioned event. Although the event is going to be held in person (with limited capacity and in accordance with health protocols), businessmen of the two sides would also have the opportunity to have virtual B2B meetings. *Continued on page 4*

Radio Moqavemat launched to air programs remembering Commander Soleimani

TEHRAN – Radio Moqavemat (Radio Resistance) was launched during a ceremony on Sunday to cover programs commemorating the first martyrdom anniversary of Commander Qassem Soleimani. The temporary network has been set up by Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) to air the programs for one month. Speaking at the ceremony, IRIB Deputy Director Ali Bakhshizadeh said, "We are

approaching the first martyrdom anniversary of Hajji Qassem Soleimani and IRIB has decided to call [the Iranian month] Dey the month of resistance," he said. "The channel has been commissioned to explain the goals of the Islamic Revolution and promoting the culture of martyrdom inspired by the thoughts of Imam Khomeini, the founder of the Islamic Republic, *Continued on page 8*

Forest tourism, an untapped potential in northeastern Iran

BY SAMANEH ABOUTALEBI
As ecotourism develops and becomes more popular around the world, the social demand for attractive, quiet, safe, and natural-looking spaces for recreation rises as well.

This is where forests play a key role in attracting tourists and developing tourism, and Iran, as a four-season country is home to several pristine forested lands.

Different provinces across the country benefit from dense forests, their magnificence, sceneries, and the income they bring in, however, oak forests in North Khorasan are still less known to potential travelers and holidaymakers.

With an area of about 25,000 hectares, the forested land of the northeastern province, which is the only oak forest in the eastern side of the country, is located around the village of Daraksh, a tourist destination in Maneh and Samalqan county, while the Atrak River, as the only permanent vital artery in the northeast of the country completes the picture of this large ecosystem.

Due to the special climate conditions of this province and the topographic situation of the region, the medicinal plants have a lot of diversity and variety in this area. Some 1100 different plant species are existing in the province.

The oak forests of this region are among the oldest in the world. Its oak species is known by the scientific name of *Quercus castanifolia*, which are currently subject to different university researches.

Besides their value for the ecosystem and environment, these forests are very important in terms of tourism and economic prosperity and need proper protection and preservation.

According to Science Direct Western, oak forests are home to many species including, the Persian squirrel which is the indicator species of this region. Persian squirrels and oak trees have symbiotic relationships, in which forests provide ecological requirements of Persian squirrels such as food and shelter, and, in return, the Persian squirrel contributes to seed germination and forests' regeneration.

A large part of the experience of ecotourism and recreational landscape depends on the maintenance of forested land. Effective management of tourism and recreation in forests can provide extra income for the locals.

Continued on page 6

U.S. role in West Asia has never been constructive: Indian professor

BY MOHAMMAD MAZHARI
TEHRAN – An Indian academic says that Washington has never played a "constructive" role in the West Asia region.

"The U.S. role in the Middle East (West Asia) has never been constructive," Ashok Swain tells the Tehran Times.

Swain, a professor of peace and conflict research at the Department of Peace and Conflict Research from Uppsala University, believes that Washington has just been seeking its own interests in the region.

"Its interest has never been for the Middle East (West Asia)'s security and development, but for its own security and development," the professor notes.

While some observers argue that the U.S. will repair its bad reputation under the incoming Biden presidency, others say that the United States has created a havoc in the region to undercut the increasingly close alliance between China,

Russia, and Iran in order to counter China's growing influence. The Indian professor says, "It will be not only difficult but in many cases impossible for the Biden administrations to bring back the mask of a fair adjudicator, which the USA had been wearing for decades."

The following is the text of the interview with Ashok Swain:

How do you assess the status of China in global economy? How could China achieve such a status?

A: China continues to be the main engine of world economic growth for the last three decades and it has already replaced the USA as the global economic leader. China's economic position looks likely to be further strengthened due to the Covid-19 crisis as it has come out much faster from it while the USA and Europe are still struggling with it.

Continued on page 5

'UN Security Council must end its silence in face of Israeli settlers' attacks'

The Palestinian Authority has denounced repeated attacks against Palestinians by Israeli settlers in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem al-Quds, calling on the United Nations Security Council to break its silence in the face of such attacks.

The ministry, in a statement, called on the UN Security Council to shoulder its political, legal and moral responsibility and mount pressure on the Zionist regime to stop such attacks against Palestinians, WAFA News Agency reported on Sunday.

In its statement, the Palestinian Foreign Ministry took to task both the international community and the United Nations for their passivity in the face of atrocities committed by the occupying regime of Tel Aviv.

Such attacks, the Palestinian ministry said, take place in the context of the Israeli regime's brutal act of aggression against Pal-

estinians, which are backed by the occupying regime and its various organizations, with the aim of speeding up the annexation of Palestinian lands, evicting Palestinians, and replacing the residents with Israeli settlers.

The statement comes days following the death of a Palestinian man who was severely beaten by a group of settlers in the central part of the occupied West Bank.

The man, identified as 37-year-old Abdel-Fattah Obeyyat, was found dead at Har Gilo settlement, located two kilometers (1.24 miles) west of Bethlehem, on Wednesday night.

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Continued on page 5

Sustained and rare, honest goodwill by the U.S. is its only salvation now...

BY MARTIN LOVE
It would appear that the primary question regarding whether the JCPOA will be resurrected and sanctions dropped is on whose terms this might happen, if ever.

The best hope is that in some fashion the Biden administration, assuming it reaches the White House on January 20, apologizes in some way for Trump's unwarranted "maximum pressure" campaign against the Islamic Republic (perhaps ideally with reparations?) and re-enters the JCPOA as it was before May 2018. And this seems to be

exactly what the Islamic Republic is insisting on, which to any level-headed person makes the most sense. On the other hand, the U.S. appears to be aiming for the terms of the deal to be temporally extended, and at first glance this does not seem like something that could not be achieved in time.

"In time" means that an extension modification may be possible, but not right away. Maybe not for a year or more because, after all, it was the U.S. that unfaithfully trashed the deal just as under Trump and Pompeo and other Neo-con-ish Trump lackeys it withdrew from a number of other international

accords in fits of extreme arrogance and disrespect for other countries, in particular Iran.

It may be that over the last four years the U.S. reached the very apex of its imperialistic dementia in what has been ultimately a decades-long, futile effort this century especially to maintain its dominance and influence across the globe – a time when the U.S. has been relying almost exclusively on military depredations or threats of such and its craven, parasitic, world-despised "allies" like the Saudis and the Israelis.

Continued on page 2

Literacy for over 30,000 foreign nationals planned

TEHRAN – The Literacy Movement Organization plans to educate more than 30,000 illiterate foreign nationals residing in the country, Shapour Mohammadzadeh, head of the Organization, has stated.

According to a census conducted in the Iranian calendar year 1395 (March 2016-March 2017), there are 2.6 million illiterates in the age group of 10 to 49 in the country, of whom 360,000 are foreign nationals.

"We provide education to 400,000 illiterates a year," Mohammadzadeh said. He made the remarks on the occasion of National Literacy Week, December 21-27.

Before the Islamic Revolution (in 1979), over 52 percent of people were illiterate, but now, the average literacy rate is over 96 percent, he noted, expressing hope that by identifying the illiterate and educating them, the illiteracy will be eradicated in the near future.

Fifty percent of the Organization's activities are aimed at educating the illiterate and the rest are aimed at consolidating literacy, he said, adding, some 80 percent of the measures are related to girls and women. The illiteracy rate of women before the revolution has dropped from 26.2 percent in the 10-49 age group to less than 2.8 percent.

In urban and rural areas, in order to provide education to the whole population, there was a gap of 38 percent before the revolution, which is now decreased to less than 7 percent.

Continued on page 7

TENDER INVITATION NO. 99-1015

IRAN ALUMINIUM COMPANY (IRALCO) would like to invite eligible suppliers for the supply of 15.000 MT Calcined Petroleum Coke (CPC) on tender basis. Interested companies are allowed to send their competitive offer till 4-Jan-2021 Based on our required instruction to following address: PO Box 31, opposite Bahonar Park, Natural Resources Boulevard, Arak- Iran Postal code: 3818998116 Attention: Mr. Omidi - Mr. Nabuini Tel: +98 86 32162014 +98 86 32162181 For obtaining tender's documents and more information, please check: www.iralco.ir

Public Relations Department of Iran Aluminum Company



TENDER INVITATION NO. 99-1016

IRAN ALUMINIUM COMPANY (IRALCO) would like to invite eligible suppliers for the supply of 30.000 MT Anode Carbone Blocks on tender basis. Interested companies are allowed to send their competitive offer till 2-Jan-2021 Based on our required instruction to following address: PO Box 31, opposite Bahonar Park, Natural Resources Boulevard, Arak- Iran Postal code: 3818998116 Attention: Mr. Omidi - Mr. Nabuini Tel: +98 86 32162014 +98 86 32162181 For obtaining tender's documents and more information, please check: www.iralco.ir

Public Relations Department of Iran Aluminum Company



CENTCOM chief reveals Washington's trembling as assassination anniversary of General Soleimani nearing

POLITICAL TEHRAN — The commander of the U.S. forces in West Asia has revealed Washington's fear of Iran's reprisal on the anniversary of the assassination of Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, Iran's top anti-terror military official, in a U.S. drone strike.

"We are prepared to defend ourselves, our friends, and partners in the region, and we're prepared to react if necessary," said General Kenneth McKenzie, head of the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) that has been designated by the Islamic Republic as a terrorist entity.

General Soleimani was assassinated in a cowardly terrorist attack by the U.S. near Baghdad international airport on January 3 while he was on an official tour of Iraq.

"My assessment is we are in a very good position and we'll be prepared for anything the Iranians or their proxies acting for them might choose to do," he noted, according to Press TV.

McKenzie made the remarks while addressing a small group of journalists during a tour of the region on Sunday. The exact whereabouts, from which McKenzie made such remarks, was not disclosed.

His tour was also not announced in advance. Similarly, visits last week by General Mark Milley, chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, to a whole host of regional countries were kept secret until he had left the region.

The AFP news agency described the secrecy surrounding the regional stopovers by the military top brass as "an apparent sign of U.S. military leaders' concerns about Iranian intentions" in the run-up to the anniversary of the assassination.

General Soleimani was considered a legendary commander in the war against terrorists.

"His military acumen, ability to devise asymmetrical anti-terrorism warfare strategies, and bringing together unruly groups to work together were unmatched," Professor Nader Entessar tells the Tehran Times.

Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, deputy commander of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units (PMU) or Hashd al-Sha'abi, was also martyred along with their companions when their convoy was targeted by a U.S. drone at Baghdad airport.

Both commanders enjoyed deep reverence among Muslim nations, throughout West Asia and beyond, over their endeavors in eliminating the U.S.-sponsored Daesh terrorist group in the region, particularly in Iraq and Syria.

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei warned soon after the atrocity about a pending "harsh revenge."

The IRGC fired volleys of ballistic missiles at a U.S. military base in western Iraq on January 8. According to the U.S. Defense Department, more than 110 American forces suffered "traumatic brain injuries" during the missile attack. The IRGC, however, says Washington uses the term to mask the number of the Americans, who perished during the retaliation.

Iran has also issued an arrest warrant and asked Interpol for help in detaining U.S. President Donald Trump, who ordered the assassination, and several other U.S. military and political leaders behind the strike.

Most recently, Ayatollah Khamenei said revenge for the Iranian general was certain and would be exacted at the right time.

Still commenting on the issue of the U.S.'s wariness about the potential of more Iranian counterattacks, McKenzie said, "I talk to my commanders about it every day and I think we will be ready."

Sustained and rare, honest goodwill by the U.S. is its only salvation now...

