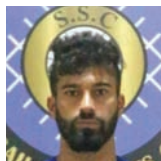




Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi, a senior cleric, dies at 86 *Page 2*



Ramin Rezaeian joins Al Sailiya club *Page 3*



School building budget rises by three folds *Page 7*

GENERAL SOLEIMANI INTERNATIONAL HERO



Iran stands ready to confront any U.S. adventurism

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© AP

Conspiracy theory in Iran football

BY MASOUD HOSSEIN
It's not a weird thing in the world of football that a team have been accused of being favored but here in Iran, many teams want to hide their failures by accusing another team. They are not responsible for what they've done and want to mislead their fans.

The fans are always ready to come up with conspiracy theories when it looks like certain teams are favored or others are wronged.

Iran football, at the moment, experiences the strange times indeed. The Asian heavyweight has not won a single title for many years due to mismanagement in the sport and it seems nobody want to change his mind.

The officials have not taken any major action to remove the obstacles over the past years and it has raised the concerns about the future.

Some Iranian coaches used to question the integrity of a referee at the end of their matches regardless of how they play. They protest the decisions, while there are some major technical problems in their teams. They want to mislead their fans and it could have devastating consequences in the long-term since the fans get used to protesting not finding a solution to the problem.

Iran is a country who has established a professional league since 2001, but the lack of infrastructure is what holds back developing football in the country. For instance, the Video Assistant Referee (VAR) has not yet been used in the league.

Persepolis, as a team who have qualified for the AFC Champions League two times in three years, are under pressure these days and they are accused of being favored by the country's Sports Ministry but there is no convincing evidence about that.

There is no denying that the team are owned by the ministry but they have started their progress since 2015 when Croatian gaffer Branko Ivankovic began to change the way they thought.

As mentioned above, there is mismanagement if Iran football since there is no charge for those who falsely accuse others and it fuels the conspiracy theory.

The football federation, first of all, has to know its President at the long-awaited election on Feb. 28. It needs to reform to end the failure in Asia and the world.

The football-mad nation deserves more but everybody must know the conspiracy thinking can be pernicious.

Tehran sports complex, cathedral named national heritage

TEHRAN – Shahid Shiroudi Sports Complex (formerly known as Amjadieh Stadium), and Saint Sarkis Cathedral along with seven other sites and monuments scattered across Tehran have been inscribed on the national heritage list.

The Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts declared the inscriptions in separate letters to Anoushirvan Mohseni-Bandpey, the governor-general of Tehran province, IRNA reported on Friday.

Entrees to the prestigious list also include a restaurant, mansion, public bathhouse, and a bank building in a bid to receive more protection than ever before.

Completed in 1942, the stadium has played host to many sporting, cultural, and national events as well as political meetings. Ever since Iran national football team was formed, they played their home matches in Amjadieh stadium before Azadi Stadium was constructed.

It has also hosted the 1968 AFC Asian Cup finals. The Asian Club Championship was also held in Amjadieh stadium in 1970. The stadium has also been the venue for the AFC Youth Championship 2000.

Built between 1964 and 1970 by Iranian-Armenian architect Eugene Aftandilian, Saint Sarkis Cathedral is one of the largest churches in the country.

This white, twin-spired church was established by an Armenian benefactor in the country, Markar Sarkissian, at his own expenses in memory of his wife, and was named after Saint Sarkis the Warrior.

The cathedral was originally built without interior columns with the hexagonal dome borne just by its walls, but when the danger of the dome falling was seen, four bearing columns were added.

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France mobilizes 100,000 police to stop New Year's Eve gatherings

France is mobilizing 100,000 police and gendarmes on New Year's Eve to break up parties and enforce a curfew imposed to combat coronavirus.

The extra security also aims at halting the torching of cars that often takes place on the final night of the year.

France has confirmed 2.6m Covid-19 cases, the fifth highest total in the world, and more than 64,000 deaths.

Like other European countries, France will see muted celebrations for New Year's Eve amid the pandemic.

In her New Year address, German Chancellor Angela Merkel spoke emotionally about the pandemic which had "imposed a lot on everyone, and too much on some" in 2020.

She reached out to those who had lost loved ones to Covid-19, and she attacked coronavirus conspiracy theories, "which are not just false and dangerous, but also cynical and cruel

towards those people".

French Interior Minister Gérald Darmanin has ordered a visible security presence in city centres and flashpoint suburbs from 20:00 (19:00 GMT), when the curfew begins.

In Paris half of the metro lines will be closed in the evening, while Mr. Darmanin also asked for a wider public transport shutdown across the country to be considered.

Despite rising cases, and concerns over a new more contagious strain of the disease, a government spokesman said there was no need for local lockdowns for now. France has had two national lockdowns and bars, restaurants and cultural attractions will remain closed into January.

Darmanin has written to regional leaders informing them of Thursday's "exceptional" mobilization of 100,000 police and gendarmes.

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Iran writes to Security Council over increased U.S. military adventurism in Persian Gulf

TEHRAN — Iran's Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations Es'haq Al-e Habib has written to the Security Council warning about the increased U.S. military adventurism in the Persian Gulf.

"I am writing to inform you that the military adventurism of the United States of America in the Persian Gulf and the Oman Sea has heightened, particularly in recent weeks," Al-e Habib wrote in a letter to President of the United Nations Security Council Jerry Matthews Matijila, according to IRNA.

He said that in addition to dispatching advanced and highly sophisticated weaponry to this region in the past several weeks, the United States has conducted a number of provocative military acts that include, but are not limited to, the flight of a number of its long-range strategic bombers in recent days over the Persian Gulf.

It came after the U.S. for the second time sent a pair of B-52 bombers to the Persian Gulf in yet another provocative military posture against Iran, just about three weeks before U.S. President

Donald Trump's tenure comes to an end.

The bombers flew nonstop from Minot Air Force Base in North Dakota and headed home after a show of force over the western side of the Persian Gulf on Wednesday, the Associated Press reported.

Earlier in December, two B-52 bombers flew nonstop from Barksdale Air Force Base in Louisiana, across Europe and then the Persian Gulf on a short-notice mission.

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Ceremonies held to mark martyrdom of General Soleimani, al-Muhandis

A ceremony was held on Friday, January 1, 2021, to commemorate the memory of Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, Iraq's PMU deputy head Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis and their companions. The ceremony, held at the University of Tehran, was attended by Judiciary Chief Ebrahim Raisi, IRGC Chief Hossein Salami, IRGC Quds Force Commander Esmail Ghaani and some other military and civilian officials as well as the families of the martyrs.

General Soleimani and his comrades were assassinated in a U.S. act of state terrorism near Baghdad's international airport on January 3, 2020.



© Mehr/Mohammadreza

How should we remember General Soleimani?

BY IAN GREENHALGH

It is true that often, one can better assess a person by who their enemies were than by who were their friends. If we apply this maxim to the late General Qassem Soleimani, sadly assassinated by U.S. airstrike in January 2020, we see clearly that his enemies were the United States, Israel and their allies in West Asia – Saudi Arabia and the Arab States.

Why did the U.S. kill Gen. Soleimani? The official reason given by Washington is that he was a terrorist (thus designated by the U.S. in 2005) and a threat to peace and stability in the region. Of course, this is very far from the truth and the real reason is that he was greatly successful in throwing a metaphorical spanner in the works of the schemes of the U.S.-Israel-Saudi 'Axis of Evil'.

In a 2014 article in New Yorker magazine, Soleimani was described by an ex-CIA operative formerly responsible for clandestine operations, as "the single most powerful operative in the Middle East (West Asia) today" and "the principal military strategist and tactician in Iran's effort to deter Western influence."

After the last decade of conflict and regime change, that has seen the destruction of Iraq, Syria and to an extent, Egypt, West Asia today is dominated by two powers – Israel, with its American and Saudi backers and Iran, which is the 'last man standing' in opposition to Israeli domination of the region. It is Iran that has been the power behind the opposition to U.S.-Israeli-Saudi hegemony over West Asia and no man did more to oppose the nefarious agenda of the U.S.-Israel-Saudi axis than Qassem Soleimani and by doing so, he became a man marked for death.

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Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi, a senior cleric, dies at 86

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Mohammad Taqi Mesbah Yazdi, a senior Iranian cleric who was a member of the Assembly of Experts, passed away late on Friday.

The cleric, 86, was admitted to hospital in Tehran a few days ago due to digestive disease.

A principlist cleric, Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi spent most of his life teaching and conducting research on Islamic thoughts. “Teaching Philosophy,” “Ethics in Quran,” and “Islam’s Political Theory” are among his famous works.

Iran writes to Security Council over increased U.S. military adventurism in Persian Gulf

1 → The U.S. Navy also announced the arrival of a nuclear-powered submarine in the Persian Gulf last week. The USS Georgia passed the Strait of Hormuz accompanied by two American warships, making it the first missile-loaded submarine of its kind to enter the Persian Gulf in eight years.

“Coupled with a series of systematic disinformation campaign, unfounded accusations and inflammatory statements and threats by the officials of the United States against the Islamic Republic of Iran, such confrontational measures have further deteriorated the already tense security environment of this highly volatile region,” Al-e Habib pointed out.



If unchecked, he continued, such warmongering tendencies could escalate the situation to an alarming level, and it is self-evident that the United States shall bear the full responsibility for all consequences.

Warning against the aforesaid measures, “I must stress that while the Islamic Republic of Iran does not seek conflict, our ability and resolute determination to protect our people, to defend our security, sovereignty, territorial integrity and vital interests as well as to respond decisively to any threat or use of force against Iran must not be underestimated,” the envoy added.

Al-e Habib also said such military adventurism is in clear contradiction with the “Purposes and Principles” of the United Nations and has serious ramifications for regional and international peace and security.

The United Nations Security Council is expected to compel the United States to abide by the principles and rules of international law and stop these unlawful measures, he remarked, adding, “Likewise, the international community should demand that the United States put an end to its destabilizing measures in such a volatile region as the Persian Gulf.”

The Iranian envoy also requested the “present letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.”

Tehran condemns attack in Yemen’s Aden airport

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — The Islamic Republic of Iran has condemned attacks at an airport in Yemen’s southern city of Aden, which claimed the lives of more than 20 people.

In a statement on Thursday, Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh expressed his condolences to the families of the victims, blaming the continued foreign aggression and occupation of the Yemeni soil as the key contributors to instability as well as a lack of order and enforcement of law, that have jeopardized the country’s territorial integrity.



A large explosion struck the airport in the southern Yemeni city of Aden on Wednesday, shortly after a plane carrying the newly formed Saudi-backed cabinet landed there, security officials said.

Yemen’s Interior Ministry said least 26 people were killed and more than 50 were wounded in the blast, according to Al Jazeera.

The source of the explosion was not immediately clear and no group claimed responsibility for attacking the airport. No one on the government plane was hurt.

“Such acts of violence and the killing of civilians are the result of the mentality of aggressors and occupiers of Yemen, who, in the name of a self-styled coalition, have destroyed the whole of Yemen, and, with their bellicose and secessionist views, have perpetuated the most heinous human crisis in Yemen,” Khatibzadeh said.

“The Islamic Republic of Iran condemns the aggressors’ acts of aggression and war, and stresses a political solution to the crisis, and once again asks all parties to end the futile conflict by returning to political negotiations,” he added.

Hours after the attack, a second explosion was heard around Aden’s Maasheq presidential palace where the cabinet members including Prime Minister Maeen Abdulmalik, as well as the Saudi ambassador to Yemen, had been taken to safety, residents and local media said.

It was unclear what caused the second blast and there were no immediate reports of casualties.

An AFP correspondent at the airport said he heard two explosions. “At least two explosions were heard as the cabinet members were leaving the aircraft,” the correspondent said.

The UN special envoy for Yemen, Martin Griffiths, condemned the explosion as an “unacceptable act of violence.” He said in a tweet that the attack was “a tragic reminder of the importance of bringing #Yemen urgently back on the path towards peace.”

Ex-defense chief warns Trump not to turn New Year to mourning for Americans

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Former Defense Minister Hossein Dehghan has advised outgoing U.S. President Donald Trump not to turn the New Year to a mourning ceremony for the American people.

“I saw in the news that the American [rulers] have raised the alarm out of fear of [Iran’s] retaliation and they have flown two B-52 bombers over the Persian Gulf,” Dehghan, now a military advisor to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, wrote in a tweet on Thursday.

“All of their military bases in the region are covered by our missiles,” the general said. “I advise the fired White House [dweller] not to turn the New Year into a mourning ceremony for the Americans.”

Two nuclear-capable American B-52 bombers flew over the Persian Gulf after nonstop flights to the region from their U.S.-based hangars. It was the third time in six weeks that American bombers were conducting long-range flights off the Iranian coast.

It came after the U.S. Navy announced the arrival of a nuclear-powered submarine in



the Persian Gulf last week. The USS Georgia passed the Strait of Hormuz accompanied by two American warships, making it the first missile-loaded submarine of its kind to enter the Persian Gulf in eight years.

This also comes as Iranians and Iraqis are preparing to mark the first anniversary of the martyrdom of their popular com-

manders, namely Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, who were assassinated in a U.S. drone strike on January 3 last year.

