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EAEU Business Council, ICCIMA ink cooperation MOU

TEHRAN — Iranian Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) Business Council, on Wednesday, for mutual cooperation.

The MOU was signed on the sidelines of the Eurasian Week 2019 international

exhibition forum in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan's Aki Press reported.

ICCIMA Head Gholam-Hossein Shafei signed the document on behalf of Iran, and President of the Kyrgyz Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs Danil Ibraev signed the document on behalf of the Eurasian Economic Union Business Council. ➔ **4**

IRGC chief slams European trio's allegations against Iran as fictitious

TEHRAN — Major General Hossein Salami, the head of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), has slammed three European countries over blaming Iran for the recent attacks on Saudi oil facilities without any evidence whatsoever.

"The Europeans revealed their [true] face and, without any document and evidence, leveled a fictitious and false charge against Iran," General Salami said on Tuesday, according to Mehr.

The remarks came after France, Britain and Germany - known as the European trio - said it was clear Iran was responsible for an attack on Saudi oil facilities on September 14.

French President Emmanuel Macron, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and German Chancellor Angela Merkel met during the annual United Nations gathering of world leaders to coordinate their strategy on Iran. ➔ **3**

Lavrov thanks U.S. for granting him a visa to take part in UN General Assembly

TEHRAN — Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has "thanked" the United States for receiving a visa to participate in the UN General assembly session.

"I am happy that we have an opportunity to meet in New York. I am happy that I have received a U.S. visa in the end, unlike members of my delegation. Washington was very considerate in this," Lavrov said in his opening remarks at the meeting in the "Astana format."

Russian Foreign Ministry's official

spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said earlier that Lavrov "described as shameful the situation with non-issuance of visas to the Russian delegation." According to TASS, several members of the Russian Federation Council, including chairman of the International Affairs Committee Konstantin Kosachev, were not given U.S. visas and will not be able to take part in the UN General Assembly session. Kosachev told TASS that 10 Russian delegates were refused visas.



ARTICLE
Hamid Bayati
Tehran Times journalist

A look at London's suspicious positions on Iran and Aramco

Johnson and Raab new Arabian puppets

Recent statements by the British prime minister and foreign secretary indicate that London demote itself to the position of an agent by accepting a new mission, and has begun a suspicious scenario against Iran. Britain, hostility of which to Iranian people historically proven, has shown that it seizes any opportunity to hit Iran. Following the September 14 attacks on the Aramco oil facilities by Yemenis, Britain launched a new campaign against Iran.

As evidence shows, London has been commissioned by Saudi Arabia to incite the international community against Iran, and form an international coalition against the Islamic Republic. Prime Minister Boris Johnson and Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab are the main drivers of the scenario.

Immediately after the attacks, the Yemenis announced that they had carried out the strikes, but a few days later Riyadh tried to lay the blame for the attacks on Iran.

Johnson and Raab's mission began after Saudi officials exposed some parts of missile and fallen drones, claiming that Iran was in charge of the attack.

In this regard, Raab who tried to add fuel to fire since the beginning, started a new phase of his actions on Sunday, September 22. He explicitly claimed that Iran was in charge for the attacks.

Raab said in an interview, "Based on information that I have observed, I found that it is almost impossible that the attacks on Aramco was carried out by Houthis. It is invalid to say that Houthis attacked Aramco."

Raab did not point out what group or country was responsible for the attacks from London's prospective.

"Before we blame someone for the attacks, I want that the matter be clear for me, because the action that we intend to take will be powerful and widely backed," he said. ➔ **7**

Abe, U.N. chief agree on need to reform international body

TEHRAN — Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres agreed on the need to reform the international body, including the Security Council, ahead of the 75th anniversary of its founding next year.

Abe, in New York to attend the UN General Assembly, also shared with Guterres recognition of the importance of fully implementing UN resolutions on North Korea, the Japanese Foreign Ministry said.

During the meeting, Abe secured support from Guterres for Japan's efforts to resolve the issue of Japanese nationals abducted by North Korea in the 1970s and 1980s, the ministry said.