➔ Whatever happened to the application of some goodwill and faithfulness to alleged or designated enemies of varying degrees like China or Russia, but especially Iran? It's been almost totally absent in the thinking and perverse strategies of Washington, and this absence or the effects of it are beginning to show more than it ever has in U.S. history.

Whatever happens in this current decade, one thing has become utterly clear. The U.S. is in steep decline from where it was after World War 2 even if it remains a power that must be reckoned with if for no other reason but that an "empire" in decline, fast or slow, is still a dangerous one to those countries, especially those with natural resources and deep human capital, that want their sovereignty and independence respected no matter what. And Iran above all desires just that, it is so obvious.

Iran has not and never has sought special treatment from the U.S. or any other country but it has been subject to Western aggression, even regime change in 1953. (Whereas utterly dependent U.S. "allied" regimes like Saudi Arabia and Israel and a few others have demanded and received special treatments from the U.S. because otherwise they could not stand on their own legs and would quickly disappear without U.S. largesse or military protection at tremendous cost to U.S. citizens monetary and otherwise.)

Iranians know Iran's millennia of history and its manifold achievements and its variegated culture and it rightfully takes pride in itself however it has evolved over the centuries. Yes, the Islamic Republic as it currently stands may not be a "democracy" in strict, idealistic Western terms, and has its problems just like any other nation, but the U.S. itself is no longer a "democracy" if one compares it now to its own definition of what a real democracy looks like!

And the downward slide of the U.S. into a non-democratic corporatist oligarchy has to be the greatest tragedy the U.S. has ever suffered in its relatively short history aside from the Civil War of the 19th century. A tragedy because the U.S. as powerful as it may still seem suffers a huge gap between the haves and the have nots, a Treasury that is virtually bankrupt, debts of such magnitude the world has never seen before anywhere, and a kind of moral rot that is eating away at the foundations of civil accord so deeply that many foreigners find the country laughable for its current pretensions and hubris. The recent election, allegedly of Joe Biden, and discord over the results is telling, for one thing.

Moreover, few worldwide have much respect any longer for what's left of U.S. world dominance — something that could have been obviated had the U.S. not turned itself into a military predator mounting useless and costly wars willy nilly that have merely benefited temporarily only a very few U.S. citizens at the top of the food chain.

One huge question now is whether someone like Joe Biden can begin to turn things around for America before it collapses. Given his proposed administration's appointments of many retreats from the Clinton and Obama years, a turnaround may not be in the cards but still those Americans that have voted for Biden are hopeful. A good dollop of honest and sustained goodwill towards countries like Iran such that in time the U.S. might be trusted to a degree again may be just the correct formula for progress. And this in turn would have to involve less support, or conditional support, for the Zionists and the Saudis, to name two examples.

Iran says Canada misusing the grief of Ukraine plane victims

POLITICAL TEHRAN — The Iranian Foreign Ministry on Monday lashed out at Canada for misusing the unfortunate downing of a Ukrainian passenger plane on January 8 near Tehran, saying the Ottawa government "is trading" with the grief of the bereaved families.

An Iranian air defense unit mistakenly shot down Flight 752 of the Ukrainian International Airlines shortly after take-off from Tehran en route to Kiev.

167 passengers and 9 crew members were killed in the downing. The victims included 82 Iranians, 63 Iranian-Canadians, 11 Ukrainians, 10 Swedes, four Afghans, three Germans, and three British nationals.

The operator had mistaken the Boeing 737-800 with a cruise missile at a time when the air defense systems were at the highest level of alert following the United States' earlier assassination of prominent Iranian commander Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh told a press conference that since the first day of the incident Canada has acted irresponsibly in the process of investigation into the incident.

"Their behavior has been quite political and nonlegal," Khatibzadeh pointed out. Khatibzadeh's reprimand came less than a week after remarks by Canada's Foreign Affairs Minister Francois-Philippe Champagne concerning the tragic incident.

Speaking to CBC News Network, Champagne alleged that he did not believe that the mistaken downing of the airliner by Iran's air defense "can be blamed on human error."

According to Press TV, Champagne also said he was concerned about the quality of information that was to be released by Iran about the tragedy.

"I invite the Canadian foreign minister and government to observe diplomatic manners and know their limits and positions," Khatibzadeh said, "Otherwise they will receive a different response."

Mohsen Baharvand, Iran's deputy foreign minister for legal and international affairs, told the Tehran Times in November that Canada's



unilateral steps and statements against Iran on the plane crash is hampering Tehran's efforts to clarify the truth.

Describing Canada's behavior against Iran as "strange", Baharvand said the Canadian government has begun to take unilateral actions in order to "politicize" the plane crash incident.

"Strangely, the Canadian government has begun to take unilateral actions, and we see no good reason for that except that Canada intends to politicize the issue," the deputy foreign minister for legal affairs lamented.

Baharvand said, "In meetings between the foreign ministers of two countries, we have explained what cooperation Iran had done and their representatives visited the area where the plane crashed."

He added, "They participated in reading of the black box of the plane in Paris and any other cooperation. Iran has provided any necessary cooperation with Canada and other parties."

In his Monday press briefing, Khatibzadeh added Iran had not missed a single date in completing its investigation into the tragedy with the help of all of its relevant bodies in line with its domestic and international responsibilities.

■ **'Technical report to be released soon'**

The Foreign Ministry spokesman said

the technical report that has resulted from the investigation was ready and due to be released "today or tomorrow," adding that the Ukrainian side and the other concerned parties would be sent a copy online.

■ **'Canada in no position to take about human rights'**

Canada lays strong claim to upholding human rights and regularly accuses Iran of violating universal principles.

In the press briefing, the Foreign Ministry spokesman also called on Canada to be accountable for its role as the prime abettor of U.S. sanctions against Iran rather than throw irresponsible and groundless blames at the country under the guise of human rights advocacy.

"A government that has done its utmost to block transfer of medicine to Iran is in no position to take a podium and speak about human rights," Press TV quoted Khatibzadeh as saying.

"Canada has provided most cooperation with the White House to prevent shipment of medicine to the Iranian nation," he added.

■ **'Action, not just words'**

Separately, the spokesman addressed recent remarks by Jack Sullivan, U.S. President-elect Joe Biden's national security advisor-designate, that Washington considered rejoining the 2015 nuclear deal between

Iran and world powers to be a "feasible and achievable" option.

Khatibzadeh said he had to examine Sullivan's remarks in more detail, but any potential resumption by the United States of its international commitments under the deal "has to manifest itself in action, not just in words."

Khatibzadeh reminded that the U.S. is in egregious violation of its obligations under the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2231 that has endorsed the nuclear accord, and has to return to its contractual obligations.

Washington left the agreement that is officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in 2018, despite the multi-party nature of the deal and its enshrinement as a Security Council's ratification. It then returned the draconian sanctions that the JCPOA had lifted.

Iran, in return, started a set of nuclear countermeasures, and announced following General Soleimani's assassination that it no longer recognized the limits that it was supposed to implement under the agreement.

However, Khatibzadeh said, "If the opposite side returned to its commitments, we would reverse the reduction in our commitments too."

■ **'European Parliament's measure one-sided'**

The official, meanwhile, denounced the European Parliament's recent resolution that supposedly sanctioned a number of Iranian officials, whom the European legislature accused of violating human rights.

In the resolution, the European body criticized Iran's recent execution of Rouhollah Zam, a recognized Western-affiliated anti-Iran propagandist, who used to engage in extensive subversive measures against the Islamic establishment and the Iranian nation.

Khatibzadeh called the measure "one-sided, hackneyed, threadbare, and unacceptable," questioning how the EP had passed such a measure, while failing all the time to either denounce the U.S. economic war on Iran and prevent European countries from abetting the warfare.

General Soleimani, an anti-terror hero amid a web of U.S.-Israeli intrigue

His is a tale of heroic deeds. His is a tale of a never-ending battle against the evil forces of our time.

His is a tale of a role model for resistance.

It is the tale of Major General Qassem Soleimani.

Assassinated on January 3, 2020, in a cowardly drone strike, directly ordered by Donald Trump, the outgoing White House dweller, the commander of the Quds Force of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) had a substantial role in defending Iran against its enemies, and assisting the countries in region in the battle against terror.

This is a glance at his anti-terror efforts and the work he did toward eradicating the terrorist groups from the region — the terrorists who enjoy Western patronage.

■ **Anti-terror figure, national hero**

General Soleimani was viewed by the freedom-seeking people as the key figure in the West Asia battles that led to the collapse of Daesh, the world's most notorious terror group. He was a peace champion, a leading regional force against the scourge of Daesh and likeminded terrorist outfits.

Soleimani started his military career by joining the IRGC following the victory of the Islamic Revolution in 1979.

During the imposed Iraqi war on Iran, which was launched in 1980 and lasted for eight years, Soleimani gradually became known as an adept commander, leading Iranian troops in numerous battles against the Western-backed Ba'ath regime forces.

■ **A man of his words**

When foreign-backed Takfiri outfits reared their ugly heads, the IRGC commander emerged as a key strategist and ingenious commander, leading Iranian military advisers assisting Syrian and Iraqi troops in the fight.

The general was frequently pictured on the frontlines during anti-terrorism operations from Iraq's Mosul to Syria's Aleppo. In Iraq, at the height of the Daesh campaign, he assisted Baghdad in operations to retake the strategic oil-rich city of Tikrit in 2015.

The head of Iraq's Badr Organization credited Tehran and Soleimani with saving Baghdad when Daesh first unleashed its campaign in Iraq in a year earlier.

In an interview with Sky News Arabic in 2014, when Daesh overran the Kurdish-populated northern Iraqi town of Sinjar, then President of Iraqi Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) Masoud Barzani said Iran was the first country to provide Iraq's embattled Kurdish region with weapons to fight off the terrorist group.

In November 2017, Soleimani declared the end of Daesh in a letter addressed to Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei.

Last year, Soleimani gave an insight on his role in defending



Major General Soleimani, who commands the Quds Force of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), tops Foreign Policy's 2019 list of Global Thinkers in the defense and security field.

Lebanon during the 2006 Israeli war on the Arab country. Iran's support for resistance movements such as Lebanon's Hezbollah is an imperative in the Islamic Republic's foreign policy.

Secretary General of Hezbollah Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah has time and again hailed Iran as the center of a 'major camp' headed by Ayatollah Khamenei against the U.S. and Israel. Last year, the Leader awarded Soleimani with Iran's highest military order, the Order of Zulfaqar.

Hailed both by the enemies and foes as a major military tactician, General Soleimani topped Foreign Policy (FP)'s 2019 list of Global Thinkers in defense and security. It placed General Soleimani on top of the list of the most influential people in the defense and security sector.

A short write-up on the senior Iranian commander described him as the "public face of Iran's response to U.S. President Donald Trump's threats."

General Soleimani made headlines in July 2018, when he delivered a blistering response to an all-caps tweet addressed to President Hassan Rouhani, in which Trump had issued a military threat against the Islamic Republic.

The U.S. president had threatened Iran with actions "the likes of which few throughout history have ever suffered before."

In a fiery speech, the senior general responded, "Trump! You must not threaten our nation and must not insult our president... You have got to know what you are talking about; ask your predecessors and mark their experiences," General Soleimani emphasized.

"We are near you, where you can't even imagine... Come! We are ready. We are the man of this arena. You know that this war would mean annihilation of all your means. You may begin the war, but it is us who will end it."

■ **Vicious triangle of U.S., Israeli and Saudi plots to assassinate Soleimani**

Several reports had already emerged about assassination

plots against the commander by the U.S., Israel and Saudi Arabia, which are believed to be among the major supporters of terrorists wreaking havoc in West Asia.

In November 2018, the New York Times reported that Saudi Major General Ahmed al-Assiri took part in a meeting in Riyadh in 2017 that involved plans to assassinate the kingdom's "determined enemy."