The strike, which was directly ordered by Trump, triggered a strong anti-American backlash across the region, leading to growing calls for the U.S. military to end

Rouhani: Enemy was harmed by ‘ill-considered’ Soleimani assassination

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — President Hassan Rouhani says the enemy was harmed by its “ill-considered” move of brutally assassinating Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani last year.

“The enemy was definitely harmed by the ill-considered move of brutally assassinating [Soleimani] and it should rest assured that the people and youth of Iran and the region will continue to move on the path of resistance and independence of the region, even more resilient and hopeful,” Rouhani said on Thursday.

He made the remarks while addressing a ceremony held to inaugurate a number of national projects.

“All nations have realized that as long as the Americans are in this region, the region will never see a favorable and desirable [day], and the regional nations, God willing, will cut off the foot of these criminals and aggressors,” the president remarked.

January 3 will mark the first anniversary of the U.S. assassination of General Soleimani, the commander of Iran’s

IRGC Quds Force. He was admired as West Asia’s most influential counter-terrorism commander.

He was martyred in a U.S. drone strike, directly ordered by U.S. President Donald Trump, in Baghdad during an official visit. His Iraqi trenchmate Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, deputy commander of Iraq’s Hashd al-Sha’abi anti-terror force, was also killed along with their other companions when their convoy was hit.

“Trump committed many crimes and killed many people, but we will never forget these two cases,” Rouhani said, pointing to the assassination of General Soleimani and al-Muhandis.

The Americans should know that we will always lament their loss and the Iranian nation, along with other nations in the region, will one day avenge their assassination, he added.

A few days after the assassination and as the IRGC unleashed a barrage of missiles on January 8 at the United States’ Ain al-Assad air base in the western Iraqi province of Anbar, causing massive damage to the base.



According to top Iranian officials, the ultimate revenge for Soleimani’s assassination would be to force the American troops out of the region.

Rouhani also pointed out that he personally knew General Soleimani for 40 years.

“General Soleimani did not hesitate to carry out what he perceived as his national, religious and revolutionary duty, and this is very important,” Rooohani recalled.

U.S. responsible for any adventure in the region: Zarif

Zarif warns intelligence from Iraq indicates U.S. is fabricating pretext for war

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — The responsibility of any possible military adventure in the region will fall on Washington, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has warned amid heightened tensions in the Persian Gulf region.

Zarif made the remarks during a phone conversation with his Kuwaiti counterpart Sheikh Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, the Foreign Ministry website reported on Friday.

During the phone call, the two sides discussed the latest issues in bilateral relations and regional developments in the phone call

at the beginning of the New Christian Year.

Zarif elaborated on the Islamic Republic’s views regarding the establishment of comprehensive stability and security, without foreign interference and free from any tensions.

Pointing to certain suspicious moves and acts of mischief by the United States in the region, Zarif stressed that the responsibility for the consequences of any possible adventure will fall on the U.S. government.

Last January, the U.S. military assassinated Iran’s top anti-terror general Qassem Soleimani along with his senior Iraqi comrade Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis and a number of other resistance

fighters in a drone strike which was ordered by U.S. President Donald Trump.

Tensions between Washington and Tehran have soared ahead of Soleimani’s assassination anniversary, with the United States sending B-52 bombers to the Persian Gulf and dispatching a nuclear-powered submarine to the region in provocative moves against the Islamic Republic.

The deployments came after several Katyusha rockets landed near the U.S. embassy in Baghdad’s highly fortified Green Zone earlier this month.

Washington blamed Iran for the attack, but

the Islamic Republic has strongly denied any involvement in the incident and said attacks on diplomatic centers is “unacceptable”.

Zarif warned on Thursday that the Islamic Republic avoids military conflict, but is prepared to put up effective defense.

“Instead of fighting Covid in US, @realDonaldTrump & cohorts waste billions to fly B52s & send armadas to OUR region,” Zarif tweeted.

He warned that intelligence from Iraq indicate a plot to fabricate pretext for war.

“Iran doesn’t seek war but will OPENLY & DIRECTLY defend its people, security & vital interests,” the foreign minister added.

Failure of Trump’s new anti-Iran UNSC move further highlights U.S. isolation: Iran’s UK envoy

POLITICAL **TEHRAN (Press TV)** — Iran’s ambassador to the United Kingdom says the U.S.’s continued failure to unite the UN Security Council against the 2015 nuclear agreement with world powers once again proves the isolated nature of its policy concerning the deal.

“[U.S. President Donald] Trump’s administration brought about another defeat for itself at the end of 2020, and once again showed the isolation of its policy concerning the JCPOA,” Hamid Baedinejad tweeted on Thursday.

He was referring by acronym to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, the official name of the nuclear deal that has the UK, France, Russia, and China plus Germany as its other deal partners alongside Iran.

The United States illegally and unilaterally left the nuclear agreement in 2018. It, therefore, lost all possible rights to invoke its terms, including a so-called snapback mechanism that enables return of all of the Security Council sanctions against the Islamic Republic.

However, acting as if it was still a JCPOA member, the U.S. went to the UNSC earlier this year and tried to have the sanctions returned. As predicted, it was snubbed by the absolute majority of the Security Council’s 15-strong members.

Baedinejad’s remarks came after the U.S. took yet another unrealistic move by asking the Security Council to allocate a budget for the implementation of the snapback

mechanism, although the provision has not been triggered as Washington would have desired.

The unjustified nature of Washington’s latter move was verified by the opposition it was met with on the part of 110 UN members.

The Iranian official described the response served to the U.S. as an instance of “decisive objection.”

Iran’s UK envoy reminded that even America’s allies in the JCPOA — the U.S., France, and Germany — and many other pro-Washington UN members rejected its proposal in chorus with the countries of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), which traditionally oppose big powers’ one-upmanship.

Iran has braced itself to face any possible scenario, IRGC chief says

TEHRAN (Press TV) — The chief commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) has warned the United States against any provocative moves in the Persian Gulf, emphasizing that the Islam Republic stands fully prepared for any possible scenario.

Speaking at a ceremony marking the first anniversary of the assassination of top Iranian anti-terror commander Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani and his companions in a U.S. drone strike near Baghdad airport, Major General Hossein Salami said Pentagon’s recent decision to ramp up its military presence and activities in the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman is because of the mistake it made last year.

Salami noted that the assassination of Lt. Gen. Soleimani, commander of the Quds Force of Iran’s Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), and his Iraqi trenchmate Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, deputy head of the Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), and their associates bred passionate hatred among Muslims worldwide.

“This intense hatred always haunts Americans like a nightmare. They have taken a series of actions to escape from this horrible nightmare. We have braced ourselves for any scenario,” he pointed out.

“Iran has no worries. We are ready to defend our independence, vital interests and achievements of our great [1979 Islamic] revolution as we have demonstrated over the past 41 years.

“Today, we have no problems, worries nor concerns to face any military power,” Major General Salami noted.

On Wednesday, two nuclear-capable American B-52

bombers flew over the Persian Gulf after nonstop flights to the region from their U.S.-based hangars. It was the third time in six weeks that American bombers were conducting long-range flights off the Iranian coast.

The latest deployments came after the U.S. Navy announced the arrival of a nuclear-powered submarine in the Persian Gulf last week. The USS Georgia passed the Strait of Hormuz accompanied by two American warships, making it the first missile-loaded submarine of its kind to enter the Persian Gulf in eight years.

The region has witnessed escalating tensions since Trump accused Iran of playing a role in attacks on the U.S. embassy in Iraq late last month, which Tehran has dismissed as false flag operations.

Anti-terror leader: Iraq should have responded firmly

The leader of Asa’ib Ahl al-Haq anti-terror group, whose fellow fighters are part of the PMU better known as Hashd al-Sha’abi, says Baghdad should have given an appropriate response to the assassinations.

“I regret the procrastination in responding to the target killings of Gen. Soleimani and Abu Mahdi Al-Muhandis. Iraq’s response should have been stronger than Iran’s,” Qais al-Khazali told Iraq’s Arabic-language al-Ahad television network on Thursday night.

“As an Iraqi national, I am heartbroken not to have responded to the assassination of Martyr Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis. The United States should not harbor the delusion that the resistance’s response to any aggression will not be

befitting. The presence of any foreign military base on Iraqi soil is unlawful and against the Constitution, especially after the approval of the Iraqi parliament’s resolution.”

The leader of Asa’ib Ahl al-Haq group then called on the Iraqi Judiciary to prosecute those responsible for the assassinations before Trump ends his tenure on January 21.

General Soleimani and Muhandis were assassinated along with their companions in a U.S. terror drone strike authorized by Trump near Baghdad International Airport on January 3, 2020.

Iraqi lawmakers approved a bill two days later, demanding the expulsion of all foreign military forces led by the United States from the Arab country.

The U.S. assassination drew a wave of condemnation from officials and movements throughout the world, and triggered huge public protests across the region.

On January 8, the IRGC targeted the U.S.-run Ain al-Assad air base in Iraq’s western province of Anbar after launching a wave of attacks to retaliate the assassination of Gen. Soleimani.

According to the Pentagon, more than 100 American forces suffered “traumatic brain injuries” during the counterstrike on the base. The IRGC, however, says Washington uses the term to mask the number of the Americans who perished during the retaliation.

Iran has described the missile attack on Ain al-Assad air base as a “first slap.”

Head of the Judiciary’s High Council for Human Rights Ali Bageri-Kani said on Monday Iran has identified 48 suspects behind the terrorist act.

People inside U.S. may respond to assassination of Gen. Soleimani: Quds Force chief

1→ The general pointed out that enemies had been trying to target General Soleimani and his comrade Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the deputy head of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), for at least 30 years.

"[But] during this period, the dirtiest man [Trump], with temptations from the Zionist regime and Saudi Arabia, went insane. All the world will condemn you. Those who committed this crime should know that throughout the world there would be a man who will punish the cowards behind this crime," the commander of Quds Force cautioned.

He also said that the path of resistance and General Soleimani will continue and the U.S.'s acts of mischief will not stop the global support for the oppressed in Yemen, Syria, and Palestine, according to Tasnim.

Earlier on Wednesday, General Ghaani made similar remarks during a closed session of the Iranian Parliament, underlining that U.S. officials involved in the assassination of General Soleimani should learn how to lead a clandestine lifestyle in the future because Iran will take revenge against them.

"I warn the U.S. president, CIA director, secretary of defense, secretary of state and other American officials involved in the assassination of martyr Soleimani that they must learn the clandestine lifestyle of Salman Rushdie because the Islamic Republic will avenge the blood of martyr Soleimani which was shed unrightfully," the Ghaani Twitter account quoted him as saying in the Wednesday session.

General Soleimani was assassinated in



an American drone strike on January 3, 2020, along with al-Muhandis near Baghdad's international airport. The strike was ordered by U.S. President Donald Trump, a reckless move that brought Iran and the United States close to an all-out war as General Soleimani was an influential figure in Iran and beyond. In response, Iran showered a U.S. airbase in western Iran with missiles, causing brain injury among dozens of American servicemen.

However, Iran has said time and again that the ultimate revenge for the assassination of General Soleimani would be far more important than a missile strike on a

U.S. base. It would be the withdrawal of U.S. forces from the region.

Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, has recently said that the missile strike on the American airbase of Ain al-Asad was slap on the face of America. But the tougher slap, the Leader said, would be the soft victory over the superficial hegemony of arrogance and the expulsion of the Americas from the region.

The Leader also underlined the need to take revenge for the assassination of top general.

"Millions attending Martyrs Soleimani and Abu Mahdi's funerals in Iraq and Iran was the first severe slap to the U.S. But the

worse one is overcoming the hegemony of arrogance and expelling the U.S. from the region. Of course, revenge will be taken on those who ordered it and the murderers," the Leader stated.

As Iran prepares to mark the first assassination anniversary, Iranian officials reiterated their determination to seek revenge for the assassination of the general.

On Friday, IRGC Chief Major General Hossein Salami announced that Iran is ready to avenge the assassination of General Soleimani and al-Muhandis.

"We are ready to avenge the blood of these martyrs and to forever liberate Muslims from the political, economic and cultural domination and hegemony of the Western world led by the mischievous Americans," General Salami asserted.

He said Iran is not worried by the recent activities of the U.S. in the region, adding that "We are ready to defend our independence, vital interests and the achievements of our great revolution."

The IRGC chief noted that Iran has sought to boost its capabilities over the past decades and it is now prepared for any showdown with any power.

"Over the past 41 years, we have created this readiness, and today, we have no problem and concern whatsoever to confront any power. We will tell our final words to the enemies on the battlefield," General Salami continued.

He made the remarks on the sidelines of the Friday ceremony at the University of Tehran.

General Soleimani 'example to follow' for Muslim youth: Yemen FM

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Yemeni Foreign Minister Hisham Sharaf has described General Qasem Soleimani as a "way of life" and an "example" that Muslim youth will follow to serve their nations and put the interests of these nations first.

The foreign minister described General Soleimani as "a bright star of the Islamic Ummah in the sky of defending Muslim and oppressed peoples."

Sharaf underlined that the top Iranian general embodied a comprehensive approach for those who want to serve their nations.