Heightened tensions in the Middle East amid a U.S.-Iran standoff over Tehran's nuclear program and global efforts to fight climate change are among the main agenda items of the annual UN gathering. The Japanese leader vowed to continue diplomatic efforts to ease tensions in the region, according to the ministry.

Abe explained Japan's commitment to attaining a set of UN Sustainable Development Goals to be achieved by 2030, telling Guterres that the country will play its role to fulfill responsibility under the 2015 Paris climate accord aimed at curbing global warming.

Youth environmental activist Greta Thunberg

from Sweden, who became famous for boycotting school to call for cutting greenhouse gas emissions, was among those urging world leaders gathering for the annual UN gathering to take action.

Climate change is among the 17 SDGs, which also include reducing poverty and providing high-quality education.

According to Japan Times, speaking at the UN SDG Summit, Abe pledged to enable 4 million women in developing countries to receive high-quality education during a three-year period.

With its goal to promote universal health care coverage, Japan will also seek to have about 1.3 million children vaccinated in the world.

Congress is helping Saudi Arabia destabilize the Middle East. It needs to stop.

By Robert W. Jordan

(Politico) — The September 14 attack on Saudi oil facilities—an attack the United States, Britain, Germany and France all say Iran carried out—demonstrates how close the Middle East is to war. But the focus on Iran must not obscure Saudi Arabia's own role in the worsening situation, including its disastrous involvement in the civil war in Yemen. Rushing to provide U.S. military support to Saudi Arabia now will send the absolute wrong signal to Riyadh, whose conduct over the past few years has damaged America's global standing and threatened our security.

Congress is considering whether to end U.S. backing for the Saudi-led coalition fighting in Yemen. It should suspend U.S. arms sales and other support for the coalition not only to help end the horrific conflict, but to make clear that Saudi Arabia must take steps to avoid a broader

regional conflagration.

I know from personal experience the complexities of U.S.-Saudi ties, having served as American ambassador in Riyadh from 2001-2003—until now, perhaps the most difficult period in our nearly nine-decade bilateral relationship. During my tenure, I faced a Saudi government in denial that 15 of the 9/11 hijackers were Saudi citizens and blind to the threat religious extremism posed to both of our countries. Then, as now, Saudi leaders refused to acknowledge dangers everyone else saw clearly. Now, unlike then, the danger emanating from Saudi Arabia comes not from radicalized citizens, but from the Saudi leadership itself.

Among the many flagrant acts undertaken by Saudi Arabia over the past few years, two have fixed in the minds of U.S. lawmakers and the American public: its catastrophic involvement in the war in Yemen and the gruesome murder

of Washington Post columnist Jamal Khashoggi. Mohammed bin Salman, Saudi Arabia's reckless crown prince who's better known as MBBS, stands behind both of them.

In Yemen, over four years of war has produced no progress in Saudi Arabia's fight against Houthis, though fighting has killed tens of thousands of civilians and threatened millions more with starvation and disease. Many of the more than 20,000 airstrikes carried out by Saudi Arabia—and its ally the United Arab Emirates—have used American munitions to repeatedly and illegally target civilians, despite the fact that the Saudi military has had years of U.S. training and support. Khashoggi's final newspaper column published before he was murdered warned that Saudi Arabia could not win militarily in Yemen, and he urged an end to the war before it further damaged Saudi Arabia's reputation. ➔ **13**



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Books on imposed war unveiled in Tehran

Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Chief Hossein Salami (3rd R) and ex-IRGC chief Mohammad-Ali Jafari (3rd L) unveil a collection of 90 books on the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war at the Sacred Defense Research and Archives Center in Tehran on September 25, 2019.

A number of military and cultural figures also attended the unveiling ceremony.



PERSPECTIVE
Mohammad Hashemi
Journalist

Does Merkel follow Trump's footsteps on Iran?