In October 2019, Yossi Cohen, the director of the Israeli spy agency Mossad, had acknowledged having a "prestigious" assassination list at his disposal, claiming that targeting foreign influential figures, including Soleimani, was "not impossible."

A report by the Kuwaiti newspaper al-Jarida also said Washington gave Israel the green light to assassinate Soleimani.

In the January 3 drone strike, the second-in-command of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, and eight other companions were also martyred.

U.S. media reports revealed details of the assassination, saying the terrorist operation used Israeli intelligence and was run from the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) headquarters in Qatar.

The Trump administration openly claimed responsibility. Iran's Leader declared three days of national mourning. Ayatollah Khamenei has said severe vengeance in due time awaits the perpetrators.

Before the funeral ceremony — which was attended by crowds in millions across several cities — the IRGC responded to the assassination, striking the American airbase of Ain al-Assad in Anbar province in western Iraq and another in Erbil, the capital of Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdistan region.

Observers maintained that the Trump administration's action would make the region less safe, and that it was an act of war, the highest of high crimes under international law, turning millions of Iranians, Iraqis, others in the region, and elsewhere into raging U.S. haters for good reason.

■ **General Soleimani's legacy lives on**

Millions of mourners thronged the streets in Iran's southeastern city of Kerman, the hometown of Soleimani, to attend a final funeral. That came after massive processions in the cities of Ahvaz, Mashhad, Tehran and Qom, as well as the Iraqi cities of Baghdad, Karbala and Najaf.

Ayatollah Khamenei recently recalled the million-strong funerals, saying the "unforgettable" ceremonies "surprised the arrogance's soft war generals and served as a first severe slap in the face of the Americans."

The Leader said a tougher slap would come by expelling the United States from the region through the joint efforts of countries that are part of the resistance front.

He said General Soleimani possessed "wisdom, ingenuity, [readiness for] sacrifice and altruism" and was a man of spirituality and sincerity, not hypocrisy.

(Source: Press TV)

Judiciary chief: Jesus Christ loathes injustices

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Iranian Judiciary Chief Ebrahim Raisi said on Monday that justice-seekers in the world should know that Jesus Christ is unhappy with all these injustices, corruptions, state terrorism and the cruelty against human beings in the world.

"His Majesty Jesus Christ (PBUH) is

abhorrent of all these oppression, corruption, terror, especially state terrorism of the American regime, and if he had been (alive) he would not have tolerated all these oppressions which are being committed against the people of the region, especially the oppressed Palestinian people and Yemeni children," the top Shia cleric asserted.

The senior judge said the message of Jesus Christ is justice, peace and friendship and those who do injustice under his name have in fact nothing to do with him.

In a report released on December 1, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said almost a quarter of a million people have died

in Yemen's war, confirming the huge toll from a conflict that has ravaged Yemen's economy and created the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

Palestinians have also been subjected to injustice for more than seven decades, since the Zionist regime was established in 1948.

European plot: How to kill an agreement?

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — While other parties to the Iran nuclear deal underline the need to strike a balance between rights and obligations within the deal, the Europeans keep calling on Iran to reverse its nuclear measures that are meant to bring back balance to the nuclear deal.

Less than a week after a meeting of the Joint Commission of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) at the level of political directors and deputy foreign ministers, the JCPOA parties held an informal virtual meeting on Monday to discuss the latest development surrounding the 2015 Iran nuclear deal.

The foreign ministers of Iran, China, France, Germany, the Russian Federation and the United Kingdom, as well as the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, attended the December 21 meeting, which was agreed on last week during the meeting of the JCPOA Joint Commission.

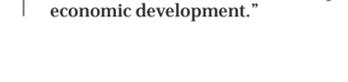
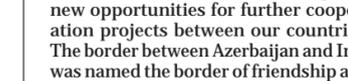
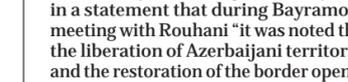
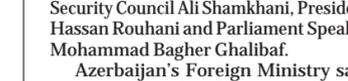
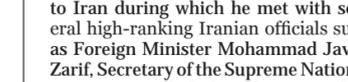
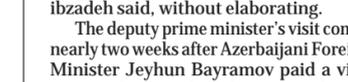
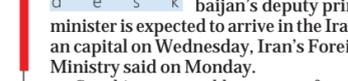
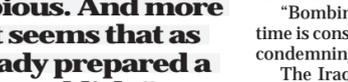
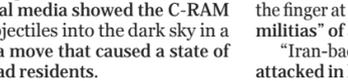
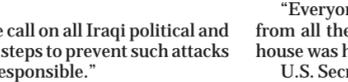
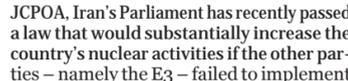
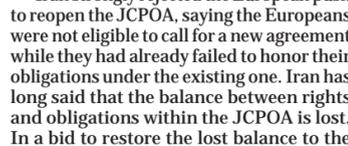
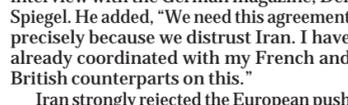
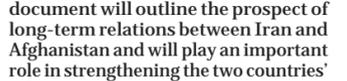
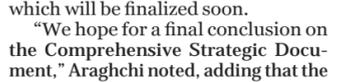
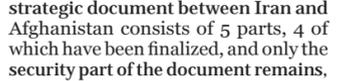
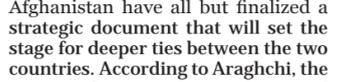
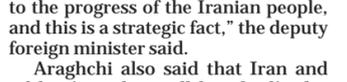
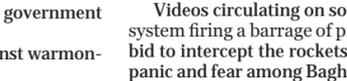
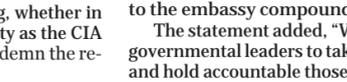
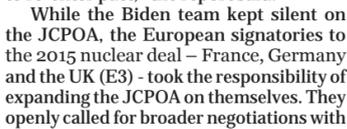
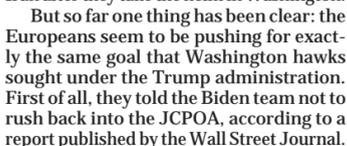
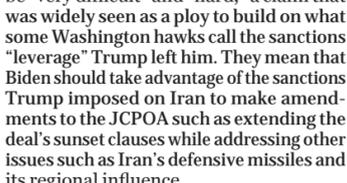
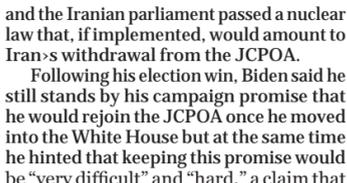
The foreign ministers and the chief EU diplomat discussed a variety of issues related to the JCPOA such as preserving and fully implementing the deal, reiterating the need to continue the cooperation between Iran and the UN nuclear watchdog, and more importantly the prospect of a U.S. return to the nuclear deal.

"JCPOA participants re-emphasized their commitment to preserve the agreement and stressed their respective efforts in this regard. They discussed that full and effective implementation of the JCPOA by all remains crucial and discussed the need to address ongoing implementation challenges, including on nuclear non-proliferation and sanctions lifting commitments," said a joint ministerial statement issued following the Monday meeting.

It added, "Ministers underscored the important role of the IAEA as the sole impartial and independent international organization mandated by the UN Security Council to monitor and verify the implementation of the nuclear non-proliferation commitments under the JCPOA. They stressed the importance of continued good faith cooperation with the IAEA."

The statement also addressed the issue of the potential U.S. return to the JCPOA, saying, "Ministers acknowledged the prospect of a return of the US to the JCPOA and underlined their readiness to positively address this in a joint effort."

The meeting came at a time when new circumstances arose after Joe Biden won the U.S. presidential election in November



the other side failed to implement certain commitments. The Europeans guarded against this law instead of fulfilling their commitments although they know that Iran will not implement the law if they keep up their end of the bargain.

On December 7, the E3 issued a joint statement on the JCPOA, voicing "great concern" over the Iranian nuclear law.

If Iran is serious about preserving a space for diplomacy, they said, it must not implement this law.

"Such a move would jeopardize our shared efforts to preserve the JCPOA and risks compromising the important opportunity for a return to diplomacy with the incoming U.S. administration," the December 7 statement said.

During the Monday meeting, the E3 once again called on Iran not to increase its nuclear activities and thus waste the last chance to revive the JCPOA in a thinly-veiled threat that if Iran moves forward with its nuclear steps, the 2015 nuclear deal will not be saved during the upcoming Joe Biden administration.

Speaking after the Monday JCPOA meeting, Mass said that Iran should avoid taking any tactical steps that would make it hard for Biden to reverse President Donald Trump's decision to quit the deal, according to Reuters.

"To make possible a rapprochement with the U.S. under Biden, there should be no further tactical manoeuvres of the kind we've seen too many of in the recent past," he told reporters. "This chance, this last window of opportunity, must not be wasted."

British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab also echoed the same warning while putting more emphasis on preventing Iran from implementing its nuclear law.

"Today I met with the JCPOA participants, where I made it absolutely clear Iran must not implement the recently announced expansions to its nuclear program. To do so would undermine the opportunities for progress we hope to see in 2021," Raab said in a tweet shortly after the JCPOA ministerial meeting.

Europe is working to preserve the JCPOA and then expand it without compensating Iran for the losses it incurred in the past few years but this approach could backfire. Because Iran has made it clear that the JCPOA commitments cannot be implemented one-sidedly. Therefore, the E3 needs to change course on Iran before it's too late.

Rocket attack on U.S. embassy in Baghdad 'dubious,' Iran says

1-2 who is known for his lies and cheating, whether in his current capacity or in his previous capacity as the CIA director. Therefore, I firmly and strongly condemn the remarks by the U.S. secretary of state."

Khatibzadeh said he is sure that the Iraqi government will find those behind the attack.

The spokesman also warned the U.S. against war-mongering and escalating tensions.

After weeks of relative de-escalation, the U.S. embassy in Baghdad came under rocket attacks on Sunday night. According to Iraqi press reports, at least 23 rockets landed in the Green Zone of Baghdad, a heavily fortified district in which the U.S. embassy and other government buildings are located.

The U.S. embassy's C-RAM defense system was activated to intercept the rockets, the embassy said in a statement.

"The U.S. embassy confirms rockets targeting the International Zone (Green Zone) resulted in the engagement of embassy defensive systems," the statement said, adding that the rockets have inflicted only minor damages

to the embassy compound.

The statement added, "We call on all Iraqi political and governmental leaders to take steps to prevent such attacks and hold accountable those responsible."

Videos circulating on social media showed the C-RAM system firing a barrage of projectiles into the dark sky in a bid to intercept the rockets, a move that caused a state of panic and fear among Baghdad residents.

"The kind and timing of this attack [on the U.S. embassy], as well as the statement issued by the U.S. secretary of state, show that [the attack] is very dubious. Its timing is dubious. And more importantly, it seems that as if they had already prepared a statement to publish."

"Everyone is screaming and crying. My wife is losing it from all the terrifying sounds," a local Iraqi man, whose house was hit, told AFP.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo was quick to point the finger at Iran, accusing what he described as "Iran-backed militias" of attacking the embassy.

"Iran-backed militias once again flagrantly and recklessly attacked in Baghdad, wounding Iraqi civilians. The people of Iraq deserve to have these attackers prosecuted. These violent and corrupt criminals must cease their destabilizing actions," Pompeo said in a tweet.

Iraqi resistance groups, however, denied any involvement in the attack. They even condemned it.

Kataeb Hezbollah, a group that the U.S. often blames for such attacks, issued an online statement denouncing the attack as "out of order".

"Bombing the embassy of evil (U.S. embassy) at this time is considered out of order," the group said, while also condemning the U.S. embassy's use of the C-RAM system.

The Iraqi military said that "an outlawed group" was behind the attack but it did not name this group.

Afghan national security advisor to visit Iran on Tuesday

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Afghanistan's National Security Advisor Hamdullah Mohib plans to visit Iran on Tuesday at the invitation of Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council Ali Shamkhani.