Commenting on the measures needed to be adopted by the leaders of the Axis of Resistance to continue the path of resistance, Sharaf said, "First of all, strength and cohesion of the Axis of Resistance as an inevitable destiny and a necessity for keeping its peoples free must be emphasized. The leaders of the countries of this axis are required to have more joint coordination and solidarity among themselves, and to take the highest degree of caution towards the known enemy and to exchange information related to the safety and security of these leaders (of resistance) and their apparatus, in addition to strengthening and increasing their capabilities in various fields, particularly those related to the information field, cybersecurity and intelligence, to take advanced steps in facing the axis of conspiracy and evil."

The Yemeni foreign minister made the remarks in an interview with the Iranian Fars news agency.



Sharaf pointed to the United States' duplicity in claiming to fight terrorism and then assassinating the most important fighter against terrorism.

"The peoples of the world have become accustomed to this disgraceful behavior and the duplicity of successive White House administrations. These are political entities that believe in self-interest, excessive selfishness and benefit from others without trying to participate and partner and expand the base of benefit for the benefit of human societies," the Yemeni foreign minister said.

According to Sharaf, the American way of fighting terrorism is primarily intended to combat those who stand up against the policy of global capitalism and achieving the goals of NATO and Western political entities without any humanitarian considerations or consideration for the

interest of the people.

The chief Yemeni diplomat pointed out that General Soleimani spent his lifetime serving his people and the Islamic nation and did not live to create a position for himself or to accumulate property or achieve personal gain.

Sharaf concluded that the top Iranian general "is now considered a school, a way of life and a practice that will be emulated by Muslim youth to serve their people and put the interest of those peoples first."

General Soleimani was assassinated in an American drone strike on January 3, 2020, along with al-Muhandis near Baghdad's international airport. The strike was ordered by U.S. President Donald Trump and brought Tehran and Washington close to an all-out war. Iran responded to the U.S. strike by launching a missile strike on the American airbase of Ain al-Asad in western Iraq.

Ebrahim al-Dalimi, Yemen's ambassador to Iran, has also said one of the important reasons that led to the U.S. assassinating General Soleimani was his support for Yemen.

Speaking at a ceremony held on Friday at the University of Tehran to commemorate the first anniversary of the assassination of the general, the ambassador said, "We, Yemenis, assert that one of the most important reasons that led to the assassination of Soleimani was his blessed stance on the side of the Yemenis."

Al-Dalimi pointed out that Yemen is an integral part of the resistance front, and General Soleimani was a companion of all Yemeni fighters.

Martyrdom spirit of General Soleimani proof of 'ultimate sacrifice': Iran's nuclear body

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iran's top nuclear organization has called Quds Force Commander Major General Qasem Soleimani an "exalted martyr" whose martyrdom was indicative of human freedom and sacrifices.

"These days, the memory of General Soleimani martyrdom has filled our hearts with grief and doubled sorrow," the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) said in a tweet on Thursday.

The AEOI added, "The martyrdom spirit of

that exalted martyr is a firm proof of human freedom, and ultimate sacrifice."

This week marks the first anniversary of the assassination of General Soleimani in an American drone strike near Baghdad's international airport on January 3, 2020. Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, deputy head of the Iraqi Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), who accompanied Soleimani upon his arrival in Baghdad, was also assassinated in the strike.

With the assassination anniversary just



a few days away, tensions between Tehran and Washington have soared in recent days. The U.S. has sent a submarine to the Persian Gulf and Israel is reportedly following suit.

Iran has warned the U.S. against any aggression.

"Intelligence from Iraq indicate plot to FABRICATE pretext for war. Iran doesn't seek war but will OPENLY & DIRECTLY defend its people, security & vital interests," Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said in a tweet on Thursday.

Iran stands ready to confront any U.S. adventurism

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — As Iran makes preparations for commemorating the first martyrdom anniversary of its counterterrorism hero, U.S. President Donald Trump scrambles to find an excuse for waging a war on Iran to cover up his failures over the past four years.

This was on full display in Trump's recent threatening tweets against Iran. Following a vague rocket attack on the U.S. embassy in Iraq, Trump and his secretary of state, Mike Pompeo, issued stern warnings to Iran and accused it of standing behind the attack.

Nearly two weeks ago, the U.S. embassy in Baghdad came under attack after weeks of relative calm. More than 20 rockets landed inside the Green Zone of Baghdad, a heavily fortified district in which the U.S. embassy and other government buildings are located. Many of these rockets hit the embassy and, according to Iraqi press reports, caused injuries among several Americans working at the embassy.

Without offering any evidence, the U.S. quickly pointed the finger at Iran, claiming that "Iran-backed militias" were behind the attack.

"Iran-backed militias once again flagrantly and recklessly attacked in Baghdad, wounding Iraqi civilians," Pompeo claimed in a tweet.

Shortly after this tweet, Trump returned to his warmongering rhetoric against Iran, issuing a stark threat against Iran.

"Our embassy in Baghdad got hit Sunday by several rockets. Three rockets failed to launch. Guess where they were from: IRAN. Now we hear chatter of additional attacks against Americans in Iraq. Some friendly health advice to Iran: If one American is killed, I will hold Iran responsible. Think it over," Trump tweeted on Thursday.

Iran strongly rejected the U.S. accusation, calling it "dubious" and "ill-intended." Saeed Khatibzadeh, spokesman for Iran's Foreign Ministry, said last week that "the kind,

timing and content of their statements and tweets are dubious and ill-intended."

Despite Iran's denial, the U.S. continued to deploy its military assets and troops to the region in what appeared a concerted effort to fabricate a pretext for a war against Iran. The U.S. announced the arrival of the nuclear-powered submarine USS Georgia in the Persian Gulf, the first deployment of this kind in at least eight years. The U.S. also flew B-52 bombers to the region in a show of force against Iran.

This is all while Iran has made it clear that it does not seek tensions with the U.S. but the White House is exploiting the first anniversary of the assassination of General Qasem Soleimani to create the misperception that Iran is preparing to stage an attack on U.S. targets in the region. Of course, Iranian officials have repeatedly said that Iran will avenge the blood of the top general, but they ruled out any possible military confrontation with the U.S. forces in the coming days. In fact, Iran has said that it seeks to expel the U.S. from the region through various means including by strengthening the Resistance Axis politically.

But at the same time, Iran expressed readiness to defend itself against any American aggression.

"We have made it clear that while we are not after tensions, we will use everything in our power to defend the interest and national security of Iran," Khatibzadeh said in his weekly press briefing.

Iran also said that it has obtained intelligence showing the U.S. is plotting to fabricate a pretext for war on Iran.

"Instead of fighting Covid in U.S., @realDonaldTrump & cohorts waste billions to fly B52s & send armadas to OUR region. Intelligence from Iraq indicate plot to FABRICATE pretext for war. Iran doesn't seek war but will OPENLY & DIRECTLY defend its people, security & vital interests," Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said in a tweet on Thursday.



Zarif had earlier said that "Trump will bear full responsibility for any adventurism on his way out," after the U.S. president leveled accusations at Iran for the attack on the embassy.

Despite Iran clearly announcing that it does not seek war, the U.S. keeps claiming that Iran may attack U.S. forces or interests in the region. On Friday, an unknown U.S. official told NBC News that the U.S. has seen increasing indications that Iran could be planning an attack against American forces or interests in the West Asia region.

These accusations are likely to make things worse. Iran has said it does not seek war. Therefore, third-party groups and players may seek to push the U.S. into a costly war with Iran that it is not ready to fight.

Iran has warned about such players. Government spokesman Ali Rabiee has recently warned of possible provocations and false flag operations in Iraq aimed at tarnishing Iran's image, adding that Iran will hold the U.S. regime and its regional clients responsible for these operations.

Rabiee also said that Iran is not responsible for what is happening in Iraq, underlining that there are a lot of groups that seek to end the occupation in line with their national and ethnic motives. "Their actions have nothing to do with Iran," the government spokesman asserted.

S P O R T S

Ramin Rezaeian joins Al Sailiya club

S P O R T S d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iranian international defender Ramin Rezaeian joined Al Sailiya football club on loan from Al Duhail SC.

The 30-year-old player failed to meet Al Duhail coach Sabri Lamouchi's expectations and was forced to leave the Qatari football team.

Rezaeian had been linked with a move to Persepolis but the Iranian team announced that they are not going to sign a new player at the moment.

Rezaeian, who started his playing career in Saba in 2009, represented Iran national football team in the 2018 FIFA World Cup.

Al Sailiya are his third Qatari club since he has already played for Al Shahania.

Al Sailiya have also signed Umm Salal left back Rami Favez.

International athletic events to be held at Emam Reza Stadium

S P O R T S d e s k **TEHRAN** — Athletic Federation of Islamic Republic of Iran (AAFIRI) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Astan-e Quds Razavi on Thursday in order to develop the athletics in the country.

The MoU was inked at the ceremony attended by head of the athletic federation Hashem Siami, Alireza Tajfirooz, general manager of Astan-e Quds Razavi's sports section, and some of the federation's board of directors in Mashhad's Emam Reza Stadium.

The stadium, which was previously introduced as a training base in Islamic countries, will establish a talent identification and training center called the Advanced Athletics Academy, with the aim of finding the young talents who has potential to win medal in athletics, especially in deprived areas, according to the MoU.

Dahlan Jumaan al-Hamad, President of the Asian Athletics Association (AAA), had said Siami in early December he would visit the well-equipped stadium soon to inspect the stadium for hosting the tournaments.

The Emam Reza Stadium will enable Iran to host the international events in Mashhad.

The national athletics championships will be held at the stadium next year. The purpose of this competition is to encourage the young athletes to promote spiritual and physical health.

Persepolis held by plucky Zob Ahan: IPL

S P O R T S d e s k **TEHRAN** — Persepolis football team were held to a 1-1 draw against Zob Ahan here in Iran Professional League (IPL) on Thursday.

Omid Alishah gave the hosts the lead in the 16th minute at the Azadi Stadium.

Persepolis were dominant in the first half and could have scored more goals.

In the second half, Zob Ahan played a better football and put the Reds under pressure. They created several opportunities but their players wasted their chances.

With one minute remaining, Persepolis defender Saeid Aghaei and Zob Ahan defender Abdollah Hosseini were sent off following on-field bust-up.

In the injury time, Zob Ahan midfielder Milad Jahani equalized the match.

Holders Persepolis are ninth with 10 points from six matches. Esteghlal sit top on 15 points from eight matches.

Sardar Azmoun second player at AFC: IFFHS

S P O R T S d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iranian international striker Sardar Azmoun was chosen as the second best man player of the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) by the International Federation of Football History and Statistics (IFFHS).

Korean Super striker Son Heung Min writes history in the football field and in the World of Football, becoming the first to receive the Best Man Player 2020 in AFC by IFFHS, winning the ranking before Sardar Azmoun (Iran/Zenith St Petersburg) and Takumi Minamino (Japan/Liverpool FC).

The Tottenham forward is the first Asian footballer to score 50 goals in English Premier League and only the second South Korean to score 100 Pro goals in European football after legendary Cha Bum-Keun in 1980's.

Also, the second Asian to play in the champions league final. In 2019 he was nominated in Ballon d'or and won FIFA Puskas Award 2020 for his spellbinding solo goal. His transition from a shy newcomer to a top class footballer is very absorbing.

Today, he is considered as one of the best Asian players in the History and winger in European football. Spurs boss Jose Mourinho nicknamed Son as "Sonaldo" after his award winning solo goal by comparing Brazilian superstar "Ronaldo".

Shahrdari Urmia remain top of Iran Volleyball League

S P O R T S d e s k **TEHRAN** — Shahrdari Urmia swept past Khatam Ardakan 3-0 on Friday to stay top of Iran Volleyball Super League.

Shahrdari Urmia defeated Khatam in straight sets (25-19, 25-22, 25-19) in Tehran's Khaneh Volleyball.

The team cemented their place at the top of the table with 37 points from 15 matches.

Sepahan also defeated Shahrdari Varamin in straight sets (25-19, 25-19, 25-17) and remained in the second place.

Matchday 17 results:

*shahdab Yazd 3 – 0 Shahrdari Qazvin (25-18, 25-18, 25-17)

* Saipa 3 – 0 Azar Batteri Urmia (25-16, 28-26, 25-14)

* Shahrdari Urmia 3 – 0 Khatam (25-19, 25-22, 25-19)

*Sepahan 3 – 0 Shahrdari Varami (25-19, 25-19, 25-17)

* Labaniyat Haraz 3 – 0 Rahyab Melal (25-21, 25-18, 25-22)

Production by major automakers exceeds 653,000 in 9 months

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Three major Iranian carmakers, namely Iran Khodro Company (IKCO), SAIPA Group, and Pars Khodro, manufactured 653,861 vehicles during the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-December 20, 2020), the data released by Codal website showed.



According to the data, during the mentioned period, IKCO manufactured 346,486 vehicles, of which 55,252 were produced in the ninth Iranian calendar month of Azar (November 21-December 20).

SAIPA manufactured 234,576 vehicles in the mentioned period, of which 24,721 were manufactured in the ninth month.

Pars Khodro also manufactured 72,799 vehicles, of which 6,723 were manufactured in the ninth month.

Iranian carmakers had exported about 1,300 vehicles to nine countries, including Hong Kong, Taiwan, Syria, UAE, Spain, China, Iraq, and Turkey during the previous Iranian calendar year.