The talks between German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Iranian President Hassan Rouhani on Tuesday (September 24) in New York were held at the height of tensions between Tehran and Washington. It was Angela Merkel's first meeting with an Iranian president as she had avoided such meetings since coming to office in 2005. German media had attributed Merkel's reluctance to meet Iranian officials to what they described as Iran's international and regional stances, including its policy towards Israel.

The meeting came shortly after more signs emerged pointing to collapse of the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran. Germany, France and the UK joined the US in blaming Iran for the September 14 attacks on Saudi Arabia's key oil plants which Yemeni Houthis claimed responsibility.

■ EU backs new 'Trump deal'

In a joint statement they also said they continue to support the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran but they added the time has come for Iran to start talks on a longer-term, more comprehensive agreement dealing with Iran's nuclear program, its regional and missile program, just as Donald Trump's administration has pushed.

The statement drew a strong condemnation from Iran and Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif responded that Britain, France and Germany's "paralysis in fulfilling their obligations w/o US permission has been clear since May 2018," when Washington withdrew from the accord. "No new deal before compliance w/ current one," Zarif wrote on his Twitter account.

Following the meeting with the Iranian president, Merkel said Iran's demands for U.S. sanctions relief were "unrealistic".

"I would welcome it if it came to talks between the United States and Iran but it won't work that all sanctions are first taken off the table and then there are talks. I think that is not realistic," Merkel said on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly.

The demands that the German chancellor called "unrealistic" were part and parcel of the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) - commonly referred to as the "nuclear deal" - signed between Iran and world powers. ➔ **7**

Nuclear deal parties committed to saving it though ‘increasingly’ difficult: EU

(Press TV) — European Union foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini says the remaining parties to the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, have expressed their commitment to preserving the agreement, stressing, however, that there are increasing difficulties ahead.

“It is in the interests of all to remain committed to the deal, but it is becoming increasingly difficult,” Mogherini told reporters after a meeting of the parties at the United Nations on Wednesday.



She said France, Britain, Germany, Russia, China and Iran had agreed to continue efforts to implement the multilateral international deal, which U.S. President Donald Trump left in May 2018.

The Trump administration also unleashed the “toughest ever” sanctions against the Islamic Republic following Washington’s withdrawal in defiance of global criticism on a bid to strangle the country’s oil trade.

Trump is a stern critic of the deal, which was clinched in 2015 by Iran and major world powers,

including the United States, France, Britain, China, Russia, and Germany. Under the agreement, nuclear-related sanctions put in place against Iran were lifted in exchange for curbs on Tehran’s nuclear program.

In response to the U.S. move to leave the JCPOA and its reimposition of sanctions, Tehran has so far rowed back on its nuclear commitments three times in compliance with articles 26 and 36 of the JCPOA, but stressed that its retaliatory measures will be reversible as soon as European signatories to the accord finds practical ways to shield the mutual trade from the U.S. sanctions.

Iran says that if it does not receive economic benefits from the JCPOA by November it will further reduce its commitments.

“Every step that has been taken so far by Iran is reversible and we call on Iran to reverse these decisions and go back to full compliance,” Mogherini said, adding, “I hope that rationality will prevail.”

Trump’s goal has been to get another deal as he has already described the JCPOA as “the worst deal ever negotiated.” The White House position has been that maximum pressure will continue until Iranian officials accept to sit at the negotiating table.

Iranian officials, however, say it was Washington that left the JCPOA last year although the deal was endorsed by the UN Security Council in the form of a resolution.

Tehran says talks with Washington are impossible as the latter is pressing ahead with its hostile policy and refuses to lift sanctions against the Islamic Republic.

Rouhani: If U.S. seeks talks with Iran, ‘it must create the needed conditions’

Trump abandoned the nuclear deal ‘without a valid reason or cause,’ president regrets

POLITICAL DESK TEHRAN/NEW YORK — In an interview with Fox News aired on Tuesday, President Hassan Rouhani said if the U.S. administration is really seeking dialogue with Iran “it must create the needed conditions.”