During his visit to Iran, Mohib will meet with his Iranian counterpart to discuss bilateral issues, the Afghan peace plan process and regional developments, Nour News reported.

In addition to Shamkhani, the Afghan national security advisor is also expected to meet with some other high-ranking Iranian security and political officials.

Mohib's visit came after several Iranian officials paid visits to Afghanistan to discuss important issues such as the Afghan peace process.

Seyed Abbas Araghchi, the deputy foreign minister of Iran, recently traveled to neighboring Afghanistan to hold high-level talks with Afghan officials. He met with his Afghan counterpart Mirwais Nab, Mohib, Abdullah Abdullah, the head of Afghanistan's High Council for National Reconciliation, and former Afghan President Hamid Karzai.

Pointing to the affinities between Iran and Afghanistan, Araghchi said peace and stability in neighboring Afghanistan directly affect Iran.

"This association shows that peace and stability in Afghanistan is peace and



stability in Iran and that the well-being of the Afghan people is directly related to the progress of the Iranian people, and this is a strategic fact," the deputy foreign minister said.

Araghchi also said that Iran and Afghanistan have all but finalized a strategic document that will set the stage for deeper ties between the two countries. According to Araghchi, the strategic document between Iran and Afghanistan consists of 5 parts, 4 of which have been finalized, and only the security part of the document remains, which will be finalized soon.

"We hope for a final conclusion on the Comprehensive Strategic Document," Araghchi noted, adding that the document will outline the prospect of long-term relations between Iran and Afghanistan and will play an important role in strengthening the two countries' relations.

Azerbaijan's deputy PM due in Tehran on Wednesday

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Azerbaijan's deputy prime minister is expected to arrive in the Iranian capital on Wednesday, Iran's Foreign Ministry said on Monday.

Speaking at a weekly press conference on Monday morning, Saeed Khatibzadeh, the spokesman for Iran's Foreign Ministry, announced that the Azerbaijani deputy prime minister is expected to pay a visit to Iran this week.

"Deputy prime minister of Azerbaijan will travel to Tehran on Wednesday," Khatibzadeh said, without elaborating.

The deputy prime minister's visit comes nearly two weeks after Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov paid a visit to Iran during which he met with several high-ranking Iranian officials such as Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council Ali Shamkhani, President Hassan Rouhani and Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf.

Azerbaijan's Foreign Ministry said in a statement that during Bayramov's meeting with Rouhani "it was noted that the liberation of Azerbaijani territories and the restoration of the border opened new opportunities for further cooperation projects between our countries. The border between Azerbaijan and Iran was named the border of friendship and economic development."



Iran and Azerbaijan had close contacts during the 44-day war between Baku and Yerevan over the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh. The war resulted in Azerbaijan retaking the territories it lost to Armenia in the 1990s.

During his visit to Iran, Bayramov briefed the Iranian officials on the war, while underlining the need to further deepen the Iran-Azerbaijan ties.

"Minister Jeyhun Bayramov briefed the other party on the 44-day Patriotic War, which resulted in the liberation of Azerbaijani lands," Azerbaijan's Foreign Ministry said in a statement following Bayramov's meeting with Zarif.

The chief Iranian diplomat "welcomed the liberation of the occupied territories," according to the statement.

Iran had called for a peaceful resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and it even presented peace initiative in this regard.

SPORTS

Para athletes' health, our priority: Khosravi Vafa

SPORTS **TEHRAN** — Head of Iran's National Paralympic Committee (NPC) Mahmoud Khosravi Vafa said protecting the health of the Para athletes is a top priority for them.

Speaking during a webinar ran by Iran's National Paralympic Committee (NPC) on Monday, Khosravi Vafa said that the Para athletes should be able to compete in a safe environment.

"The health and safety of our athletes is important for us and we will not put their lives at risk for winning medal," Khosravi Vafa said.

"The NPC will increase the number of training camps' days and we're going to establish a solid health protocol to ensure that our athletes will train in a safe environment," he added.

"Arrivals and departures of the coaches, athletes and the organizers during holding the training camps should be restricted to lower risk of Covid-19 infection," Khosravi Vafa stated.

Iran sent a record 110 athletes to Rio 2016, returning eight golds, nine silvers and seven bronzes to finish 15th in the medals table.

Iran will send nine sports to Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games, namely athletics, archery, sitting volleyball, wheelchair basketball, taekwondo, rowing, judo, shooting and powerlifting.



Tayebi nominated for 2020 FutsalFeed's Best Team

SPORTS **TEHRAN** — Iranian international futsal player Hossein Tayebi has been shortlisted for the FutsalFeed's best team in 2020.

Tayebi was transferred to Portuguese giants Benfica after successfully clinching another title with Kairat Almaty in Kazakhstan. Now he is instrumental in his team's success, having scored six goals so far.

He is among the six left wingers in the world. The 2020 Best Team will be selected via poll.

Jafar Salmani signs for Portimonense

SPORTS **TEHRAN** — Iranian player Jafar Salmani signed a three-year deal with Portuguese top flight football team Portimonense, with a termination clause of 20 million euros.

Salmani, an under-23 international for his country, is a well-known player of Paulo Sérgio. He was trained by him in 2018/2019, when the Portuguese was the technical manager of the Iranian football team at Sanat Naft.

Salmani is Iran's fourth player in the Primeira Liga. Mehdi Taremi (Porto), Ali Alipour (Marítimo) and Shahriar Moghanlou (Santa Clara) are the other three Iranians playing at the Portugal top league.

Portimonense Sporting Clube are a Portuguese sports club based in Portimão. Founded on 14 August 1914, they are the most notable for their professional football team, which currently play in the Primeira Liga.

Para athlete Eslami receives four-year ban

SPORTS **TEHRAN** — Iranian Para athlete Hamid Eslami has been suspended for four years by the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) for committing an anti-doping rule violation.

The Para athletics T11 runner returned an adverse analytical finding for a prohibited substance in a urine sample provided on 17 August 2019 in an out of competition test, Paralympic.org wrote.

The substance was EPO (Erythropoietin), which is included on the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) 2019 Prohibited List under the class S2. Peptide Hormones, Growth Factors, Related Substances and Mimetics.

As a result of the violation, Eslami will be ineligible for competition for four years from 14 October 2019 to 14 October 2023.

"Eslami was part of a Registered Testing Pool, a group of top-level athletes in specific Paralympic sports who take part in a year-round out-of-competition testing program," James Sclater, IPC Anti-Doping Director, said. "The IPC has conducted more targeted out of competition tests on athletes as part of our increased investment in anti-doping activities."

"Athletes should be aware that even though competitions have been limited during the COVID-19 pandemic, the IPC continues its out of competition testing program, especially in the lead up to the Paralympic Games in Tokyo."

Each athlete is strictly liable for the substances found in his or her sample. An ADRV occurs whenever a prohibited substance (or its metabolites or markers) is found in his or her bodily specimen, whether or not the athlete intentionally or unintentionally used a prohibited substance or was negligent or otherwise at fault.

As a signatory of the WADA Anti-Doping Code (ADC), the IPC remains committed to a doping-free sporting environment at all levels. The IPC, together with the International Federations and the National Paralympic Committees, established the IPC Anti-Doping Code (ADC) to prevent doping in sport for Paralympic athletes, in the spirit of fair play. The IPC ADC is in conformity with the general principles of the WADC.

Mehdi Abdi a revelation for Persepolis: FIFA

Abdi Mehdi was a revelation for Persepolis football team in the 2020 AFC Champions League.

Abdi scored Persepolis' only goal in the ACL final match against Ulsan Hyundai.

Deployed as the center-forward, the 22-year-old forward was a revelation for the Iranian team during the knockout phase, scoring the crucial equalizer against Al-Nassr in the semi-final before opening the scoring against Ulsan.

It remains to be seen whether his predatory talents will earn him a first call-up by Iran coach Dragan Skocic, FIFA.com reported.

(Source: FIFA)

Iran, Russia agree on expansion of technical co-op in oil, gas sectors

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh said that Iran and Russia agreed to boost technical cooperation in the oil and gas sectors, IRNA reported.

The minister made the remarks after his meeting with the Russia Deputy Prime Alexander Novak and Energy Minister Nikolai Shulginov in Moscow on Monday.



"We discussed the issues related to stabilizing the global oil market in the meeting", Zanganeh stated.

"Russia has played a decisive role in stabilizing the global oil market over the years, and we talked with each other in the framework of OPEC Plus, given the serious cooperation in OPEC", he said, adding, "Our views in this area were close to each other."

Mentioning that the OPEC Plus meeting will be held on January 4, the minister said that a meeting in this regard will be held in February as well.

He said both countries stressed the importance of doing so to maintain the stability of the global oil market and future prospects in this area.

During the meeting with Zanganeh, the Russian deputy prime minister called for more cooperation between Iran and Russia especially in the field of energy.

Loading, unloading of goods up 13% at Shahid Bahonar Port

ECONOMY TEHRAN — The loading and unloading of commodities have increased 13 percent at Shahid Bahonar Port, in Iran's southern Hormozgan Province, during the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-December 20), compared to the same period of time in the past year, according to an official with the province's ports and maritime department.

Morteza Salari announced that over 1.4 million tons of goods have been loaded and unloaded at this port during the nine-month period.

He put the average daily loading-unloading capacity of Shahid Bahonar Port at 8,000 tons.

While the coronavirus pandemic has created many limitations for the economic activities all around the world, operations at Iranian ports are underway continuously, and even the U.S. sanctions could not halt activities at the ports.

Iran's Ports and Maritime Organizations (PMO)'s Head Mohammad Rastad has recently said that the country's trade gateways were not closed even a moment despite the sanctions and pandemic, adding that loading and unloading of goods, especially the essential goods, are continuously conducted at the ports.

As announced by the PMO head, loading and unloading of commodities are being conducted continuously at the ports of Iran while the health requirements are completely met.

Rastad has reiterated that all port operations are done observing healthcare protocols and the principles set by the Coronavirus Containment Headquarters.

Activities at Chabahar Port (Iran's only oceanic port in southeastern Sistan-Baluchestan Province), and Shahid Rajaei Port (Iran's largest container port in southern Hormozgan Province) in the recent months prove and underline Iran's outstanding performance under the difficult condition of the sanctions and the pandemic.

In a statement on October 15, PMO declared that loading and unloading of commodities are underway continuously at the country's ports.

While the enemy is trying to halt Iran's exports and imports through imposing sanctions, operation at Iranian ports are underway without interruption as the result of the all-out efforts of the organization's personnel, the statement reads.

Meanwhile, as the PMO head has announced, 11 new development projects with 59 trillion rials (over \$1.4 billion) of investment are currently underway at the Iranian ports.

Not only the sanctions could not stop development activities at the ports of Iran, some new development projects have been also defined, Rastad has underscored.

The third phase of the development plan of Shahid Rajaei Port is one of the major projects which is going to go operational by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2021).

While Iran is combating the U.S. unilateral sanctions on its economy, the country's ports as the major gates of exports and imports play some significant role in this battle, and the ongoing operation at the ports indicates that they are playing their part perfectly.

TEDPIX falls 2,800 points on Monday

ECONOMY TEHRAN — TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), dropped 2,708 points to 1.436 million on Monday.

Over 9.8 billion securities worth 107.03 trillion rials (about \$2.548 billion) were traded at the TSE on Monday.

The first market's index fell 2,414 points, and the second market's index lost 3,951 points.

The index stood at 1.413 million points at the end of the previous week.

During the past week, the indices of Iran Khodro Group, Social Security Investment Company, Saipa Company, Tejarat Bank, Esfahan Oil Refining Company, and National Iranian Copper Industry Company were the most widely followed indices.

TEDPIX, which had been experiencing a surprisingly rising trend since the last days of the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19), hit the record high of two million points on August 2, but then it began to drop, coming down to 1.2 million points.