Based on the data released by the Industry, Mining, and Trade Ministry, 468,699 vehicles were manufactured in Iran during the first half of the current year (March 20-September 21, 2020), which has been 23.4 percent higher than the figure for the same period of time in the past year.

During this period, 425,925 passenger cars were manufactured in the country, registering a growth of 21.9 percent compared to the first six months of the previous year. The production of trucks also reached 39,519 units in the said time span, which has increased by 40.4 percent compared to the last year's same period.

Considering the mentioned data, while the growth in output has been realized in the first half, car manufacturing is also planned to rise in the second half.

Mohsen Salehinia, the new head of the Industrial Development and Renovation Organization of Iran (IDRO), has mentioned planning for increasing car manufacturing in the second half, and said, "We are investigating and finalizing the issues in this due".

Deputy Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Saeed Zarandi had said earlier this year that 1.2 million vehicles were planned to be manufactured in the present year, which seems a realistic figure given the surge in production policies of this year.

TSE's main index experiences 3.5% weekly drop

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), which is Iran's major stock exchange, fell 3.5 percent in the past Iranian calendar week (ended on Friday).

The index closed at 1.398 million points on Wednesday (December 30, 2020), which was the last working day of the previous week.

During the five working days of the past week, the indices of Iran Khodro Group, Social Security Investment Company, Saipa Company, 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, 2020), hit the record high of two million points on August 2, 2020, but then it began to drop, coming down to 1.2 million points.

Then after a period of correction, the index started to climb.

The vice-chairman of the TSE's board of directors has recently said that the stock market will spend the last months of the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 20, 2021) calmly.

Mentioning investigation of the periodical (six-month and nine-month) reports of the companies' performance, Javad Eshqi-Nejad said that given the foreign currency exchange rate situation and the appropriate sales volume, in this period, almost the expectations of listed companies have been met and positive results have been provided for the capital market.

Regarding the continuation of the stock market trend in the next three months, he said: "In this regard, the main issue is political relations and international behavior; We seem to be achieving good results in the international arena."

While predicting that the stock market will be calm in the last months of this year, he said: "But for the next year, according to the budget, we may face new events whose analysis can have special effects on various industries; in a way that these effects may be associated with some industries for the next 2-3 years."

Electricity, water projects worth over \$657m put into operation

1 → A-B-Iran program (the acronyms A and B stand for water and electricity in Persian) was initiated in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19, 2020), during which the minister made 31 trips to various provinces for inaugurating over 220 major projects with a total investment of 335.6 trillion rials (about \$7.99 billion).

Since the beginning of the second phase

of the scheme in the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 20, 2020), every week several energy projects have gone operational across the country.

Earlier this month, Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian had said that "In the second phase of the program 250 projects are going to be inaugurated by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20) of which so far 154 have gone operational."



The official noted that a total of 500 trillion rials (about \$11.9 billion) of investment will be made in the mentioned 250 projects.

Last week, some 28 energy projects worth over 5.53 trillion rials (about \$131.6 million) were inaugurated in two provinces in the 33rd week of the mentioned program.

Trade between Iran, EAEU reaches \$1.4b in 8 months

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — The value of non-oil trade between Iran and the members of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) reached \$1.4 billion in the first eight months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 19-November 20, 2020), data released by Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA) showed.

Based on the mentioned data, Iran exported 1.8 million tons of commodities worth \$639 million to the EAEU members in the period under review, registering a 20 percent fall in terms of weight and a six-percent decline in terms of value.

Trade with Eurasia accounted for 2.8 percent of the country's total non-oil trade in the mentioned period, IRNA reported.

As reported, the country's trade with its Eurasian partners declined 11 percent compared to the previous year's same eight-month period.

During this time span, Iran's exports to Russia and Belarus increased significantly in terms of weight and value, while exports to three other countries, namely Armenia,

Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan, decreased.

Eurasian destinations accounted for only 2.4 percent of Iran's total exports in the first eight months of the current year, according to the said data.

Among Eurasian trade partners, Russia was Iran's top export destination with \$285 million, followed by Armenia with \$233 million worth of imports from the Islamic Republic, while most of Iran's imports also came from Russia (\$727 million).

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.

Iran to dispatch 20 commercial attachés to target markets in next calendar year

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Head of Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) has said that the organization plans to send 20 commercial attachés to new target markets in the next Iranian calendar year 1400 (begins on March 21).

"We have considered the budget required for [dispatching] 20 commercial attachés to new target markets in our budget for [the year] 1400," Hamid Zadboum said in an interview with local media.

Underlining the significant role of commercial attachés in accelerating trade with other countries, Zadboum said: "Commercial attachés are the business arms of our ambassadors in destination markets and the task of commercial attachés is to strengthen trade diplomacy."

The official stressed the need for diversifying the country's export basket in order to be able to diversify export destinations, noting: "naturally, the diversity of the export basket depends to a large extent on the production of diverse export products, so we must move in a direction that our products are tailored to the needs of target markets."

He further noted that despite the efforts for the expansion of the trade circle, Iran is currently more focused on boosting trade with the neighboring countries and some special trade partners like China and India.



Two years ago about 54 percent of our exports were made to 15 neighboring countries, and now the figure has increased to over 62 percent in the first eight months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 19-November 20, 2020), Zadboum said.

"Our goal is to increase the figure to 70 percent by the end of the current year (March 20, 2021)," he said.

Following the government's policies for increasing the country's trade with the neighbors over the past few years, the TPO, as the foreign trade representative of the Industry, Mining, and Trade Ministry, has been trying to send new commercial attachés to target markets every year.

In early December, the Head of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) Gholam-Hossein Shafeie had called on the government to choose the country's commercial attachés from among the private sector representatives.

Gasoline exports stand at \$1.4b in 7 months

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iran exported over \$1.4 billion worth of gasoline in the first seven months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-October 21, 2020).

The country exported nearly \$490 million worth of the mentioned commodity during the previous Iranian calendar year 1398 (ended on March 19, 2020).

The significant increase in the country's gasoline production and exports comes despite the fact that nearly two years ago Iran was an importer of the strategic product, shipping in over 4.5 million liters per day of gasoline.

Iran became a net gasoline exporter in February 2019, after the inauguration of the third phase of the Persian Gulf Star Refinery (PGS) project which added 120,000 barrels to the country's daily gasoline production.

The increase in the exports of the mentioned commodity is a result of the increase in the country's refining capacity and the decline in domestic consumption following the implementation of a rationing program.

Over the past seven years, Iran's refining capacity has increased by about 500,000 barrels per day (bpd), according to the National Iranian Oil Refining and Distribution Company (NIORDC).

The country's refining capacity which stood at 1.8 million bpd in the Iranian calendar year 1392 (ended on March 20, 2014) has currently reached 2.3 million



bpd.

There are currently 10 refineries operating in the country, nine of which are processing crude oil, and one is specially designed for refining gas condensate.

Iran exported over \$1 billion worth of gasoline in the first five months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-August 21, 2020), following a decrease in consumption and increase of production in the country.

Despite the sanctions and the outbreak of the coronavirus, industry data indicate that Iran not only managed to continue exporting some volumes but actually boosted exports almost three-fold in the mentioned period compared to the previous year.

Back in November 2019, the deputy finance and economic affairs minister said the fuel rationing plan would make the country able to export 3.65 billion liters of gasoline every year and earn about 14 trillion rials (about \$3.3 billion) from the exports.

NIDC digs 107 wells in West Karoun oilfields

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — National Iranian Drilling Company (NIDC) has dug and completed digging operation of 107 oil wells in the West Karoun oilfields, Alireza Laiji, the company's deputy managing director, has announced.

Stressing NIDC's major role in the implementation of the key projects, the official said that conducting 137,900 meters of digging operation to dig 70 wells in Azadegan oilfield (one of the five fields of West Karoun) is one of the prominent operations by this company.

West Karoun oilfields, which Iran shares with Iraq at the western part of Iran's southwestern region of Karoun, include five major fields namely North Azadegan, South Azadegan, North Yaran, South Yaran, and Yadavaran.

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

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

The first phase of an oil transmission project which is going to send the oil from West Karoun fields to the country's export terminals was officially launched in



mid-August, 2020.

As reported, the mentioned transmission line in the first phase has the capacity to transfer 460,000 barrels of heavy crude oil as well as 254,000 barrels of light crude on a daily basis.

The transmission route in this project is going to send oil from the West Karoun pumping station to a middle station, which is Omidieh pumping station, and then to the Bahregan and Jask terminals as the final destinations.

The mentioned project includes operations for transferring oil from North Azadegan, South Aza-

degan, Yadavaran, and Darkhovin to West Karoun Pumping station, in addition to transferring North Yaran oil to Jofair exploitation unit and then to the West Karoun station.

With the development of Phase 2 of this project, which is currently underway, the capacity of the mentioned transmission line is going to increase to more than one million barrels per day.

Holding 70 onshore and offshore drilling rigs as well as equipment and facilities for offering integrated technical and engineering services, the National Iranian Drilling Company accounts for a major part of drilling exploration as well as appraisal/development wells in Iran.

As previously announced, the company has dug over 240 oil and gas wells across the country in the past two years.

NIDC has dug and completed the digging operation of 87 oil and gas wells during the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-December 20, 2020), according to the managing director of the company.

Abdollah Mousavi has said that the drilled wells consisted of 22 development wells, one appraisal well, 62 workover wells, and two exploratory wells.

He said currently 17 drilling rigs are being relocated to operational areas. NIDC is conducting digging operations in 10 provinces of the country, the official noted.

General Soleimani: A superhero who stood up to reveal the ugly face of Western interferences

By Sonja van den Ende

On 3 January 2020 General Qassem Soleimani was brutally assassinated, with a specific targeted drone strike, in Bagdad, Iraq, by the United States. This was a terrible barbaric act of war on a great and high standing general, who was the driving force in eliminating the U.S. and Western funded terrorist group ISIS (DAESH).

General Qassem Soleimani was a hero, especially in Syria, where he is always remembered as the hero of Al-Qusayr, a small Christian town 35 kilometers from Homs and 15 kilometers from the Lebanese border, in the Rif Dimashq area. A key town, where the Dutch priest Father Frans van der Lugt established his religious Al-Ard (the earth) center, for disabled and sick people. The Dutch priest was murdered by DAESH terrorists in April 2014 and his grave can be visited in Homs. Al-Qusayr town was strategically important because of the illegal weapons flow from Western countries, transported through Al-Qusayr in Syria. The small town is not far from the Lebanese border. General Soleimani appeared in many places and battles in Syria and was giving his support to Hezbollah and the Syrian Arab Army. He was the strategic master of many battles against DAESH in Syria.

Also, he had a great reputation in Iraq, where ISIS conquered, with help of the U.S. and Western countries, large parts of the country and established a so-called Caliphate. For many Iraqis he was a hero, like in Syria. He managed to unite Kurds and Shia fighters in the battles against ISIS. He is most known (in Iraq) for his leading role in the battle of Jurf al-Sakhar, a strategic town 50 kilometers south of Baghdad. The town of Jurf al-Sakhar is important for Shia pilgrims; it's the main road on their way to the holy town of Karbala. It was conquered by DAESH in 2014 and liberated in October 2014, thanks to the great effort of General Soleimani. According to many fighters, he was always present at the battlefield.



Because General Soleimani was too powerful, strategic mastermind, dangerous to the U.S. and its allies, and revealed the ugly face of Western interference in both Syria and Iraq, he had to be killed according to them.

Afraid of losing control in both Syria and Iraq, the Zionist state of Israel urged on his assassination. The murder was in line of what the Obama Administration had started, the new way of killing by drones. President Obama secretly started his drone assassination program in 2008. A total of 563 strikes were carried out by drones; targets in Pakistan, Somalia and Yemen during Obama's two terms. The Trump Administration continued these unlawful strikes, although not as many strikes as under Obama and eventually from pressure of Israel, who sees Iran as its biggest threat and enemy, he gave orders to kill General Qassem Soleimani.

The U.S. and Israel have a long record of assassinating Iranian scientists and high ranking Iranian officials, in and outside Iran. According to international law it's prohibited to conduct killings, on foreign soil and is seen as an act of war. But it's not only the U.S. and Israel who are guilty, also European countries, who allow U.S. forces in Ramstein Airbase, Germany, to conduct their drone assassinations from there. It has been proven that the United Kingdom

(UK), Germany, the Netherlands and Italy have played a significant role in supporting the U.S. lethal operations, including its drone program.

General Qassem Soleimani is seen as a hero in West Asia, Iran, Pakistan and parts of Afghanistan. He stood up for the suppressed and fought tirelessly against the Western funded ISIS group, or DAESH as Arab people call them. The meaning of DAESH is simple, whatever the West calls them moderate or any name they will give the so-called opposition, for Syrians and Iraqis they are terrorist. General Soleimani helped them to crush DAESH. According to many Syrians and Iraqis, he was fearless, courageous, unselfish, and always present on the battlefield. He was an inspiration for his soldiers, who went for battle and knew their life was in God's (Allah) hand. He was, according to many witnesses, a tolerant, righteous and religious man.