Iran has been insisting that the only path to negotiations between Tehran and Washington is that the United States must lift all the sanctions that it has illegally and unilaterally imposed on Iran.

Rouhani said U.S. President Donald Trump has put away trust when he was asked about a potential meeting in New York.

Rouhani is in New York to attend the 74th UN General Assembly. He said, “Why would we bump into one another? If we seek to pursue higher goals to benefit both countries, both people, it must be planned, and talks must be based on those plans.”

He added, “But prior to that, we must create mutual trust, and the trust that is something that Mr. Trump took away from this framework. We had an agreement. Mr. Trump exited without a valid justification, and illegally, from an international agreement.”

“So, if the United States of America’s government is willing to talk, it must create the needed conditions,” Rouhani insisted.

Rouhani continued, “Well, once we carried on negotiations with the United States of America for two years, and during a 17-day period, the foreign minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the U.S. Secretary of State had continuous talks without returning to their countries. It was extremely difficult, but we did reach an agreement which was signed, and it was enshrined in the United Nations Security Council resolution, and without a valid reason or cause, the United States left this agreement.”

“So, it took away the foundation of the needed trust. I think more than the issues it touched upon, the most basic needed issue is trust, and Mr. Trump damaged the trust between the two countries. So, this is very important,” he said.

Rouhani then suggested a key way to rebuilding trust would be removing sanctions against his country, which he described as “a type of terrorism.”

He said, “Trust must be restored, and the restoration of trust consists in taking away the pressure imposed upon the nation and the people of Iran which show that clearly there is animosity even towards our children, our ill people, because we -- they even have difficulty in obtaining basic medications and medical equipment.”

“This is a type of terrorism. This is inhumane, and if there is a cessation to this, then, of course, the atmosphere will change. Of course, then it can be envisioned, and we can talk about many different topics of mutual interest for both sides,” he added.

■ **Rouhani says terrorism has expanded wherever U.S. has gone**

Rouhani also said that terrorism has expanded wherever the United States has gone.

“Today, America, unfortunately, is the supporter of terrorism in our region -- and wherever America has gone, terrorism has expanded in the wake,” he told Fox News.

“I am amazed at the interpretations of Mr. Trump, vis-a-vis terrorism,” he said.

Rouhani pointed to U.S. military involvement in Syria without the permission of President Bashar al-Assad as an example of the U.S. “terrorism”.

“The country that is present and flying over the air space of and bombarding the soil of the country of Syria without permission of the government is the United States of America,” he said.

Rouhani: Our response to negotiation under sanctions is negative

President Rouhani invites all countries directly affected by developments in Persian Gulf and Strait of Hormuz to join “Hormuz Peace Endeavor”

UNITED NATIONS — In a key speech at the United Nations General Assembly on Wednesday, President Hassan Rouhani said Iran’s “response to any negotiation under sanctions is in the negative.”

U.S. President Donald Trump, who has abandoned the 2015 the nuclear deal and imposed the harshest ever sanctions on Iran, has been repeatedly calling for dialogue with Iran.

“On behalf of my nation and state, I would like to announce that our response to any negotiation under sanctions is in the negative,” Rouhani told world leaders and delegates participating at the annual UN conference.

Following is the full text of Rouhani’s speech:

In the name of God, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful:

Mr. President;

I would like to congratulate your deserved election as the president of the seventy-fourth General Assembly of the United Nations, and wish success and good luck for Your Excellency and the honorable Secretary General.

At the outset, I would like to commemorate the freedom-seeking movement of Hossein (PBUH), and pay homage to all the freedom-seekers of the world who do not bow to oppression and aggression, and tolerate all the hardships of the struggle for rights, as well as to the spirits of all the oppressed martyrs of terrorist strikes and bombardment in Yemen, Syria, Occupied Palestine, Afghanistan and other countries of the world.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

The Middle East is burning in the flames of war, bloodshed, aggression, occupation and religious and sectarian fanaticism and extremism. And under such circumstances, the suppressed people of Palestine are the biggest victim. Discrimination, appropriation of lands, settlement expansions and killings continue to be practiced against the Palestinians.