After a period of correction, the index has been recently climbing. Earlier this month, Ahmad Eshtiaqi, a market analyst, told IRNA that the index will continue its upward trend until the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2021) and is expected to reach 1.8 million points by the end of the year.

Industrial units' activities being developed to promote production

By Mahnaz Abdi

TEHRAN — Iran's industrial parks play a significant role in making the country independent through boosting production, which is a major strategy of Iran to combat the U.S. sanctions.

In fact, strengthening domestic production to achieve self-reliance is the most important program that Iran is following up in its industry sector in a bid to nullify the effects of the U.S. sanctions on its economy.

In this due, the current Iranian calendar year (began on March 20) has been named the year of "Surge in Production", and all governmental bodies, as well as the private sector, are moving in line with the materialization of this motto.

Regarding its significant role in the realization of the mentioned goal, the Industry, Mining and Trade Ministry has already defined its main programs for supporting domestic production in the current year.

The ministry's seven main axes of the surge in production are being pursued under 40 major programs.

In this regard, the development of industrial parks and supporting the units located in these areas is one of the major programs underway by the ministry.

This program has already borne fruit, as



according to the latest data released by Industry, Mining and Trade Ministry, during the first eight months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-November 20), 25,108 permits have been issued for establishing new industrial units in the country, which marked a 45.4-percent increase year on year. The estimated investment making for these units is 3.12 quadrillion rials (about

\$74.5 billion), up 48.6 percent compared to the figure for the past year's same time span.

The units are predicted to create jobs for 563,270 persons, indicating 41.2 percent growth year on year.

As previously announced by the ministry, the issuance of permits for setting up industrial units in the country increased 16 percent in the past Iranian calendar year

(ended on March 19, 2020).

Also as the acting head of Iran Small Industries and Industrial Parks Organization (ISIPO) has announced, 991 idle industrial units have been revived in the country during the first eight months of the present year.

Asghar Mosaheb said that reviving the mentioned units has created jobs for 17,090 persons.

The official said there are over 46,000 small and medium-sized industrial units in Iran's industrial parks and zones, of them about 9,200 units are inactive.

Supporting the industrial units is being pursued seriously, but there are some weaknesses in this due which should be addressed and resolved.

One of them is the lack of support to the private industrial parks, which was mentioned by the ISIPO's acting head in a live TV program on Sunday night.

The problems related to land ownership and environmental issues were among the subjects addressed in the program.

As announced by Mosaheb, there are already 7,000 units in the private industrial parks of Iran.

And in general, the lack of necessary infrastructure, which has been constantly mentioned, is a major challenge that the industrial parks are facing throughout the country.

TCCIMA to hold Iran-Eurasia economic diplomacy meeting in late Jan. 2021

→ 1 Iran and Eurasian Economic Union reached a free trade agreement in October 2018 based on which about 862 commodity items were subjected to preferential tariffs.

The interim agreement enabling the formation 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 the 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.

The agreement with the bloc has increased Iran's exports to the EAEU member states significantly, which



is a turning point for the Islamic Republic's plans for boosting non-oil exports during the U.S. sanctions.

Back in May, the head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) had announced that the export of the commodities subjected to preferential tariffs from Iran to the Eurasian Economic Union's member states had risen 85 percent since the implementation of the agreement between the two sides.

Hamid Zadboum also said that 13 percent of Iran's imports from the EAEU are subjected to the preferential tariffs, while 49 percent of the country's exports to the bloc is subjected to those tariffs.

The official said that Iran's exports to the EAEU member countries are more variable compared to its imports from those states, adding exports can be even more expanded.

Private sector should be prepared for potential changes in future

ECONOMY TEHRAN — The Heads of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA)'s committees have stressed the need for the country's private sector to be prepared for handling potential changes in the country's economic atmosphere in the future.

The ICCIMA representatives, in a meeting on Sunday, explored the recent developments in the global economy and especially in the region and discussed the impacts of the new



changes in the White House and the possibility of the removal of the U.S. sanctions on the country's economy.

As reported by the ICCIMA portal, in the meeting which was chaired by ICCIMA Deputy Head Mohammadreza Ansari, the attendees also reviewed the national budget bill for the next Iranian calendar year 1400 (begins on March 21, 2021) and criticized some of the aspects of the mentioned bill, calling it unrealistic.

Speaking in the meeting, Mohsen Ha-

ji-Baba, Chairman of ICCIMA Money and Capital Markets Committee described sudden changes in economic indicators as harmful saying: "it does not matter if these fluctuations and changes are upward or downward, in any case, they will have a negative impact on the economy."

According to Haji Baba, the private sector should be prepared to face and manage any change — either positive or negative — in the future, and to do so requires the government's support.

Over 26b cubic meters of water stored behind Iranian dams: IWRM

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Some 26.37 billion cubic meters of water is stored behind the dams across Iran, indicating that 52 percent of the capacity of the country's dams is full, a report by Iran Water Resources Management Company (IWRM) said.

Based on IWRM data, currently, the total capacity of the country's dam reservoirs stands at 50.5 billion cubic meters.

As reported, since the beginning of the current water year (late September) up to December 18, the total volume of water inflow to the reservoirs of the country's dams stood at 7.18 billion cubic meters, two percent more than the figure for the last year's same period.

According to the mentioned data, compared to the figures for the previous water year, the volume of water outflow from the country's dams has decreased by 16 percent to stand at 7.98 on the mentioned date.

Last week, Mohammad Mousavi Kani, the director of planning affairs at Iran Water and Power Resources Development Company (IWPCO), said that all dams across Iran are fully prepared for handling potential floods in the winter.



Due to the recent rainfalls across Iran, the flood flows have been completely contained in the dam reservoirs and the empty volume of the dam reservoirs under IWPCO supervision has reduced to 2.6 billion cubic meters, Mousavi Kani said.

According to meteorological forecasts regarding the occurrence of major floods in the western and southwestern basins of the country in the current Iranian calendar month (started on November 21), so far about 750 million cubic meters of water has been contained in the dams of the mentioned regions.

Some 87 percent of the mentioned figure has been stored in Karun 4, Gotvand, and Seymareh dams, according to Mousavi.

As reported, over two billion cubic meters of water has been stored in the dams under IWPCO management since the beginning of the current water year (started in late September), of which 38 percent was realized in the current month.

Out of a total of 183 currently operational dams across Iran, 52 are related to the Caspian Sea catchment area, 12 are based in Urumieh basin, 68 dams are located in the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman watersheds, 34 dams are in the Central Plateau, 11 dams are in Sarakhs catchment basin, and another six dams are located across the eastern boundary basin (Hamoun).

Domestic production in home appliance industry saves Iran \$220m

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Domestic production of equipment and parts used in the home appliance industry has saved Iran \$220 million, the secretary of the Association of Industries of Household Appliances of Iran said on Monday.

Currently Iranian producers have indigenized the knowledge for manufacturing 70-75 percent of the country's home appliance needs, Abbas Hashemi said in a press conference.

According to Hashemi, the Association of Industries of Household Appliances of Iran has established a parts manufacturing department, the purpose of which is to promote the position of component makers in the association to deepen domestic manufacturing of the required parts and

equipment in this industry while providing a platform for home appliance manufacturers and component makers to stay connected.

The official noted that the country has managed to export up to \$250 million of home appliances in the previous years and currently, the production and assembly lines for Iranian home appliances have been set up in some of the countries in the region and Iran is exporting its products to the target markets by sending Completely Knocked Down (CKD) kits to the mentioned production lines.

Iran has various comparative advantages in this industry in terms of supplying raw materials such as steel sheets, petrochemicals, copper and brass sections, the abundance and low costs of energy and workforce in addition to the strategic position of the

country, compared to other countries in the region, he said.

"So, the development of exports to countries in the region and to the neighboring countries is possible even despite the strong regional competitors," Hashemi added.

In recent years, the Iranian government has been following a new strategy for supporting domestic production to neutralize the impacts of the U.S. sanctions while reducing the reliance of the economy on oil revenues.

The home appliances sector has not been an exemption and like many other areas, the production of home appliances has witnessed a significant rise in the past two years so that in the previous calendar year 1398 (ended on March 19) this industry's production capacity increased by 10 percent compared to the preceding year.



Iranian Industry, Mining and Trade data indicates that the country's home appliance manufacturers produced 2,801,100 sets of refrigerators, freezers, washing machines and televisions in the first eight months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-November 20).

U.S. role in West Asia has never been constructive: Indian professor

“China continues to be the main engine of world economic growth for the last three decades and it has already replaced the USA as the global economic leader”

1 → China's rapid growth was possible due to a combination of various factors: A young, healthy and educated workforce, a state with strong institutions that managed internal stability and did not engage in external conflicts, the country's joining the World Trade Organization in 2001, adopting trade liberalization policies, and receiving massive foreign investment in the domestic economy.

The last four years have been one of the most tumultuous periods in modern China-U.S. relations. Was it just because of Trump's impulsiveness or a new shift in American strategy?

A: America lacked a coherent foreign policy in the last four years under Trump. There was no continuity, no vision, and even no plan. Trump adopted unilateral transactional approach vis-à-vis China resulting in regular flip-flops. In the last year of Trump's presidency, while he became more confrontational with China, Xi's China adopted an assertive and equally confrontational attitude as well. This has resulted in seriously deteriorating China-USA relations, and even public discourse in the USA towards China has become extremely bitter and suspicious. It will not be easy for the Biden administration to undo the damages which Trump has inflicted on China-U.S. relations.

Do you think China can replace the U.S. in regions like West Asia? Does China have political and economic capacities to act as a key player in the region?

A: The USA has old and strong allies in the Middle East (West Asia). It still enjoys stronger political-military power in the region. However, Trump's



decision in May 2018 to withdraw from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), better known as the Iran nuclear deal, was an extremely foolish decision, which not only pushed Iran to strengthened its relations with China, it also antagonized American allies which had economic relations with Iran. This has resulted in China and Iran considering being in a 25-year strategic pact, covering comprehensive economic and military cooperation. However, the willingness of the Biden administration to revive the JCPOA is a welcome development, and that can potentially help to maintain the dominant position of the USA in the Middle East (West Asia) for some time.

How do you assess the U.S. role in the region? What is your analysis of the dialogue between the Trump administration and the Taliban?

A: Unfortunately, the U.S. role in the Middle East (West Asia) has never been constructive. Its interest has never been for the Middle East's security and development, but for its own security and development. The Trump administration has completely exposed the destabilizing American policy in the region as it took several unilateral decisions, ignoring the history, ideology, and even concerns of its own allies.

It will be not only difficult but in many cases impossible for the Biden administrations to bring back the mask of a fair adjudicator,

which the USA had been wearing for decades.

Trump's negotiations with the Taliban are like his negotiations with North Korea are now a big unknown and the time will tell how the new administration will move it forward. Whatever it is that there is no doubt that the Taliban has become more powerful and has received legitimacy, thanks to Trump's policies.

What is the role of Pakistan and India in the region amid the U.S.-China competition?

A: India and Pakistan had been trying to maintain a fine balance while dealing with the USA and China for many years. Gradually, Pakistan has become much closer to China though, at the same time, it has still maintained a working friendship with the USA as they both need each other in Afghanistan. On the other hand, with the increasing border hostility with China, particularly since May 2020, India has been left with no option but to openly ally with the USA. Due to the ongoing China-U.S. competition, the relation between India and Pakistan has not only become worse, but there is also an open alliance between China and Pakistan against India.

Do you think countries like India, Pakistan, and Iran can form a regional coalition?

A: Yes, that should be the priority at this time. India, Pakistan, and Iran need political stability and economic growth as their growing population needs better human security. They need to cooperate and work together rather than being a party to this emerging great power rivalry between China and the USA.