Leave us with the big problem, the Western approach to human rights and terrorism. For many years Western politicians and sponsored human rights groups (mainly by George Soros), are conducting a heavy style propaganda on their own citizens, to condemn Iran, Syria and other countries who don't comply with their Western world view. Fuelled by Israel, who has its own aspirations in the region, a greater

Israel, on the principles of the Yinon plan, a plan published in February 1982. It has played a role in both conflict resolution analysis by scholars who regard it as having influenced the formulation of policies adopted by the American administration under George Bush Jr., who started the "war on terror" in 2001. The claim has been made that Yinon's article was adopted by members of the Institute for Zionist Strategies in the American administration to further American interests in West Asia, as well as achieving the Jewish dream of a state "from the brook of Egypt to the Euphrates". Their dream is to conquer the whole of the region.

The Western countries are dominated by the U.S. and Israeli-Zionist doctrine. Their 'dirty' war in Syria is a good example, resulting from the so-called Islamic Awakening, a plan to colonize West Asia, with as a tool the Western mercenaries, the Muslim Brotherhood, who later got all different names like Al-Qaeda, etc. The funding of ISIS in camp Bucca, Iraq, and the making of Abu-Bakr-al-Baghdadi, some rumors have it he was a Mossad/CIA agent called Shimon Elliot, trained among ex-Iraqi officers in camp Bucca and the source for the radicalization of the ex-officers.

The deceiving role of Western human rights groups like Amnesty which resulted in the inhumane CAESAR-act. Also, Western media role in lying about facts and not telling the truth. But Western media is a tool for politicians and not independent anymore. Western countries are under influence from the Muslim Brotherhood in politics and media, which in the end will be a big disaster for the Western world, as we know it. The politicians are just 'puppet-on-a-string' concerning their foreign policy making; the real power is not in their hands.

Sonja van den Ende is an independent journalist from the Netherlands. Her expertise includes international affairs by special focus on Syria, West Asia and Russia. She is the former international secretary at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA - Vienna).

How should we remember General Soleimani?

➡ It is true that often, one can better assess a person by who their enemies were than by who were their friends. If we apply this maxim to the late General Qassem Soleimani, sadly assassinated by U.S. airstrike in January 2020, we see clearly that his enemies were the United States, Israel and their allies in West Asia – Saudi Arabia and the Arab States.

Why did the U.S. kill Gen. Soleimani? The official reason given by Washington is that he was a terrorist (thus designated by the U.S. in 2005) and a threat to peace and stability in the region. Of course, this is very far from the truth and the real reason is that he was greatly successful in throwing a metaphorical spanner in the works of the schemes of the U.S.-Israel-Saudi 'Axis of Evil'.

In a 2014 article in New Yorker magazine, Soleimani was described by an ex-CIA operative formerly responsible for clandestine operations, as "the single most powerful operative in the Middle East (West Asia) today" and "the principal military strategist and tactician in Iran's effort to deter Western influence."

After the last decade of conflict and regime change, that has seen the destruction of Iraq, Syria and to an extent, Egypt, West Asia today is dominated by two powers – Israel, with its American and Saudi backers and Iran, which is the 'last man standing' in opposition to Israeli domination of the region. It is Iran that has been the power behind the opposition to U.S.-Israeli-Saudi hegemony over West Asia and no man did more to oppose the nefarious agenda of the U.S.-Israel-Saudi axis than Qassem Soleimani and by doing so, he became a man marked for death.

Soleimani was leader of the Quds Force, the primary military arm of Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps. Almost his entire military career was spent battling the various proxy forces of the U.S.-Israel-Saudi axis and in doing so, he enjoyed great success. He began by successfully battling drug traffickers operating along the Afghanistan-Iran border, thus disrupting the highly lucrative heroin smuggling operations that had earned huge profits for the CIA, thus he came 'onto the radar' as a threat to U.S. 'interests' in the region.

The next time Gen. Soleimani came into direct opposition to the nefarious operations of the axis came in 2006 when Israel invaded Lebanon, an invasion that very quickly turned into total failure and became an embarrassing defeat for Israel. It was Gen. Soleimani that masterminded the Lebanese defence as he directed the battle between the Hezbollah forces that defended Lebanon and inflicted a crushing defeat on the Israeli invaders.

One might ask why an Iranian general was commanding

“It was Gen. Soleimani that masterminded the Lebanese defence as he directed the battle between the Hezbollah forces that defended Lebanon and inflicted a crushing defeat on the Israeli invaders (in 2006).”



Ian Greenhalgh is a British political analyst and historian with a particular interest in military history and the real causes of conflicts. His studies in history and background in the media industry have given him a keen insight into the use of mass media as a creator of conflict in the modern world.

Hezbollah forces in Lebanon, the answer requires a little knowledge of the geopolitics of West Asia. While Iran is not an Arab nation, the bond of Islam makes it a natural ally and supporter of nations of Syria & Iraq (the Saddam Hussein years were an aberration, Saddam cared nothing for Islam of any form and was a CIA puppet who attacked Iran on U.S. orders); therefore, it is entirely reasonable for Iran to support and defend its Arab brothers, whether they be in Iraq, Syria or Lebanon. Gen. Soleimani was the man who led Iranian efforts to do so.

With a track record of defeating CIA-backed drug traffickers and humiliating Israel's forces in Lebanon, Soleimani was already perceived by the U.S.-Israel-Saudi axis as a thorn in the side of their plans when they enacted their plot to destroy Syria & Iraq under the guise of Islamic State in 2014. The Iraqi Army largely deserted, turning over its weapons & equipment to the ISIL fighters and simply going home, their pockets lined with U.S.-supplied cash handed out by ISIL. This was the how and why of ISIL's lightning fast conquest of large swathes of northern Iraq. With the Iraqi Army gone, ISIL faced little opposition, just a rag-tag of Kurdish forces and hastily organised local militias, into this vacuum stepped Gen. Soleimani and a small but highly motivated and trained Iranian Revolutionary Guards cadre around which the general was able to organise the local Kurds & Iraqi militias into an effective fighting force that first halted the advance of ISIL, then over many long, hard months of fighting, pushed them back and eventually drove them out of Iraq entirely.

Now he had defeated ISIL in Iraq, Gen. Soleimani really was a marked man, he had seriously derailed the nefarious agenda of the U.S.-Israel-Saudi axis and they wanted his head for doing so. With Iraq now free of ISIS, Gen. Soleimani moved on to Syria where a similar struggle was taking place between the

largely foreign mercenary forces of ISIL and the Syrian armed forces with assistance from Hezbollah. Once again, Soleimani became the lynchpin that held together the alliance against ISIL and masterminded the successfully military campaign that defeated them. During this time, the U.S. and Israel made several attempts to kill the General, airstrikes on positions where the General was thought to be located were a frequent occurrence and several times the U.S. falsely claimed to have killed him. Eventually, thanks to the leadership of Soleimani, ISIL was defeated in Syria and the general had a second great victory against the proxy mercenary forces of the U.S.-Israel-Saudi axis under his belt.

With such a string of victories to his credit, Gen. Soleimani was very much a man marked for death by his enemies. He had driven their proxy armies out of first Iraq and then Syria, he had destroyed their plans to conquer West Asia, no other figure could reasonably be claimed to be a greater threat to their nefarious agenda. Therefore, it was with a crushing inevitability that the General, a man of great integrity, a warrior of great bravery and a unifying and inspiring figure for the entire Arab and wider Islamic world would meet his tragic end at the hands of the US-Israel-Saudi axis when finally, they caught up with him at Baghdad Airport in January 2020, blowing his vehicle convoy to pieces with an airstrike.

The Western world reveres great generals of the past such as Rommel, Patton and Montgomery, in my eyes, Qassem Soleimani deserves to be ranked alongside them as a warrior and man of honour and integrity, a man who fought long and hard against forces that sought to destroy, conquer and enslave on behalf of international criminals. Gen. Soleimani should be remembered as both a great general and a great man, but I fear that will not be the case in the Western world where he has been besmirched as a terrorist and enemy of freedom. I hope that one day, this egregious falsehood is overturned and his rightful position as the man who defeated Islamic State first in Iraq and then in Syria is fully recognised. Soleimani was a humble man, he never courted fame nor public adulation, he simply got on with the task assigned to him and completed that task with great skill and courage.

I shall leave the writing of epitaphs to more poetically minded writers and simply say that Qassem Soleimani was a brave and noble warrior who gave his life in service of his Islamic brothers so that they may live safer, happier lives and for that, he deserves to be remembered with respect and admiration.

“Soleimani was a humble man; he never courted fame nor public adulation; he simply got on with the task assigned to him and completed that task with great skill and courage.”

China warns U.S. not to ‘stir up trouble’ as navy crosses Taiwan Strait

Two Navy ships crossed the Strait of Taiwan on Thursday, prompting China to warn the U.S. not to "stir up trouble" in the contentious region.

The pair of guided missile destroyers, the USS John S. McCain and the USS Curtis Wilbur, "conducted a routine Taiwan Strait transit [on] December 31 in accordance with international law," the U.S. Seventh Fleet said in a statement.

The Navy performed 12 similar missions

this year in the strait — which separates China from the breakaway island republic — though reportedly never before with two ships, NY Post reported.

“The U.S. naval vessels’ provocative actions are sending erroneous signals to the ‘Taiwan independence’ forces, seriously damaging the peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait, and China firmly opposes it,” Chinese Defense Ministry spokesman Senior Colonel Wu Qian said.

Added People's Liberation Army Senior Colonel Zhang Chunhui: “The U.S. sent now and then its warships to sail through the Taiwan Strait and deliberately sensationalized and raised the heat of the Taiwan issue, desiring to stir up trouble in the Taiwan Strait.”

The latest tensions come as President Trump prepares to leave office on Jan. 20.

Trump pursued a long-running trade war with China over the authoritarian na-

tion's economic policies and vowed that if re-elected, he would "de-couple" the U.S. from China economically and punish the country's rulers for allowing the COVID-19 pandemic to emerge by concealing early data on the virus.

Trump in 2016 accepted a congratulatory phone call from Taiwan's president, breaching historical U.S. deference to China, which considers Taiwan a rogue province. President-elect Joe Biden has yet to do so.

Houthi hails ‘balanced deterrence’ against Saudi Arabia, predicts ‘victory’ for Yemen

A member of Yemen's Supreme Political Council says Yemeni armed forces have pulled off a "balanced deterrence campaign" after years of fighting off a Saudi-led aggression.

"The balanced deterrence campaign is a victory pulled off by Yemeni forces in military and security centers. This is what millions of steadfast, honorable and devoted Yemenis should be proud of," Mohammed Ali al-Houthi tweeted on Thursday night.

"The world should know that, God willing, the fruits of patience will be the victory of truth and the cost of arrogance will be defeat."

His remarks came amid reports that Israel sought to intervene in the years-long war on Yemen which, in many analysts' terms, has turned to a quagmire for Saudi Arabia.

On Monday, Yemen's official Saba news agency quoted an unnamed official at the Yemeni Foreign Ministry as saying that "in case the Zionist regime commits a great folly against Yemen, all its interests as well as those of its allies in the Red Sea region will become a legitimate target within the framework of the right of self-defense guaranteed by all international conventions and agreements."

Al-Houthi said the status quo in Yemen has nothing to do with the Tel Aviv regime, urging Israeli authorities to focus on the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories and stop threatening regional states.

ACCORDING TO Press TV, Israel and Persian Gulf Arab states have used alleged Iranian threats as a pretext to justify their normalization of ties.

Spokesman for the Israeli military brigadier general Hidai Zilberman told Saudi news website Elaph Monday that Tel Aviv expected an Iranian attack could come from Iraq and Yemen.

In the past, Ansarullah has strongly warned to Israel against committing any "foolish act" against Yemen.

"Should Israel perpetrate any foolish act against our nation...our nation would not hesitate to announce a struggle down the divine path against this enemy (Israel)," Ansarullah leader Abdul-Malik al-Houthi said in November 2019.

"Nor would we hesitate to deliver deadly blows to [Israel] and attack the extremely sensitive targets belonging to the usurping regime of Israel."

France mobilizes 100,000 police to stop New Year's Eve gatherings

➡ Officers will be instructed to break up underground parties as soon as they are reported, fine participants and identify the organizers.

Patrols meanwhile are to carry out "appropriate identity checks" and search vehicles.

Darmanin also urged shops to limit or stop the sale of flammable liquids in portable containers and takeaway alcoholic drinks. He has also suggested that local authorities do not publicize incidents of cars set alight, to "avoid any incidence of 'competition'" between different areas.

Car burning has effectively become an annual event in French suburbs since riots in 2005 in Paris and elsewhere.

Last year a record 1,457 cars were torched across France on New Year's Eve, according to media reports. The previous year's figure was 1,290.

In the UK, a further 20 million people in England were placed into the toughest tier of restrictions from Thursday.

"I must ask you to follow the rules where you live tomorrow night and see in the new year safely at home," Prime Minister Boris Johnson said during a press conference.

ISIL claims deadly Chechnya knife attack

ISIL (Daesh) terrorist group has claimed responsibility for a knife attack on police, in which one officer died, in the capital of Russia's southern Chechnya region.

The group's claim, reported in the al-Naba newspaper on Friday, was made without providing any evidence. The al-Naba newspaper is affiliated with ISIL, al Jazeera reported.

The attack, which took place on Monday, saw two assailants kill one policeman and injure another in Grozny, according to Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov.

Kadyrov said the attackers were brothers from the neighboring region of Ingushetia who worked at a bakery in Chechnya. They were shot dead while trying to seize weapons, he said.