The U.S.- and Zionist-imposed plans, such as “the deal of century”, recognizing Beit-ul Moqaddas as the capital of the Zionist regime, and the accession of the Syrian Golan to the other occupied territories are doomed to fail.

In contrast to the U.S.’ destructive plans, the Islamic Republic of Iran’s regional and international assistance and cooperation on security and counter-terrorism have been much decisive. The clear example of such an approach is our cooperation with Russia and Turkey within the Astana format on the Syrian crisis, and our peace proposal for Yemen in view of our active cooperation with the special envoys of the Secretary General of the United Nations as well as our efforts to facilitate reconciliation talks among the Yemeni parties, which resulted in the conclusion of the Stockholm peace accord on Hodaida Port.

Distinguished Participants;

I hail from a country that has resisted the most merciless economic terrorism, and has defended its right to independence and to science and technology development. The U.S. government, while imposing extraterritorial sanctions and threats against other nations, has made many efforts to deprive Iran from the advantages of participating in the global economy, and has resorted to international piracy by misusing the international banking system.

We Iranians have been the pioneers of freedom-seeking movements in the region, while seeking peace and progress for our nation as well as for our neighbors, and we have never surrendered to foreign aggression and imposition. We cannot believe in the invitation to negotiation by people who claim to have applied the harshest sanctions of history against the dignity and prosperity of our nation. How can one believe that the silent killing of a great nation and pressure on the life of 83 million Iranians, especially women and children, are welcomed by the American government officials who pride themselves on such pressures and additively exploit sanctions against a spectrum of countries such



The security of Saudi Arabia shall be guaranteed with the termination of aggression against Yemen rather than by inviting foreigners to the region.

as Iran, Venezuela, Cuba, China and Russia. The Iranian nation will never ever forget and forgive these crimes and criminals.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

The attitude of the incumbent U.S. government towards the nuclear deal (or the JCPOA) not only violates the provisions of UN Security Council Resolution 2231, but also constitutes a breach of the sovereignty and political and economic independence of all the countries of the world.

In spite of the American withdrawal from the JCPOA, and for one year, Iran remained fully faithful to all its nuclear commitments in accordance with the JCPOA. Out of respect for the Security Council resolution, we provided Europe with the opportunity to fulfill its 11 commitments made to compensate for the effects of the U.S. withdrawal. However, unfortunately, we only heard nice words while witnessing no effective measures.

It has now become clear for all that the United States turns its back on its commitments and Europe is unable and incapable of fulfilling its commitments. We even adopted a step-by-step approach in implementing paragraphs 26 and 36 of the JCPOA. And we remain committed to our promises in the deal. However, our patience has a limit: when the U.S. does not respect the United Nations Security Council, and when Europe displays inability, the only way shall be to rely on national dignity, pride and strength.

They call us to negotiation while they run away from treaties and deals. We negotiated with the incumbent U.S. government at the 5+1 negotiating table; however, the U.S. has failed to honor the commitment made by their predecessor.

On behalf of my nation and state, I would like to announce that our response to any negotiation under sanctions is in the negative. The government and people of Iran have remained steadfast against the harshest sanctions in the past one and a half years, and will never negotiate with an enemy that seeks to force Iran to surrender with the weapon of poverty, pressure and sanction.

If you require a positive answer, and as declared by the leader of the Islamic Revolution, the only way for talks to begin is return to commitments and compliance.

If you are sensitive to the name of the JCPOA, well, then you can simply return to its framework and abide by UN Security Council Resolution 2231. Stop the sanctions so as to open the way for the start of negotiations.

I would like to make it crystal clear: If you are satisfied with minimums, we will also be

The ultimate path towards peace and security in the Middle East passes through inward democracy and outward diplomacy.

working with the minimums; either for you or for us. However, if you require more, you should also give more.