Dignity of Iranian nation infuriates U.S. deep state

By John Stepling

The question of sanctions is in the broadest sense an interesting and kind of huge topic. The United States has increasingly over the last 60 years I guess, 70 years, but certainly, over the last 30, some years has used, employed sanctions as a kind of primary weapon against its «enemies» - the people that choose to define as enemies, anybody who is at all independent is going to be viewed as an enemy.

And the U.S. has felt over these 30 years very comfortable enacting sanctions, and they've been pretty much satisfied with the results and they don't have to engage in boots on the ground as they say. They don't have to do a lot of things they would do in conventional warfare, or even in certain kinds of occupation.

It's the sort of 21st-century soft power or something. But, the effectiveness of sanctions always rests on a sort of global community and a kind of compliance with things and this is what I always find at the heart of any of these questions about Iran, and its relationship to the U.S., to Israel, to China, Russia, the EU.

At what point did the «global community», did the UN and Security Council, did the World Economic Forum, did Davos, did the Trilateral Commission did all the... you know, at what point was it agreed upon that Iran was going to be the villain of the moment? They were going to be defined as a pariah state. They had done nothing to earn this definition, description, and yet that's what happened.

And so the entire JCPOA always seems very strange to me because nobody asks if you praise it back. Why this question was in play at all? So, you look at all the countries that the U.S. has enacted sanctions against Cuba, you know, an embargo and sanctions on Cuba, Venezuela is on and on and on. The through-line to all of this can be seen as what is good for Western business interests for Western capital.

But the problem now is that some of these dynamics are changing. The U.S. is no longer an economic superpower; it's economically in a rather precarious and vulnerable position, actually. But the sanctions began in 1945; they began with Woodrow Wilson and as part of the League of Nations notion that he had as a way to enforce peace. I mean it was laughable from the beginning.

But anyway and there had been broad sanctions and there had been sort of, you know, very targeted sanctions that only focus on certain things there have been arms embargoes and all manner of sanctions. But, uh, they invariably hurt. The most vulnerable people in the country being sanctioned, that's one thing. They don't interrupt the ruling class anywhere. Global ruling class tends to, you know, fraternize with



each other and doesn't much care about what the rest of the people in their country are doing or can't have or are suffering from or whatever it might be.

But back to the point that the U.S. power has eroded, to some degree, is true. And, yet you know the U.S. also remains a military superpower, and it is part of why defense spending keeps getting ratcheted up further and further and further and further.

There are enough weapons to destroy the planet 1000 times over. There were enough weapons 70 years ago to destroy the planet 1000 times over. It's a big business, though. It's a very profitable business.

So, you look at the Iranian situation in relationship to, you know, China and Russia, and other trading partners in the Pacific Rim, even in Europe to some degree, though, the EU is being bullied by the U.S. So when [Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali] Khamenei says, you know «neutralize the sanctions.» I mean I think this is a reasonably wise thing to say. That is because the people who are issuing sanctions are capricious. One doesn't know why they're doing well. I mean, one can guess why they're doing things, but the reasons are not logical and not rational.

So one has to look at ways to turn them into something other than entirely destructive and you have to work, with your friends in the world. Iran has to work with its partners in the world to find ways to do that neutralizing. They can't do it alone. You can't neutralize sanctions alone. I mean ever all of this is about international relationships.

I'm sort of jumping all around but I keep returning to the reason that Iran looms as such an irritant to the ideologues in Washington. Why all the neo-cons and the people from the Cato Institute and the Brookings Institute and you know all of these think tanks in a way, everybody hates Iran? And part of it is the absolute independence they have they have shown, and incredible resiliency and they've been targeted openly acknowledged as being targeted by Israel, which is the

same as being targeted by the United States for sort of mythic crimes, nobody ever specifically comes up with any evidence of anything Iran did.

It's actually pretty funny at a certain point, and it's like a win-win Westerner or Israeli apologists talk about the Palestinians. You always want to ask what do you expect these people to do? What do you expect people who are occupied in prison, shut down, or sanctioned? How do you expect that country to behave?

That's the issue with sanctions. On one level, does the United States, do people like Mike Pompeo and Joe Biden, all of these people expect Iran to roll over and piddle on themselves like a little puppy or something and say, oh gosh I hope you like us now. I mean it's an absurdity, but the U.S. is paternalistic. They treat everybody as inferior. They condescend to everybody, and they are completely unaware of the effect this has.

But things are shifting and their power, their economic power has eroded the effectiveness of their economic policies and threats. It is not nearly what it was even 10 or 15 years ago, I mean, since 2008 I guess we're in a strange situation, and I read a statistic this morning about the COVID lockdowns because this is a great depression in the U.S. Over 60% of small businesses in the United States are going to go under. Sixty percent of small businesses will die. That's a gutting of a nation.

What are the plans? Nobody seems to want to talk about this. And they're hurtling into this abyss, and we're going to see something very drastic happening in the United States this year and it may be people heard it off to FEMA camps or, who knows because of the homelessness and food insecurity, the desperation, and probably increasing medical problems, psychological problems. This is all. This bill is coming due for the U.S., and I don't think they have a plan for it.

So, whenever I see U.S. politicians wagging their fingers and threatening nations like Iran, I think boy, this is something you very well may not be able to do much longer and the hypocrisy, of course, is stunning. So, yeah, I mean Iran, I think has earned global respect because of the dignity with which they have responded to all of these provocations, you know, the assassination of Soleimani, the nuclear scientist.

They've been remarkably dignified and I think that probably infuriates the United States even more. But, I think in the corridors of power in Washington, there is a sense that Iranian policy has not worked, is not working, has not worked, and probably as it stands, will not work. So, what they decided to do once Biden takes office will be interesting, I don't know, but it'll be interesting.

John Stepling is an American author and political commentator. He is based in Norway.

(Source: Press TV)

'UN Security Council must end its silence in face of Israeli settlers' attacks'

1 → The ministry, in a statement, called on the UN Security Council to shoulder its political, legal and moral responsibility and mount pressure on the Zionist regime to stop such attacks against Palestinians, WAFA News Agency reported on Sunday.

In its statement, the Palestinian Foreign Ministry took to task both the international community and the United Nations for their passivity in the face of atrocities committed by the occupying regime of Tel Aviv.

Such attacks, the Palestinian ministry said, take place in the context of the Israeli regime's brutal act of aggression against Palestinians, which are backed by the occupying regime and its various organizations, with the aim of speeding up the annexation of Palestinian lands, evicting Palestinians, and replacing the residents with Israeli settlers.

The statement comes days following the death of a Palestinian man who was severely beaten by a group of settlers in the central part of the occupied West Bank, Press TV reported.

The man, identified as 37-year-old Abdel-Fattah Obeyyat, was found dead at Har Gilo settlement, located two kilometers (1.24 miles) west of Bethlehem, on Wednesday night.

In another incident last week, an Israeli settler run over a Palestinian woman and her child, when the duo was crossing the main road in Huwara, south of Nablus.

Earlier in December, two Palestinian workers lost their lives after they were struck by a bus near an Israeli military checkpoint at the northern entrance to the city of Bethlehem, about 10 kilometers south of Jerusalem al-Quds.

Saudi war, blockade kill 100,000 Yemeni newborns every year: health ministry

A Yemeni health ministry official says 100,000 newborns die every year in the impoverished country due to the ongoing war of aggression and total blockade imposed on Yemen by the Saudi-led military coalition.

In an interview with Yemen's Arabic-language al-Masirah television network, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Health Najeb al-Qubati announced the grim news on Saturday, saying this means that every two hours six Yemeni children lose their lives due to the years-long Saudi-imposed war.

He added that the Saudi-led coalition has been preventing the entry of advanced medical equipment since March 2015, when Saudi Arabia along with several of its allies invaded Yemen to bring the former Riyadh-backed regime back to power and vanquish the country's Ansarullah movement.

“We have been unable to bring medical personnel [into the country] due to the siege and aggression,” Qubati said.

The undersecretary of Yemen's health ministry also pointed out that the crippling and inhumane siege imposed on the country by the invading coalition targets Yemeni children “while they are still fetuses in their mother's wombs.”

Qubati also warned that the rates of malnutrition among Yemeni mothers are very high.

More countries ban UK travel over fears of new COVID strain

Argentina, Chile, Colombia and Canada have joined a growing list of nations in barring travel to and from the United Kingdom as part of a bid to block a new strain of coronavirus that is sweeping across southeastern England.

Travel bans came hours after British Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced that Christmas shopping and gatherings in London and many of its surrounding areas had to be cancelled because of rapidly spreading infections blamed on the new coronavirus variant.

According to al Jazeera, Johnson also placed those regions under strict new Tier 4 restrictions, suspending Christmas plans for millions of people, and prompting France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, Austria, Ireland and Bulgaria to impose curbs on UK travel.

Argentina's Interior Ministry said in its statement that the last flight from the UK before the suspension starts is scheduled to arrive in Buenos Aires on Monday morning.

Passengers and crew arriving on that flight will have to go into a seven-day quarantine, it said.

Chile's government said non-resident foreigners who had been in the UK over the last 14 days would be banned from entering the country. The measure will go into effect at midnight on Tuesday and last two weeks, the Chilean statement said. Colombia's President Ivan Duque also suspended all flights to the UK and said anyone who arrives in the country from Monday “who has been in the United Kingdom will enter a 14-day isolation in our country”.

Resistance News

24 MEPs call for intervention to help Gaza fight Corona

INTERNATIONAL TRHRAN— 24 members in the European Parliament signed a petition tabled by the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor calling on Israel to allow immediate entry of requirements to confront the coronavirus pandemic into the Gaza Strip and to end the blockade imposed on the coastal enclave for more than 14 years.

In a press release on Monday, the International Human Rights Monitor welcomed the signing of the petition by members of the European Parliament, including the head of the delegation of relations with Palestine in the European Parliament, Representative Manu Pineda, and his deputy, Margrete Auken.

It noted that the MEPs expressed their concern about the latest spike in COVID-19 cases in the Gaza Strip. They called for immediate measures to be taken to facilitate the entry of medicines and medical and preventive supplies such as masks and intensive care units into the Strip.

The Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor pointed to the dilapidated health system and the depletion of a large number of medical supplies and equipment, with a deficit exceeding 30% and an occupancy rate for intensive care beds that reached 90%.

Japan sets record military budget with stealth fighters, missiles

Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga's government approved a ninth consecutive rise in military spending on Monday, to fund the development of an advanced stealth fighter and longer-range anti-ship missile to counter China's growing military power.

The Ministry of Defence will get a record 5.34 trillion yen (\$51.7bn) for the year starting in April, up 1.1

percent from this year. With Suga's large majority in parliament, enactment of the budget is all but certain, al Jazeera reported.

Suga is continuing the controversial military expansion pursued by his predecessor, Shinzo Abe, to give Japan's forces new planes, missiles and aircraft carriers with greater range and potency against potential foes, including

neighboring China.

On Monday, Japan's Joint Staff revealed in a Tweet that aircraft were scrambled on December 18 in response to a suspected intrusion into its airspace over the Sea of Japan, bordering the Korean peninsula and Russia, and the Sea of Okhotsk, which borders Russia. It did not elaborate on the incident.



Coronavirus: world tourist arrivals fall by more than 70%

TOURISM TEHRAN – World tourist arrivals fell by 72% over the first ten months of the year, according to data compiled by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). Restrictions on travel, low consumer confidence, and a global struggle to contain the coronavirus pandemic are amongst factors contributing to the worst year on record in the history of tourism. International destinations welcomed 900 million fewer international tourists between January and October when compared with the same period of 2019, the data indicates.



This translates into a loss of \$935 billion in export revenues from international tourism, more than 10 times the loss in 2009 under the impact of the global economic crisis.