Resistance News

Israeli regime's attempts to Judaize occupied Jerusalem al-Quds will fail: Hamas

INTERNATIONAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — The Palestinian Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas, has censured the Israeli regime over attempts to change the geographic and demographic character of occupied Jerusalem al-Quds, saying such bids are doomed to failure.

Hamas made the remarks in a statement on the new railway project that Israel has started to connect its illegal settlements in Jerusalem al-Quds with Tel Aviv and other Israeli areas.

In its statement, Hamas has condemned the Jerusalem al-Quds rail project as "a new colonial project that is part of the settler Judaization projects."

The Jerusalem al-Quds light rail project aims to connect the western sector of the holy city with settlements located on occupied Palestinian territory in the eastern part and to favor their illegal development in violation of international law.

Israel's settlement approvals in 2020 highest on record: Palestinian NGO

INTERNATIONAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — A Palestinian non-governmental organization says Israel has pressed forward with plans for the construction of thousands more settler units in the occupied West Bank, making 2020 a record year for illegal settlement building activities.

The director of the Applied Research Institute - Jerusalem (ARIJ), Jad Isaac, told the Voice of Palestine radio station that Israeli authorities endorsed plans for 10,000 more units in various parts of the West Bank this year, in addition to the legalization of dozens of settlement outposts.

Isaac added that these approvals make 2020 the highest year on record in terms of units in settlement plans.

Tehran sports complex, cathedral named national heritage

➔1 The church has a gallery for the choir from which hymns are performed. The church has two belfries with domes on top, one on each side of the entrance hall on the western side. The bells are pulled by electric power. The belfry domes as well as the main dome are decorated with octagonal rods.



A view of Saint Sarkis Cathedral in downtown Tehran.

Most Iranian Christians are of Armenian descent, but there's also a sprinkling of Protestants, Assyrians, Catholics, and Orthodox Christians, all of whom have churches in Tehran, most behind large walls in the same district as Sarkis Cathedral.

Some \$15.5m paid to support tourism in Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari province

TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** – The Iranian government has paid more than 649 billion rials (about \$15.5 million at the official rate of 42,000 rials) to support tourism businesses in southwestern Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari province during the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-December 20, 2020).

This amount of money has been paid to be invested in tourism-related projects such as hotels, tourist complexes, eco-lodge units, and traditional restaurants, CHTN quoted provincial tourism chief Mehrdad Javadi as saying on Thursday.



Implementation of such projects has generated over 300 job opportunities in the tourism sector across the province, the official added.

Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari has various unique traditions and rituals relative to the 'tribal' lifestyles. Special forms of music, dance, and clothing are noteworthy. It has considerable potential to become a vibrant tourist attraction because of its changing natural landscape.

The province is also a hub for making wool felt products, majorly of which exported abroad. It is home to some 500 crafters, in over 250 workshops, making handmade felt products.

Iran's Kalateh Khij seeks sisterhood agreement with Netherlands' Leiden

TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** — The Iranian city of Kalateh Khij, which is a ancient hub of traditional textiles, seeks to reach a sisterhood agreement with Leiden in the Netherlands.

"Kalateh Khij, which is famed as a city of handmade textiles seeks to sign a sisterhood agreement with the historical and cultural city of Leiden in the Netherlands," "Kalateh Khij's mayor said on Thursday.

"Given that the two cities have significant similarities in terms of culture, tourism and handicrafts, the proposal concerning the sisterhood agreement between the two cities has been submitted to the Interior Ministry," CHTN quoted Hassan Ahmadi as saying on Friday.

Over 900 weavers are active in Kalateh Khij, which is also a nominee for being registered on the national list of [intangible] cultural Heritage, the official added.



Kalateh Khij, also known as Kalateh Khonj, is a city in Bastam district, Shahrud county of Semnan province, Iran. At the 2006 census, its population was 5,335, in 1,447 families.

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 ornamentations with precious and semi-precious gemstones are traditionally exported to Iraq, Afghanistan, Germany, the U.S., the UK, and other countries.

Replicas of Easter Island's moais on show in Iran

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** – A total of ten replicas of Easter Island's moai statues have been constructed and installed in a theme park in Malayer, western Iran.

These statues with an average height of three meters were built using metal frames covered by concrete slabs that have been painted in terms of showing the texture and colors of the gray and black of the sculptures, Malayer Mayor Hossein Babaei said on Wednesday, IRNA reported.

The Eiffel Tower, Si-o-Se Pol (Bridge of Thirty-Three Arches), the Hafez mausoleum, the Leaning Tower of Pisa, and some Achaemenian-era sites are amongst tens of monuments one can see within the theme park in western Iran. As a window to the world, the theme park is estimated to lure more travelers to Malayer, which has earned a national reputation for its rugs and popular parks.

Easter Island, the most remote inhabited island on the planet, is 3,700 kilometers from the coast of continental Chile and has an area of 16,628 hectares while the World Heritage property occupies an area of approximately seven thousand hectares, including four nearby islets.

Rapa Nui National Park is a protect-



ed Chilean wildlife area located in Easter Island, which concentrates on the legacy of the Rapa Nui culture. This culture displayed extraordinary characteristics that are expressed in singular architecture and sculpture within the Polynesian context.

From the 10th to the 16th century this society built shrines and erected enormous stone figures known as moai, which created an unrivaled cultural landscape that continues to fascinate people throughout

the world.

A hub of woodcarving

Malayer may be top on the list for those who are interested to visit a woodcarving hub. The west-central Iranian town is named a global hub for woodcarving and carved-wood furniture by the World Crafts Council - Asia Pacific Region (WCC-APR).

Located in Hamedan province, the ancient city is home to over 4,000 furniture workshops in which more than 8,000

wood masters and some 25,000 crafters are engaged.

Although the art had been practiced in Malayer for a long time ago, it is about a half-century that it has gained prosperity in the region. In some cases, the whole family is occupied with traditional furniture making and although they didn't make much money this way, their love for handicrafts and the increasing perseverance of woodcarving artists of Malayer shows today a new face of this art-craft to the world.

Artists and crafter of this region use the wood of beech, walnut, and plane trees to make different products such as traditional, classic, steel, and sofa furniture. Their other products are dining table, desk, all kinds of chair, bed and decorative pieces.

Currently, some 60 percent of the furniture and woodcarving products in Iran are reportedly produced in Malayer and they are sent to various Iranian cities or being exported to Central Asian countries, Persian Gulf littoral states, Turkey, and Iraq amongst some others. Known in classical times as Ecbatana, Hamedan was one of the ancient world's greatest cities. Pitifully little remains from antiquity, but significant parts of the city center are given over to excavations, and there's a scattering of historical curiosities.

Quran manuscript inscribed on corn husk unveiled in southwestern Iran

TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** – A manuscript of the Holy Quran, which is inscribed on a corn husk, has been unveiled in Dismok, southwestern Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad province.

Made by female crafters, the manuscript is written by ink extracted from walnut hull, provincial tourism chief Majid Safai said on Wednesday.

The project is sponsored by the province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Department in collaboration with the Alavi Foundation.

Located 180 kilometers to the provincial capital of Yasuj, Dismok is known for its Kilim-Mashteh (a kind of hand-w-

oven kilim), which was awarded with the National Seal of Excellence in 2013.

Dismok historical fortress is also a destination for domestic and foreign travelers. The basement and parts of the fortress dates back to the Sassanid era (224–651), while the main building belongs to the Qajar period (1789–1925).

Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad province is known for its nomads and nomadic life. Sightseers may live with a nomadic or rural family for a while or enjoy an independent stay and assist them with day-to-day life. It also opens up an opportunity to feel rustic routines, their agriculture, traditions, arts, and culture.



Historical manuscripts restored in Semnan

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** — Over 20 historical manuscripts including paper contracts, miniature-ornamented folios, and Islamic marriage contracts have recently been rehabilitated in laboratories across the central province of Semnan.

The restoration projects aimed at shedding light on some of the hidden angles of the antiquity, politics, culture, and arts of the different historical eras of Semnan, provincial tourism chief Hamidreza Doust-mohammadi said on Thursday.



The mentioned manuscripts are remarkable in terms of the types of hand-

writing, signatures, seals, and decorative features, the official added.

The project involved documenting, identifying all physical harms, cleansing, strengthening, and repairing the dressing of the manuscripts, he explained.

He also noted that as the paper is easily destroyed by physical, chemical, and environmental factors, these documents are being kept in a "suitable" environment.

The main population centers of Semnan province lie along the ancient Silk Road (and modern-day Imam Reza Ex-

pressway), linking Rey (Tehran) with Khorasan (Mashhad). While few visitors spend much time in the area, driving through you can easily seek out several well-preserved caravanserais (notably Dehnamak and Ahowan), cisterns (the Cafe Abenbar in Garmsar is a special treat) and ruined mud citadels (Padeh is lumpy but fascinating). The large, bustling cities of Semnan, Damghan, and Shahrud (Bastam) all have a small selection of historic buildings and Semnan has a fine old covered bazaar.

New excavation to probe 7,000-year-old hill near Tehran

TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** – An archaeological project is scheduled to be commenced on the 7,000-year-old Qoli Darvish Hill, which is situated in Qom province, southern Tehran, provincial tourism chief has said.

A budget of one billion rials (about \$24,000 at the official rate of 42,000 rials) has been allocated to the project, which is one of the top priorities of the province's cultural heritage department, Hamid Yazdani said on Thursday.

Dating back to the Iron Age, the hill is located southwest of the city Qom. Archeological excavations, which began in 2002 showed that Qoli Darvish dates back to six to seven thousand years ago.

The hill covers land as big as 50 hectares. The discov-



ery of historical elements of an ancient temple from the Bronze Age to the end of the Iron Age led to conclusions about the social classes and further anthropological researches about those periods of history.

In recent years, domestic and foreign tourists can visit the ancient hill, which was inscribed on the National Heritage list in 2003.

The country's second-holiest city after Mashhad, Qom is home to both the magnificent shrine of Hazrat-e Masumeh (SA) and the major religious madrasas (schools).

Apart from sightseers and pilgrims who visit Qom to pay homage at the holy shrine, the city is also a top destination for Shiite scholars and students who come from across the world to learn Islamic studies at its madrasas and browse through eminent religious bookshops.

Splendid museums in country of culture and history

(Part 3/3)
TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** – Now the National Museum of Iran has 13 different sections, including sections of prehistoric, historic, Islamic, stamps and coins, restoration, epigraph and scrolls, library and documentation center, research the history of Iranian art, research of Nations' history and civilization, photography, public relations and International relations, information center and physical protection systems, all of which have been set up during years.

Yazd Water Museum

Yazd is a dry city which is located in the desert, and one of the major issues was getting water, so much so that it has a museum dedicated to explaining how it was obtained. This museum will explain all about qanat, an elaborate tunnel system used to extract groundwater. The tunnels were hand-hug and just big enough to fit one person.

Water from the qanat is stored in "Ab Anbar", water reservoirs, which were usually adorned with badgir, windcatchers, to keep the water near ice-cold temperature. The actual museum is in the basement. This museum displays the tool, techniques used for the past 4000

years in Iran in creating underground waterways (called qanats) and connecting them to the city and field locations for agricultural and other uses. Before the Romans built their aqueducts, Iranians had built an extensive system of underground qanats (aqueduct).

The Museum building has once been a merchant's house built in 1929. Two qanats are running beneath the museum at different levels, which are reachable through a special stairway called "Pay-ab". This museum has put on display a variety of water objects from qanat to water ownership documents. Some parts of the house structure represent some part of water history in the region. For example, the stairway to qanat or a reservoir on the roof can show how water technologies and everyday life have been interwoven in the past.

Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art (TMOCA)

The largest art museums in Tehran lies among a lush park called Laleh Park. It contains more than 3,000 priceless items of European and American paintings from the 19th and 20th centuries. An eye-opening collection of Iranian modern and contemporary art also exists,

which conclude sculptures too.

The museum was established by Farah Pahlavi. The idea arose when she was talking to an artist. Then she started to meet many Iranian and international artists to complete the collection.

TMOCA has the most priceless works of great western artists such as Picasso, Pollack, Matisse, Kandinsky, Warhol, Rothko, Van Gogh, Bacon, Miró, and Munch. Consequently, it's one of the most significant collections outside Europe and the U.S. It's estimated that the museum's value is approximately £2.5 billion.

The works of Iranian artists such as Sohrab Sepehri, Farideh Lashai, and Parviz Tanavoli exist in the museum as well.

Moghadam Museum

This museum is in a house with traditional architecture in the center of Tehran. It's among a small garden with multiple turquoise ponds and many trees in the yard.

They built this house about 200 years ago. It belonged to Ehtesab al-Molk, a high-ranking official, in the Qajar dynasty in the 19th century. One of Ehtesab's sons, Mohsen Moghadam, studied



A view of Moghadam Museum in Tehran

Archaeology in Europe, then he came back to Iran with his French wife. The couple started to collect precious items like gems, fabrics, paintings, and prehistoric objects and arranged them in his father's house.

Mohsen is the first Iranian who got the Legion of Honor from the French President because of his previous activities. After the couple passed away, Tehran University has been managing the museum until now.

By walking through this amazing garden, you find out more about Persian architecture and refresh your mind, as well as getting historical information.