If you stand by your word that you only have one demand for Iran, i.e. non-production and non-utilization of nuclear weapons, then that can easily be attained with IAEA supervision and more importantly, with the fatwa of the Iranian leader. Instead of a “show” of negotiation, you should return to the reality of negotiation. A memorial photo is the last step of negotiation; not the first one.

We in Iran, despite all the obstructions created by the U.S. government, are staying on the path of economic and social growth and prosperity. Iran’s economy in 2017 registered the highest economic growth rate in the world. And today, despite fluctuations emanating from foreign interference during the past one and a half years, we have returned to the track of growth and stability. Iran’s gross domestic product minus oil has become positive again in recent months. And the trade balance of the country remains positive.

Distinguished Participants;

The security doctrine of the Islamic Republic of Iran is based on the maintenance of peace and stability in the Persian Gulf and providing freedom of navigation and safety of movement in the Strait of Hormuz. Recent incidents have seriously endangered such security. Security and peace in the Persian Gulf, Sea of Oman and the Strait of Hormuz could be provided with the participation of the countries of the region and the free flow of oil and other energy resources could be guaranteed, provided that we consider security as an umbrella in all areas for all the countries. Based upon the historical responsibility of my country in maintaining security, peace, stability and progress in the Persian Gulf region and Strait of Hormuz, I would like to invite all the countries directly affected by the developments in the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz to the “Coalition for Hope”, meaning Hormuz Peace Endeavor.

The goal of the Coalition for Hope is to promote peace, stability, progress and welfare for all the residents of the Strait of Hormuz region, and to enhance mutual understanding and peaceful and friendly relations amongst them.

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

The Coalition for Hope is based on important principles such as compliance with the

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

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran shall provide more details of the Coalition for Hope to the beneficiary states.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

The formation of any security coalition and initiative under any title in the region with the centrality and command of foreign forces is a clear example of interference in the affairs of the region. The securitization of navigation is in contravention of the right to free navigation and the right to development, and will escalate tensions and further complication of conditions, and increase of mistrust in the region, while jeopardizing regional peace, security and stability.

The security of the region shall be provided when American troops pull out. Security shall not be supplied with American weapons and intervention. The United States, after 18 years, has failed to reduce acts of terrorism. However, the Islamic Republic of Iran managed to terminate the scourge of Daesh with the assistance of neighboring nations and governments. The ultimate path towards peace and security in the Middle East passes through inward democracy and outward diplomacy. Security cannot be purchased or supplied by foreign governments.

The peace, security and independence of our neighbors are the peace, security and independence of us. America is not our neighbor. It is the Islamic Republic of Iran that neighbors you, and we have been long taught that the neighbor comes first, then the house. In the event of an incident, you and we shall remain alone. We are neighbors with each other, and not with the United States.

The United States is located here, not in the Middle East. The United States is not the advocate of any nation; neither is it the guardian of any state. In fact, states do not delegate power of attorney to other states and do not give custodianship to others. If the flames of the fire of Yemen have spread today to Hijaz, the warmonger should be sought and punished; rather than leveling allegations and begrudging the innocents. The security of Saudi Arabia shall be guaranteed with the termination of aggression against Yemen rather than by inviting foreigners to the region. We are ready to spend our national strength and regional credibility and international authority.

The solution for peace in the Arabian Peninsula, security in the Persian Gulf and stability in the Middle East should be sought inside the region rather than outside of it. The issues of the region are bigger and more important than the United States is able to resolve. The United States has failed to resolve the issues in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria, and has been the supporter of extremism, Talibanism and Daeshism. Such a government is clearly unable to resolve more sophisticated issues.

Distinguished Colleagues;

Our region is on the edge of collapse, as a single blunder can fuel a big fire. We shall not tolerate the provocative intervention of foreigners. We shall respond decisively and strongly to any sort of transgression to and violation of our security and territorial integrity.

However, the alternative and proper solution for us is to strengthen consolidation among all the nations with common interests in the Persian Gulf and the Hormuz region.