Based on the current evidence, UNWTO expects international arrivals to decline by 70% to 75% for the whole of 2020. In this case, global tourism will have returned to levels of 30 years ago, with 1 billion fewer arrivals and a loss of some \$1.1 trillion in international tourism receipts.

This massive drop in tourism due to the pandemic could result in an economic loss of \$2 trillion in world GDP.

Iran has also suffered the same fate as its foreign arrivals plunged 72% during the first eight months of the year when compared to 2019, according to UNWTO.

Forest tourism, an untapped potential in northeastern Iran

➔ Though North Khorasan province may not be the first choice of regular travelers, its tourism is getting momentum. Most foreign tourists pass straight through North Khorasan in transit between Mashhad and Gorgan according to Lonely Planet,



but if you have time to explore, it's worth diverting south from the capital, Bojnurd, towards Esfarayen, famed for its wrestling tournaments, the remarkable citadel of Belqays and the partly preserved stepped village of Roein some 20km north. Although a lot of new building spoils the effect in parts of the village, Roein is considered Khorasan's answer to the well-known Masuleh and is a possible starting point for hikes to little-visited mountain villages.

Ancient column base discovered in garden southern Iran

HERITAGE TEHRAN – The pedestal and base of a historical stone column, believed to date from the Achaemenid era, has recently been discovered in a garden, southern Iran.

The pedestal and base of a historical stone column, which altogether measures 50 by 50 with the height of 40 cm, has been discovered from a garden in Marvdasht county of Fars province, ISNA quoted a police official, Mohammadreza Bahmaninejad, as saying on Monday.

The object has been handed over to the UNESCO-registered Persepolis for further investigation, the official added.



Persepolis, also known as Takht-e Jamshid, whose magnificent ruins rest at the foot of Kuh-e Rahmat (Mountain of Mercy), was the ceremonial capital of the Achaemenid Empire. It is situated 60 kilometers northeast of the city of Shiraz in Fars Province.

The city was burnt by Alexander the Great in 330 BC apparently as revenge to the Persians because it seems the Persian King Xerxes had burnt the Greek City of Athens around 150 years earlier. The city's immense terrace was begun about 518 BC by Darius the Great, the Achaemenid Empire's king. On this terrace, successive kings erected a series of architecturally stunning palatial buildings, among them the massive Apadana palace and the Throne Hall ("Hundred-Column Hall").

This 13-ha ensemble of majestic approaches, monumental stairways, throne rooms (Apadana), reception rooms, and dependencies is classified among the world's greatest archaeological sites.

'Tehran Broadway' seeks national heritage listing

TOURISM TEHRAN – Lalehzar, one of the oldest streets in the Iranian capital, is one step closer to possibly be inscribed on the National Heritage list, provincial tourism chief has said.

The street, which was known as Tehran Broadway during the 1930s, 40s, and 50s, was home to 16 cinema halls and six theater centers as well as modern shops, cafes, and restaurants.

To preserve and revive the historical street and to prevent any destruction or illegal construction within the boundaries of the thoroughfare, it is planned to be added to the national list of cultural heritage, IRNA quoted Parham Janfeshan as saying on Monday.

As there are several historical and valuable buildings on this street, Tehran province's cultural heritage department plans to restore and repair them while preserving their originality, in close collaboration with their owners, the official added.

The aesthetic appreciation of the street was a combination of Western architecture



with national symbols and elements. There are still elements of Iranian and western

architecture in the façades of buildings and signs.

Nassereddin Shah Qajar (1831 – 1896), the first modern Iranian monarch to formally visit Europe in 1873, was ordered to build Lalehzar St. in the heart of Tehran.

Nassereddin Shah's Prime Minister Mirza Hossein Khan Sepahsalar encouraged him to take a trip to Europe in 1873.

During his trip to Paris, Nassereddin Shah received a warm welcome in a special ceremony at Champs-Élysées Avenue.

It had such a profound impact on the Iranian king that he decided to build a similar street in the capital as soon as he returned home.

The existence of cinema halls and theater centers turned the street into a modern hub for cultural activities. It was also home to the Grand Hotel, the first Iranian modern hotel and one of the most important places of its time.

The hotel hosted the first western-style concerts in Tehran. The performances of Iranian national singer and composer Aref Qazvini (1882 – 1934), one of the most influential figures during the Constitutional Revolution of Iran, took place at the venue.

Iranian crafters honored at Afghanistan Art Week

TOURISM TEHRAN – Two crafters from the northern Iranian province of Mazandaran have been honored at the Afghanistan Art Week, which came to an end in Tehran on Friday.

Asieh Tahani in the field of leather engraving and Mojdeh Moshafi in doll-making were honored at the weeklong virtual festival organized by the Iranian National Commission for UNESCO, IRNA reported on Monday.

A large number of Afghan artists and cultural figures as well as Iranian artists and crafters attended the event to hold panel discussions and showcase their works.

Literature, culture, music, handicrafts, Persian calligraphy, painting, miniature, and graphics were among the subjects discussed during the event, according to organizers.

The Afghanistan Art Week was organized in collaboration with the Embassy of Afghanistan on the theme of "My Beloved, Where Are You?" to express sympathy with the victims of the ISIS terrorist attack on Kabul University in early November.

Several gunmen attacked Kabul University, shooting at students in their classrooms and clashing with security forces for hours. Some of the students had calls from their mothers and fathers. One of the victims had 142 missed

calls, and there was a final message that read, "My beloved, where are you?"

Mazandaran has long been a cradle of ethnic handicrafts with some 70 fields currently being practiced across by about 12,000 crafters.

Iran ranks first globally in the number of cities and villages registered by the World Crafts Council (WCC). In late January, the cities of Shiraz, Malayer, and Zanjan and the village of Qassemabad were designated by the WCC-Asia Pacific Region, putting Iran's number of world crafts cities and villages from ten to 14.

Shiraz was named a "world city of [diverse] handicrafts". Malayer was made a global hub for woodcarving and carved-wood furniture. Zanjan gained the title of a "world city of filigree". And Qassemabad village, which is nationally known for its traditional costumes, was also promoted to a world hub of handicrafts. Chador Shab, a kind of homemade outer-garment for women, was, however, the main subject for the WCC assessment for the village.

Iran exported \$523 million worth of handicrafts during the past calendar year 1398 (ended March 19). Of the figure, some \$273 million worth of handicrafts were exported officially through customs, and about \$250 million was



earned via suitcase trade (allowed for customs-free and tax-free transfer) through various provinces, according to data provided by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts.

Ceramics, pottery vessels, handwoven cloths as well as personal ornaments with precious and semi-precious gemstones are traditionally exported to Iraq, Afghanistan, Germany, the U.S., the UK, and other countries.

Iran halts UK flights over new COVID strain

TOURISM TEHRAN – Iran has halted flights to and from the United Kingdom following the discovery of a new variant of COVID-19, which is said to spread faster than others.

"At the discretion of Health Ministry, flights to UK destinations will be suspended for two weeks," IRIB quoted Iran's deputy transport minister Shahram Adamejad as saying on Sunday.



"Due to the new condition of COVID-19 in the United Kingdom, flights between Tehran and destinations in the United Kingdom will be suspended for two weeks at the discretion of the Ministry of Health, to prevent the transmission of the disease and to try to maintain public health," the official explained.

The new coronavirus variant, which prompted the UK government to impose a

Tier 4 lockdown in London and southeastern England, and tighten restrictions for all of England over the festive period, is "out of control," Health Secretary Matt Hancock said on Sunday – the same day that the UK broke its daily coronavirus case record, recording 35,928 new cases, CNN reported.

The ensuing wave of travel bans has also cut off UK travelers from much of Europe and other parts of the world.

Over \$350,000 allocated to restore centuries-old arch bridge

TOURISM TEHRAN – A budget of 15 billion rials (\$357,000 at the official rate of 42,000 rials) has been allocated to implement a restoration project on the Khatun Bridge, a centuries-old arched monument in Alborz province, provincial tourism chief has announced.

A groove has been discovered in the northern part of the bridge by the cultural heritage experts, which increases the possibility of the bridge's collapse, Fereydon Mohammadi said on Monday.

Due to being in the winter and the possibility of increased rainfall, which could lead to more and serious damages to the historical monument, it is planned to undergo urgent restoration, the official added.

Early December, the Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Minister Ali-Asghar Mounesan paid a visit to the damaged bridge and stressed the need to speed up emergency protection operations to prevent further destruction of the Khatun ["Girl"] Bridge and to provide the necessary conditions for the reconstruction and restoration of this historical monument.



"Emergency protection operations, proper coverage, and installation of warning signs should be carried out as soon as possible to save the lives of citizens.... and a suitable space should be created to prevent further destruction of the bridge."

"This is a brick bridge, and despite proper and continuous maintenance, some part of it has collapsed and most of it is still standing," he noted.

"Restoration of historic buildings has always been a continuous and permanent operation, and it is natural for such events to happen," he explained.

The deck of the bridge was partly collapsed on December 4, reportedly may be due to recent rainfalls.

The foundation of the bridge was constructed during the Seljuk era (1037–1194) while its other sections were thoroughly renovated in the time of Safavids (1501–1736).

Arch bridges have been built since ancient times due to the easy accessibility of stone masonry, which is an appropriate material for sustaining compressive forces.

An arch bridge carries loads primarily by compression, which exerts on the foundation both vertical and horizontal forces. Arch foundations must therefore prevent both vertical settling and horizontal sliding. Despite the more complicated foundation design, the structure itself normally requires less material than a beam bridge of the same span.

Friday Mosque of Neyriz; one of the earliest in Iran

HERITAGE TEHRAN – Once quite flourishing in ancient times, Neyriz used to be one of the largest communities of Muslims. Located in Fars province in southern Iran, Neyriz is close to a salt lake and some stone quarries where its inhabitants are working today.

The city is home to one of the earliest mosques of Iran which is still in use as the town's Friday Mosque with exquisite stucco work at its mihrab.

The Friday mosque of Neyriz was built at least in three phases which spanned different eras of Buyid, Seljuk, and Il-Khanid rule. An inscription on the great qibla iwan (portico) indicates that the mihrab was built in 973, which is probably the date when the qibla iwan and the minaret were also constructed and enclosed within precinct walls, according to the Islamic Architecture

Community.

Identified as "iwan-mosque," the pre-Islamic typology of the Masjid-i Jami' in Neyriz, Bamiyan, and Nishapur has led some scholars to believe that their mihrabs and minarets may have been appended to Zoroastrian fire temples. At Neyriz, the northwest iwan facing the original sanctuary was erected at a later date, followed by the addition of two rows of lateral arcades along the courtyard and iwan walls. The portal, which bears the date 1472, commemorates the last known period of construction.

The mosque is rectangular in plan, measuring about forty-eight by thirty-four meters on the exterior. It is aligned with qibla along the northwest-southeast axis and is centered on an arcaded courtyard that is fifteen meters long and eighteen and a half meters wide. Entered from a simple portal at the northern

end of the northwest facade, the courtyard is dominated by the tall sanctuary iwan that occupies its southwest wing. Eleven meters wide and seventeen meters deep, the sanctuary iwan is vaulted at a height double that of the flat-roofed courtyard arcades that continue along its sidewalls.

The archways connecting the iwan to the arcades were pierced when the latter were constructed. The sanctuary iwan also dominates the exterior appearance of the mosque with its projecting buttresses.

The mosque is made of baked bricks, covered with clay on the exterior and plastered white on the interior. The courtyard façade of the great iwan is ornamented simply with polychrome tiles composed of geometric patterns. Inside, the decorative effort is focused on the mihrab niche on the qibla wall, which is framed with multiple bands of ornate ar-



abesques and inscriptions carved in relief out of stucco. The original minbar, probably wooden, was since replaced.

Architecturally speaking, few places can contend with the mosques that Iran has to offer. It's the blend of geometric designs, symmetry, and vibrant colors that dazzle the eyes of visitors and locals alike.