School building budget rises by three folds

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — Some 4.5 percent of the national development budget proposed in the bill for the next [Iranian calendar] year (starting on March 21) has been earmarked for building schools, a three-fold rise compared to the current year's figure.

The next year's proposed development budget is about 1,040 billion rials (some \$25 billion at the official rate of 42,000 rials).

Mehrollah Rakhshanimehr, director of the Organization for Development, Renovation, and Equipping Schools, said that 37 billion rials (around \$880 million) has been spent in the current year on building schools, adding the figure will rise to 51 billion rials in the next year, IRNA reported



on Thursday.

He noted that 20 percent of schools nationwide are in need of being reconstructed or retrofitted.

Last year, Rakhshanimehr said that some 30 percent of the country's schools have been constructed by benefactors, adding there are 450 school-building charities in the country.

There are some 107,000 schools nationwide with 530,000 classes, 160,000 of which are dilapidated, not meeting safety standards.

Some 85 billion rials (nearly \$2 million) has been spent on average per day for renovating schools nationwide over the past three years, Education Minister Mohsen Haji Mirzaei has said.

Iran, Cuba coproducing COVID-19 vaccine

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — The Pasteur Institute of Iran in collaboration with a Cuban company is working on producing a potential vaccine for COVID-19.

The first batch of coronavirus vaccine which will reach Iran will be probably purchased directly from a foreign country, Health Ministry spokesman Kianoush Jahanpour said on Friday.

"Following that, Iran will receive its share of the COVAX vaccines and then the Pasteur Institute of Iran will co-produce a vaccine with a Cuban company, and finally, the domestically-made vaccine will be produced," he explained, IRNA reported.

He went on to say that the human trial phase of the vaccine has been carried out successfully in Cuba. "The second phase of the human trial is being conducted under the supervision of the Pasteur Institute of Iran in Cuba. Provide that the second phase is successful, the third phase will be implemented in Iran."

On December 29, 2020, the first coronavirus vaccine

made by Iranian researchers, was unveiled and injected into three volunteers.

The production line of the Iranian coronavirus vaccine with a capacity of 1.5 million doses per month will be launched within the next 40 days. By the next six months, vaccine production will reach up to 12 million doses per month.

Hossein Vatanpour, an official with the Ministry of Health, has said 16 Iranian knowledge-based companies are working on all types of vaccine platforms. One company is active in producing DNA-based vaccines, and about three others are working to make mRNA-based vaccines, he added.

Christoph Hamelmann, WHO Representative in Iran, said on December 28, 2020, that sanctions imposed by the United States will have no effect on importing coronavirus vaccines by Iran from the COVAX, a global initiative to ensure rapid and equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines.

"We support and assist Iran in obtaining essential items from the global market, and we did so since the beginning



of the pandemic, as we anticipated the provision of medicine to be affected by sanctions," he added, ILNA reported.

COVAX member states, including Iran, will jointly decide on which brand of vaccine each country to purchase, and the final decision will be announced by the officials, he noted.

Modern forestry in Iran: history and development

PART 1/3

Forestry dates back to antiquity in Iran. In 1823, the Ministry of Public Benefits was established, which marks the government's initial attention to natural resources management in Iran in early modern times, according to the website of Forests, Range, and Watershed Management Organization.

The ministry, in 1905, set up a bureau with the title of "Roads, Railways and Forests Bureau" mandated to manage forests and conserve natural resources throughout the country. The bureau evolved constantly in many ways since then.

In 1972, the Forests and Range Organization (FRO) was established by the Parliament under the Ministry of Agriculture aimed at protection, conservation, reclamation, development, and utilization of forests, rangelands, forested lands, natural woods,



and coastal areas.

In 2002, Forest, Range and Watershed Management Organization (FRWO) was officially formed upon the transfer of the watershed management department from Ministry of Agriculture to Forest and Range Organization (FRO), pursuant to the Merger Act, mandated to manage all public lands

covered by the Forest and Rangeland Nationalization Law.

FRWO is the governmental agency under the Ministry of Agriculture- Jihad, responsible for setting guidelines, planning and enforcing policies, legislation, and regulations pertaining to land use, forestry, range management, desertification control, and watershed management.

The first modern forest management plan was formulated and implemented in the Caspian area in 1959. Forestry plans covered only limited areas until 1963 when the nationalization of forests led to the preparation of forestry plans for wood production on a large scale.

The dominant silvicultural method used at that time in forest management plans was the Shelter Belt system coupled with clear-cutting aimed at producing even-aged and pure stands to meet the industrial

needs for wood. In the next six decades afterward, considerable progress was made in silvicultural methods especially with the introduction of "Close-to-Nature Forest Management" and "Multi-Purpose Forestry" about two decades ago that emphasizes single-tree selection, reduction of wood harvest, biodiversity conservation, and ecosystem services.

However, despite all new silvicultural methods introduced by FRWO to control the heavy burden of exploitation in harmony with natural capacity in terms of regeneration and ecosystem services of the Caspian forests, the trend of deforestation continued unabatedly. This prompted the Government to introduce a temporary ban on forest harvesting operations in the Caspian forests aimed at reversing the degradation trend through conservation, restoration reforestation, and plantation measures.

2020: A year of raging wildfires, floods and scorching temperatures

From storms in the Atlantic, wildfires in California, killer floods in Asia and Africa, melting of the Arctic and bushfires in Australia, 2020 was more than a disastrous year with the pandemic.

If it were not for the global coronavirus pandemic that infected or killed millions and ruined economies, perhaps the climate crisis would have bagged the most headlines in 2020.

This year, nature struck relentlessly with record-breaking and deadly weather and climate-related disasters, TRT World reported.

With the most named storms in the Atlantic, the largest-ever area of California burned by wildfires, Australian wildfires generating a persistent smoke-charged vortex

rising up to 35 km altitude, killer floods in Asia and Africa, and a hot, melting Arctic, 2020 was more than a disastrous year even without the pandemic.

It was a year of disasters and climate change from the burning of coal, oil, and natural gas was a big factor, scientists said, despite a dip in emissions thanks to the pandemic slowdown.

U.S. obliterated the record

The United States didn't just set a record for the most disasters costing at least \$1 billion (adjusted for inflation), the nation obliterated the record, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

By September, the year 2020 had tied the old record of 16 billion-dollar disasters and when the count is completed in early January, officials figure it will be 20, likely more.

Only three states weren't part of a billion-dollar weather disaster (Alaska, Hawaii, and North Dakota), and all the coastline, from Texas to Maine, except for a tiny part of Florida, was under a watch or warning for a hurricane, tropical storm or storm surge from those systems in 2020, according to US weather officials.

With 30 named storms, the Atlantic hurricane season surpassed the mark set in 2005, ran out of storm names, and went deep into the Greek alphabet, making meteorologists reconsider how they name future storms, officials said.

Ten of those storms rapidly intensified, making them more dangerous. A dozen made landfall in the US, easily smashing the old record of nine. And Louisiana got hit five times. At one point, the American Red Cross had 60 New Orleans hotels filled with refugees.

ENGLISH IN USE

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A ◀ ▶ ☰

Clean air bill projected to create 10,000 green jobs

The clean air bill, proposed by the Department of Environment to curb air pollution, is projected to generate some 10,000 green jobs over the course of the sixth five-year national development plan (2016-2021), an environmental official said.

In line with the one of the articles of clean air bill units of Health, Safety, and the Environment (HSE), with regard to health and safety of the employees, customers, and contractors as well as the protection of the environment are bound to be established in all industrial and manufacturing enterprises, Shina Ansari told ISNA news agency.

"Accordingly, those graduates in the field of environment can apply for job opportunities in HSE units," Ansari added.

ایجاد ۱۰ هزار فرصت شغلی نتیجه اجرای لایحه هوای پاک

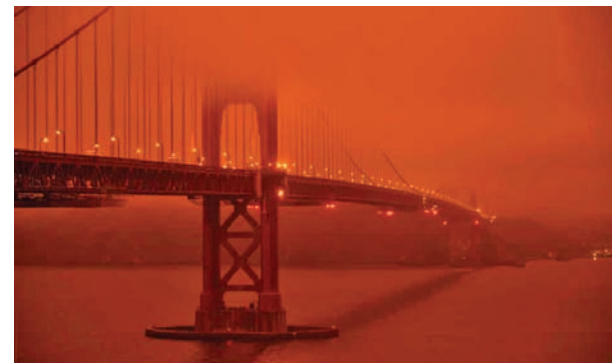
مدیرکل دفتر پایش فراگیر سازمان حفاظت محیط زیست ضمن اشاره به مواد قانون هوای پاک - که به پیشنهاد سازمان حفاظت محیط زیست اخیرا به تصویب مجلس شورای اسلامی رسید- از ایجاد ۱۰هزار فرصت شغلی طی برنامه ششم توسعه از طریق اجرای مواد این قانون خبر داد.

شینا انصاری در گفتگو با ایسنا افزود: در ماده ۱۶ لایحه هوای پاک، کلیه مراکز و واحدهای صنعتی و تولیدی، برای انجام امور مربوط به سلامت و ایمنی مشتریان و کارمندان و کارفرمایان مکلف به ایجاد واحدهای سلامت، بهداشت و محیط زیست (HSE) و به کارگیری نیروهای متخصص این حوزه هستند بنابراین تعداد زیادی از فارغ التحصیلان محیط زیست می‌توانند جذب هسته‌ها و بخش‌های زیست محیطی صنایع متوسط و بزرگ کشور به منظور پایش صنایع شوند.

Amid 2020's gloom, there are reasons to be hopeful about the climate in 2021

In a world rife with disputes and divisions, there will be one emotion likely to unite most people at the stroke of midnight on 31 December: sheer relief that 2020 is finally over.

There's no risk of overstating it: this past year has pushed our world right to the edge. A single virus leaping from animals to humans was enough to kill 1.6 million people, bring major economies to their knees, and cause untold anguish and suffering all over the world.



And while the pandemic was raging, so was the climate emergency, like two horror films overlapping. We saw record-breaking wildfires engulf the west coast of the US, a record number of powerful Atlantic storms, the Arctic ice failing to freeze in late October and deadly floods hitting countries from Italy to Indonesia. We got a glimpse of a chaotic world battered by multiple crises, each making the other worse, and it was terrifying, the Guardian reported.

Exceptional as the calamities of 2020 may seem, they could be just a taste of what's to come unless we change direction. Neither the pandemic nor extreme weather are random events. Disease outbreaks are on the rise and about 70% are the result of viruses crossing the barrier from animals to humans.

From rampant deforestation in the Amazon to Covid-infected mink farms in Denmark, industrial farming is opening up a viral Pandora's box that could unleash pandemics even worse than the present one. While scientists were busy developing a vaccine, destructive industries were even busier clearing forests and displacing wildlife, increasing the risk of awakening the next deadly virus. We're mopping up the floor while making the leak worse.

When it comes to the climate, there's no vaccine, no single fix for it. Technology can help, but the real breakthrough can only come from a radical change in political and corporate will. Despite the economic slowdown caused by the pandemic, levels of planet-heating gases in the atmosphere have hit a new record high this year. It's clear that nothing short of a complete transformation of our economy and society can save us from climate breakdown.

This is why sliding back to the old normal is not an option. Unless we stop oil firms drilling for more oil, food giants destroying rainforests, and destructive fishing depleting our seas, the worst isn't over - it's just begun. Ending the pandemic is only half the job - we must also start something new and better. We must create new green jobs, invest in communities and tackle the hardship faced by many at the same time. And 2021 is the year to do it.

For all the devastation it has caused, the pandemic has taught us some important lessons. It's forced us to slow down and re-think what really matters in life, what the important jobs are, the value of family, friends and access to nature. And the most basic lesson of all: if we get complacent about the threats we face, there's hell to pay.

There are reasons to be hopeful. In this past year, what previously would have been considered impossible turned out to be possible. The chancellor, Rishi Sunak, found the money to increase protection for people's jobs and health. Ministers prioritised working together to tackle the virus, and world leaders have collaborated to develop vaccines. If our politicians can do all that to respond to a health crisis, why not do it to tackle the climate crisis, too?

LET'S LEARN PERSIAN

(Part 97)

(Source: saadifoundation.ir)

height	ارتفاع	
	آکنون رسمی: حالا	
highway	بُزرگراه	/h/
many; much	بسیار (ی)	
more	بیش	بُرج
interesting	جالب	
population	جَمَعِیت (جمع: جَمَعِیت‌ها)	
	چَه کَسی (جمع: چَه کَسانی): کی	
way	راه	/h/
	بُزرگراه	/h/
	زیبا: قشنگ	
to count	شُمردَن - شُمار	
to understand	فَهمِیدَن - فَهم	
different	مُختَلِف	ساختمان
comparison	مُقایِسه	
to compare	مُقایِسه کَرَدَن	
	مُهاجَرَتِ اِسم: برای زندگی به جای دوری رفتن	
important	مُهم	کوه
	میلیون: هزار هزار	
point; place	نُقْطَه (جمع: نُقْطَه‌ها، نُقاط)	
existence	وُجود	
to exist	وُجود داشْتَن	مُتِل

2nd Divine Commander Theater Festival kicks off in Kerman

A R T TEHRAN — The 2nd Divine Commander Theater Festival was inaugurated on Wednesday in the southern Iranian city of Kerman, Commander Qassem Soleimani's hometown.