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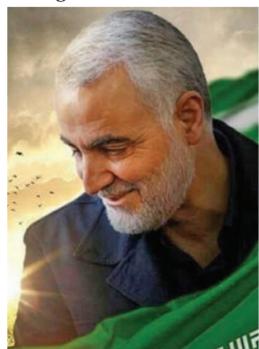
GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

The elderly are the sources of mercy and divine blessing.

Prophet Muhammad (S)

Radio Moqavemat launched to air programs remembering Commander Qassem Soleimani

→1 and the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei," he explained. Resistance in the discourse of the Islamic Revolution is among other topics to be reviewed in the different programs arranged for the channel.

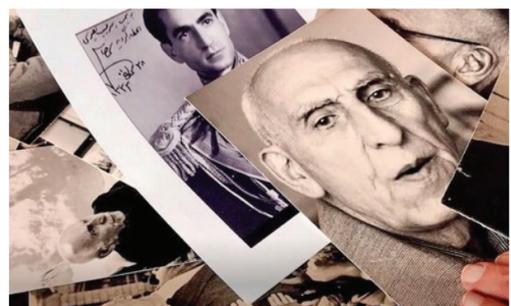


A portrait of Lieutenant-General Qassem Soleimani.

The channel will have programs around the clock and will help introduce the life and character of martyr Soleimani. Explaining resistance and the school of martyr Soleimani in Syria, Palestine, Lebanon, Afghanistan and other parts of the Muslim world are the main mission of the channel. "The role of martyr Soleimani and his influence in the unity of the world of Islam, the role of Soleimani for the youth and their families, as well as the martyrs of the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war are among other highlights of the channel," he remarked. The Expediency Council Secretary Mohsen Rezai also attending the ceremony called Iran the capital of resistance. "Anyone in the world who wants to learn resistance should come to Iran and learn the real meaning of resistance. I hope this channel will help carry the voice of the oppressed people and children to the world," he said. Soleimani, the chief of IRGC Quds Force, was assassinated during a U.S. airstrike in Baghdad on January 3.

"Coup 53" most popular doc at Cinéma Vérité

→1 TEHRAN — "Coup 53" by Taqi Amirani took first place on the list of the 15 most popular documentaries selected by polls taken during the 14th Cinéma Vérité, the organizers of the major Iranian documentary film festival announced on Monday. The film was an entry to the Special Screenings category of the festival.



A scene from "Coup 53" by Iranian director Taqi Amirani.

Amirani and editor Walter Murch find an extraordinary and never before seen archive while making a documentary about the Anglo-American coup in Iran in 1953. Documents and 16mm footage recount this story in unprecedented detail, with explosive revelations about secrets hidden for 66 years. From a historical documentary about four days in August 1953, the film becomes a living investigation that exposes the roots of Iran's volatile relationship with the United Kingdom and the USA. "Houbara" by Fathollah Amiri and Nima Askari was the second film on the list. The documentary warns about the illegal hunting of a specific species of birds, which are then smuggled into the Arab states of the Persian Gulf. These birds, the houbara bustards that live in certain regions of Iran, are being killed so that rich men in Arab countries can improve their sex lives. According to a widespread myth, the meat of these birds has aphrodisiac qualities, although this folk belief is not supported by any valid scientific research.

Ceramist Abbas Akbari honored as Iran's top art scholar of the year

→1 TEHRAN — Ceramic artist Abbas Akbari has been honored as Iran's top art scholar of the year.

The honoring ceremony was organized online last Tuesday by the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology as part of National Research Week, which was held from December 12 to 18.

Akbari is a professor at the Department of Higher Art Studies at the University of Kashan. He is active in the fields of pottery and ceramics, and has been able to revive lustre pottery, which is a type of pottery or porcelain with a metallic glaze that gives the effect of iridescence.

He has held several solo and group exhibits and has authored several books and a number of academic articles.

"The Ministry of Science has chosen the top researchers based on their activities over the past years. I have been teaching at the University of Kashan and have carried out research works on the history of clay and ceramics. I published my first book 20 years ago under the title 'Experience in Making



This combination photo shows ceramist Abbas Akbari and some of his artworks.



This combination photo shows ceramist Abbas Akbari and some of his artworks.

Pottery Kilns' based on my personal experience when I was a student and during the years when kilns were hard to find," Akbari has said. "My other activities also go back to my

research works but they are not similar to other research methods. That is why most of my books and articles are the products of my own personal experience. The last book I published was about a kiln dating

back to the Mongol era and was unearthed while renovating a house in Kashan. I renovated the kiln and documented the process and my personal experience in a book that is an important document about the kilns discovered in Iran," he explained.

He added that there are a great number of topics for research works in the country since art has numerous branches and there are many untouched issues, which need to be researched by the next generation.

"The history of art of Iran used to be recorded by Western experts using their own methods, however, I believe that those methods are no longer applicable. We need to work now in those areas that remain, such as structures that are slated for demolition and need to be studied and documented for the future. Now that we have better tools and improved technology we need to carry out these types of research," he concluded.

Akbari won the Kerameikon's Bronze Medal for his artwork at the Ceramica Multiplex 2016, held in Varazdin, the Republic of Croatia.



A combination photo shows scenes from Iranian movies "A Boy Has Disappeared" and "The Badger".

"The Badger", "A Boy Has Disappeared" at Bahamas festival

→1 TEHRAN — Iranian movies "The Badger" and "A Boy Has Disappeared" have been selected to be screened at the 17th Bahamas International Film Festival.

A large number of films from across the world will be competing in the festival, which will take place in Nassau from January 4 to 10, 2021.

Directed by Aida Alimadadi, the short film "A Boy Has Disappeared" is about a 7-year-old boy who decides to make himself disappear, as well as the objects around him, when nothing goes right.

"The Badger" by Kazem Mollai tells the story of Sudeh Sharifzadegan, whose 11-year-old son, Matiar, is kidnapped right before her second marriage. After considerable ef-

fort, Sudeh is forced to ask for the ransom money from her ex-husband, Peyman. After Matiar's release, Sudeh, being curious, comes to the sudden realization that it was all her son's plan to provide a means for his father's return.

The film has been acclaimed at numerous international events. It was selected as best fiction feature at the 6th Bangkok Thai International Film Festival in Thailand last week.

It also won the grand prize for the best foreign feature at the 29th Berkeley Video and Film Festival last October, and the award for best narrative feature at the Austin Film Festival in the U.S.

Two screenings have been arranged for each film at the 17th Bahamas International Film Festival, which will go online due to the pandemic.

Art centers team up for virtual festival to raise hopes for future

→1 TEHRAN — Two private art centers in Tehran have teamed up to organize a virtual festival, which has aimed at raising hopes for the future that is facing threats from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Final Take Culture and Art Institute and Eleven Square Center will be organizing the Art Is Alive Virtual Festival with spiritual support from the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, the organizers have announced.

The festival will be held in the field of cinema, theater, music and digital art. Behruz Gharibpur, director of the



Actor Ali Nasirian has been selected to preside over the jury at the Art Is Alive Virtual Festival. (FFF/Moein Baqeri)

acclaimed opera puppet shows "Hafez", "Rumi" and "Ashura", is the director of the festival's policymaking council.

Veteran actor Ali Nasirian has been selected to preside over the jury. He has expressed his hope that the festival can motivate young artists to work diligently in the coronavirus era.

Filmmaker Kamal Tabrizi is the director of the cinema category while Gharibpur is in charge of the theater section.

The music section is being headed by composer Fardin Khalabari, and cinematographer Mahmud Kalari is

the director of the digital art category of the festival, which will be held from February 28 to March 10, 2021.

"The festival is born out of the conditions COVID-19 has imposed on the world community," the organizers have said in a statement for the festival.

"The new media have provided the opportunity for people crippled by the disease to escape from the depression resulting from the home quarantine," the statement added.

They also hope that the festival gives a chance for young artists to discover their hidden talents.

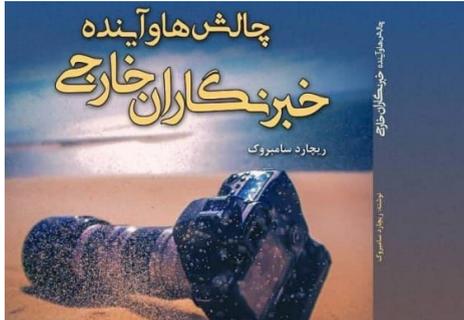
Sambrook's book on transformation of global news reporting published in Persian

→1 TEHRAN — British journalist Richard Sambrook's book "Are Foreign Correspondents Redundant?: The Changing Face Of International News" has recently been published in Persian.

The Tehran-based publishing house Barane Bahar is the publisher of the book that has been translated into Persian by Abbas Asadi and Amin Nobari of Tehran's Allameh Tabatabai University.

International news reporting is undergoing a profound transformation. Western newspapers and broadcasters have steadily cut back on foreign correspondents and reporting over the last 20 years in the face of economic pressures.

Now technology and cultural changes brought by globalization are bringing additional pressures to news organizations and the Internet has also allowed new voices to be heard. News organizations are having to



Front cover of British journalist Richard Sambrook's book "Are Foreign Correspondents Redundant?".

adapt and redefine themselves in the face of turbulent changes to how we learn about the world.

Sambrook is a senior research associate at the Reuters Institute, and a professor of Journalism, deputy head of school and director of the Centre for Journalism at Cardiff University.

He was director of the BBC's Global News division, responsible for leading the BBC's international news services across radio, television and new media.

Over the last 5 years, he has overseen the launch of 24 hour Arabic TV News, Persian TV and the development of interactive and online news services.

His particular interests are in the areas of international news and newsgathering, and in social media. His research interests include analyzing how professional and social media can complement each other. He has also played a leading role in protecting and lobbying for the safety of journalists around the world.

Cinéma Vérité honors veteran documentary filmmaker Kamran Shirdel

→1 TEHRAN — The 14th edition of Cinéma Vérité, Iran's major international festival for documentary films, honored documentary filmmaker Kamran Shirdel with a lifetime achievement award on Sunday.

Shirdel, who is also a photographer and translator, studied architecture and film direction in Rome. He started his career in filmmaking in 1965.

His 1968 film, "The Night It Rained", has been awarded at several Iranian and international events.

"The Mirrors", "Tehran Is the Capital of Iran", "Women's Quarter", "Women's Prison" and "Boom-e Simin" are among his films.

"Paykan", "Dubai" and "The First Loneliness" are his other movies. Speaking at the ceremony, the director of

the festival Mohammad Hamidi-Moqaddam said that the organizers had the honor to invite Shirdel to cooperate as the head of the jury.

Next, a documentary made by Hadi Afarideh on Shirdel was screened, and Afarideh spoke briefly about Shirdel who was not able to attend the ceremony due to his illness.

"This documentary reviews 60 years of history of this country," Afarideh said.

"His specific attitudes are quite clear in his documentaries because of the classes he has been through with great masters in Italy. Besides his own talent, he was always a good manager for those who used to collect funds for his projects," he said.

Film critic Khosro Dehqan next talked about Shirdel and said, "Perhaps, if you ask for the names of his films, not many will



Veteran documentary filmmaker Kamran Shirdel.

invisible to us," Dehqan said.

Another film critic, Hushang Golmakani, also present at the ceremony, said, "When we look at the documentaries made by the veterans, we discover that they wanted to give information and knowledge to the viewers, while Shirdel highlighted the critical aspect of documentaries in the cinema of Iran as well," he said.

"I still believe that his 'The Night It Rained' remains one of the best, although many good documentaries were made after it," he said.

The Documentary and Experimental Film Center (DEFC) celebrated the 80th birthday of Shirdel by screening a number of his films last June.

The DEFC is the main organizer of the event. The festival ran totally online and came to an end on Monday.