The festival was established after the assassination of Commander Soleimani to commemorate the IRGC Quds Force chief.

A number of officials including Kerman Governor-General Ali Zeinivand and Kerman Department of Culture and Islamic Guidance director Mohamadrez Alizadeh attended the opening ceremony organized at the Kerman martyrs' cemetery.

Speaking at the ceremony, Zeinivand said, "Art is the most powerful and most accessible language in transferring the pure concepts of the culture of self-sacrifice and martyrdom, especially the thoughts of the Commander who has turned into the symbol of resistance."

"Dramatic arts can play major roles in carrying the message of the school of Martyr Soleimani in the national and international arenas. One of the best ways in promoting the school of Martyr Soleimani is to narrate the concepts of the school through the language of art," he said.

During the festival, troupes will travel to the villages nearby to give performances.



A theater troupe gives a performance at the 2nd Divine Commander Theater Festival in the southern Iranian city of Kerman on December 30, 2020. (Mehr/Mehdi Karbakhsh Ravari)

"Soldier" by Pejman Shahverdi, "All My Boys" by Alimohammad Raadmanesh, "General Khorshid" by Saeid Kheirollahi and "General" by Saeid Badini are among the plays to be performed during the festival.

Ten plays will be performed in the official competition section of the festival. A highlight of the lineup is "Carnelian", which is on the

life of the Commander, and co-directed by Shahram and Shaahin Soltani.

"1:20 am" by Pejman Shahverdi will also go on stage at the festival.

The play depicts Commander Soleimani on one of his visits to a family of one of his soldiers who was martyred in an operation. He asks the family for a photo depicting some

people, all of whom have been martyred in the war. The family fails to find a photo, but the commander continues his search.

"Wave" by Sajjad Mansuri has also been selected to be performed at the festival.

The story of the play is about Gholam, a man who begins searching for a photo that he had taken earlier with an IRGC commander to use in his election campaign for the city council.

Director Morteza Asadimaram will stage "Standing like a Cypress to Watch the Sun" written by Hashem Purnomhamadi.

"When the Muscles Turn to Stone" by writer and director Kianush Ahmadi, "Soldier" by Mohammad-Hossein Nazari, "Cold Breathe" by Mohammad Qasemi and "January 3" have also been selected.

The lineup also includes "Quarrel" by Mohammad Davarpanah, "The Sociology of Death" by Asghar Garusi, "Wave" by Sajjad Mansuri, "An Appointment in Damascus" by Nasser Hajibaqeri, "Dragunov" by Doosti Irani and "Tiny Little Birds" by Mohammad-Hamed Esmailpur.

The festival will be running until January 4, 2021.

The Association of the Revolution and Sacred Defense Theater and the Revayat Foundation are the main organizers of the event.

Nine new books on Commander Qassem Soleimani released



A poster for Iranian publishers' latest offerings about Commander Qassem Soleimani.

→1 "No End to This Man" is another of the collection written by Seyyed Ali Bani-Lohi, who recounts Soleimani's memories of the war against the ISIS terrorists, which reflect topics about his outlook on life and war. Rahe Behesht is the publisher of the book, which also carries a collection of rarely-seen photos of the commander.

"Dear Soleimani" recounting Soleimani's memories from his life in his hometown of Kerman to his visit to the Kremlin, from a battle he fought against the U.S. forces in Najaf to his endeavor to break the ISIS siege of Amerli in Iraq.

Hemaseye Yaran is the publisher of the book authored by a group of writers.

Astan Qods Razavi's Institute for Youth has released "A Love Story", in which writer Mohammad-Ali Tavallai authors a description of Soleimani's last will and testament.

"Malik of the Time" published by the Ebrahim Hadi publishing house contains 50 stories making comparisons of Commander Soleimani and Malik al-Ashtar, a loyal

companion of Imam Ali (AS), who commanded the Imam's army in several wars. The book has been authored by a group of writers, including Ebrahim Hadi.

"Born in March" carries interviews with Commander Soleimani's comrades and close friends conducted with Ali-Akbar Mozdabadi. In this book published by Ya Zahra, the interviewees recount their memories of the battles they fought along with Commander Soleimani against the ISIS terrorists in Iraq and Syria.

"Avertin" written by Behzad Daneshgar gives an account of a massive operation conducted by the Quds Force under Soleimani in the early 2000s to purge rebels and major drug smugglers from Avertin, a village in Kerman Province and nearby areas. Setaregane Derakhshan is the publisher of the book.

Written by Hojjatolesalm Ali Shirazi, "Characteristics of the School of Martyr Soleimani" gives a brief analysis of the personal characteristics of Commander Soleimani through his discourses and memories. The book was published by Khate Moqaddam Publications.

Asian Movie Pulse picks "Asho", "Khatemeh"

A R T TEHRAN — The Asian Movie Pulse website has announced the 15 Best Asian Documentaries of 2020 with two Iranian movies "Asho" and "Khatemeh" among them.

"Asho" by Jafar Najafi is about a little shepherd interested in cinema. The routine with his herd is challenging, but passion for Hollywood and acting allows his dreams to mix in with real life. Asho and a girl, who were promised for each other in marriage since they were small as dictated by tradition in his village, try to ignore love with their childish tenacity.

"Asho" was selected as the best children's documentary at the International



"Asho" by Iranian filmmaker Jafar Najafi.

Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam (IDFA) in November.

It also won the award for best short

and medium-length documentary at the 23rd Olympia International Film Festival for Children and Young People in early December.

Directed by brothers Hadi and Mehdi Zarei, "Khatemeh" is about a 14-year-old Afghan girl named Khatemeh living in Iran with her family.

She is forced to marry the husband of her late sister who died by suicide, but after a while, she escapes from home to save her life from her husband and her brother's torture and takes refuge in the Welfare Organization of Shiraz.

2020 has been a particularly good year for documentaries all over the world, as

the international political situation along with the pandemic have presented much material for some films. Furthermore, the pandemic essentially prevented the shooting and circulation of feature movies to a large degree, giving much more space than usual for documentaries to shine. Asian cinema responded to the challenge through a number of excellent productions, 15 of which have been introduced as the best.

Other top selected documentaries include "Hong Kong Moments" by Zhou Bing from Hong Kong, "Midnight Traveler" by Hassan Fazili from Afghanistan and "A Thousand Cuts" by Ramona S. Diaz from the Philippines.

"Driving Lessons" named best short fiction at Karama Yemen Human Rights Film Festival

A R T TEHRAN — Iranian director Marzieh Riahi's "Driving Lessons" won the Barran Award for best fiction film at the Karama Yemen Human Rights Film Festival, the organizers announced on Thursday.

The film tells the story of Bahareh, a young woman who, according to Iranian law, must have a man from among her relatives accompany her on driving lessons so she and her male instructor won't be alone.

"Driving Lessons" has been screened in dozens of international festivals across the world. It was named best short narrative at the 21st Through Women's Eyes International Film Festival (TWE) in Sarasota, Florida, the U.S. in March.

Nearly 30 films from around the world were screened during the Karama Yemen Human Rights Film Festival, which went online from December 18 until December 31.

"The Box" by Dusan Kastelic from Slovenia won the Barran Award for best animation. The film is about a box,



Karama Yemen Human Rights Film Festival's official announcement for the win of Marzieh Riahi's short film "Driving Lessons".

which is full of miserable creatures. One of them doesn't belong there.

The Barran Award for best documentary went to "Ozaizah" by Alaa Hafed from Yemen. The film is about "Aziza" or "Ozazah", a woman who lives on Sabr Mountain, which is considered one of the most famous landmarks in Taiz City. Ozazah who represents the Sabri woman that contributes greatly to social life talks about Sabr Mountain and her life there.

"When You Grow Up" by Dutch filmmaker received a jury special mention. The documentary takes a look at people during a workday and makes you reflect on the meaning of labor.

A jury special mention was also awarded to "Beit Byoot", a co-Production between Qatar and Palestine by Mayar Hamdan.

"Scene 2" directed by Abdulrahman Alward and "Ozaizah" were selected as best Yemeni films.

Artist Habibollah Sadeqi to remember Qassem Soleimani in painting project

A R T TEHRAN — Iranian artist Habibollah Sadeqi plans to commemorate Commander Qassem Soleimani during his martyrdom anniversary during a painting project, which will commence on Tuesday.

The project entitled "A Requiem for the Manifestation of Simorgh" will start with a workshop at the Khial Gallery of the Saba Art and Cultural Institute.

"I am determined to narrate the concepts derived from the resistance, bravery and martyrdom of this great man," Sadeqi said in a press release on Friday.

"The duty of art and those who pay due attention to idealistic art is to narrate the thoughts of this great martyr," he added.

During this project, Sadeqi plans to create four paintings, each one measuring 2.5x2 meters.

"On the first day, Tuesday, I will begin my work by listening to the Quran recitation and the messages of Imam Khomeini about the great martyrs as well as the speeches of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, about Martyr Soleimani, and will continue with the voice of the commander," the artist said.

"On the second day, I will begin with several sketches and will continue for five days," he explained.

"Considering the role and the special status of the commander, one of the words that can narrate part of the martyr's character would be the word 'simorgh'. Simorgh is rooted in

Iranian mythology. The manifestation of a martyr is his soul, which he gives in the way of God," he said.

The workshop has been organized by the institute in collaboration with the Palestine Museum of Contemporary Art in Tehran and the Iranian Academy of Arts.

After his assassination, numerous cultural events have been organized about Commander Soleimani.

The Palestine Museum of Contemporary Art organized an art exhibit in which a selection of paintings and calligraphy works created by 60 Iranian artists during a two-day workshop at the Farshchian University of Iranian-Islamic Arts went on view under the title of "Tall Cypress of the Islamic

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GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

When two persons are together, two of them must not whisper to each other, without letting the third hear; because it would hurt him.

Prophet Muhammad (S)

WHAT'S IN ART GALLERIES

Photo/video performance



The Hours

An exhibition of photos and video performance by Hoda Amid is currently underway at Platform 3 Gallery.

The exhibit titled "The Hours" will run until January 6 at the gallery, which can be found at 29 Shahamati Alley near Vali-e Asr Square.

Graphic design



An exhibition of graphic designs by Azra Aqiqi-Bakhshayeshi will open on Saturday at Homa Gallery. The exhibit entitled "Synopsis" will run until January 12 at the gallery located at No. 8, FORTH Alley, Sanai St., Karim Khan Ave.

Painting



Tarrahan Azad Gallery is currently displaying paintings by Abbas Akbari in an exhibition named "No Painting". The exhibit will run until January 11 at the gallery located at 5 Salmas Square, off Fatemi St.



Paintings by Morteza Rajabi and Mojtaba Mohammadi are on view in an exhibition at Negar Gallery. The exhibition entitled "The Abyss" will run until January 12 at the gallery that can be found at 154 near Iranshahr St., Karim Khan Blvd.

Fabric collage



A collection fabric collages by Mahnaz Nikukar is on view in an exhibition at Haft Samar Gallery. The exhibition will be running until January 6 at the gallery that can be found at No. 8, Fifth Alley, Kuh-e Nur St., Motahari Ave.

Installation



Sets of installation by Hamidrez Azad are currently on display in an exhibition at Vista Gallery. The exhibit named "Symphony of Despair" will run until January 17 at the gallery located at No. 11, 12th Alley, Mir Emad St.

Painting/drawing



An exhibition of paintings and drawings by Mahmud Mohammadi in currently underway at Golhaye Davudi Gallery. The exhibit runs until January 6 at the gallery that can be found at 263 near Nejatollahi St., Taleqani Ave.

Print



Prints by a large number of renowned Iranian artists, including Ebrahim Haqiqi, Kurosh Shishegaran, Behzad Shishegaran, Manuchehr Motabari, Mehdi Azizi, and Ali-Akbar Sadeqi, are currently on view in an exhibition at Negah Gallery.

The exhibit will run until January 9 at the gallery located at 64 Ghaffari St., Jam St., Motahari Ave.

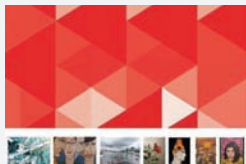
Calligraphic painting



Calligraphic paintings by Zahra Zonuzi, Hadi Aljani, Zabiollah Mohammadi, Mostafa Sarabi, Rana Dehqan and several other artists are on display in an exhibition at Delgosha Gallery.

The exhibit entitled "Farsi and Persian Monster" will run until January 31 at the gallery located at 30 Mohajer Alley, Iranshahr St., Karim Khan Ave.

Multimedia



Artworks in various media by Nilufar Moscochi, Nida Mina, Ghazal Moqaddam, Nahid Zomorrodian, Bahra Jaleh, Pegah Amini and several other artists are on display in an exhibition at Ehsan Gallery.

The exhibit will run until January 5 at the gallery located at No. 22, East 14th St. in the Ajudanieh neighborhood.



A poster for the workshop "A requiem for the Manifestation of Simorgh".

Revolution" in February.

The Revayat Cultural Foundation organized a photo contest on the funeral of the martyr in the virtual exhibition named "My Commander" in September.

The photo contest was held in several categories including single photo, series, cellphones and young adults.