This is the message of the Iranian nation: Let’s invest on hope towards a better future rather than in war and violence. Let’s return to justice; to peace; to law, commitment and promise and the negotiating table.

I thank you for your attention.

Iran’s govt. says European trio statement is ‘unacceptable’

POLITICAL DESK TEHRAN — Iranian government spokesman Ali Rabiei said on Wednesday that Britain, France and Germany’s statement which blames Iran for the Aramco attacks is “unacceptable”.

“For the government’s viewpoint, the three European countries’ statement in condemning Iran and accusing Iran in issues related to Yemen and Saudi Arabia is unacceptable. Talking without evidence is an act which has been repeatedly taken recently,” Rabiei told reporters.

He noted that the three European countries, which are signatory to the 2015 nuclear deal, have taken such a position under the influence of the United States.

In a joint statement on Monday, the leaders of France, Germany, and the United Kingdom strongly condemned the September 14 attacks on oil facilities in Saudi Arabia, and pinned the blame on Tehran.

“It is clear to us that Iran bears responsibility for this attack. There is no other plausible explanation,” the statement read.

In a post on his Twitter account on Monday, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif told the three European states that “parroting absurd U.S. claims” against Iran is “Inconsistent with JCPOA”, the official name for the nuclear agreement.

Also in a meeting with French President Emmanuel Macron at the United Nations in New York on Monday, President Rouhani said the statement is based on “groundless blame game”.

The Iranian Foreign Ministry strongly condemned the European statement, saying it is a “farfetched reasoning” that “there is no other plausible explanation”.

“Politically motivated accusations against governments along with adoption of policies that support the child-killer regime of Saudi Arabia through sending weapons to the country are dangerous, and the countries which issued this statement must bear responsibility for consequences,” the Foreign Ministry statement said.

“The Islamic Republic of Iran strongly condemns and dismisses the irresponsible claims made by the leaders of

Britain, France and Germany about the attacks by the Yemeni government’s Armed Forces on the Saudi (oil) facilities, and stresses that holding a third-party government accountable for strikes that have occurred during a full-blown war between the Saudi and Yemeni parties and for which the Yemeni side has formally claimed responsibility, is per se a provocative and highly destructive measure, let alone that such a measure has been taken before any investigations, without providing any clue and proof, and has been only based upon the ridiculous justification that ‘there is no other explanation’,” Tasnim news agency quoted the statement as saying.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif told CNN in an interview aired on Monday, “There is no evidence. And it would be a miracle to produce evidence, because it did not take place. Had we been behind this, it would have been disaster for Saudi Arabia. Nothing that they could have been repaired. The reason I am taking this to Yemen is because it is Yemen. It is the Yemeni war.”

Adviser: No difference between GOP, Democrats on Iran

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Ali Akbar Velayati, a top foreign policy adviser to the Leader, has dismissed both the U.S. Republicans and Democrats as two sides of the same coin, saying tying the fate of Iran on the Democrats' victory in the 2020 presidential election will greatly harm the country.

"These kinds of views are usually put forward by the West enthusiasts," Velayati said in an interview with the Farhikhtegan daily published on Wednesday.

He argued that there's no difference between Republicans and Democrats with regard to Iran and many other subjects.

Velayati also underscored the need to follow the strategic views of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in dealing with the U.S.

"The strategic decisions regarding foreign policy are made by the Leader," he said, Mehr reported. "And he has made his position about negotiations with the U.S. clear and we should act accordingly."

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said last week that there will be no negotiations between Iran and the United States at any level or any place.

"All officials of the Islamic Republic of Iran unanimously agree that there will be no negotiations with America at any level either in New York or any other place," the Leader asserted.



Velayati asks: Is it possible to build trust in a liar (Trump)?"

He noted that the U.S. seeks to impose its demands through negotiations and prove that its "policy of maximum pressure" against Iran has worked.

Velayati, a former foreign minister, said, "We have negotiated with them in two or three occasions but none have yielded results."

"We believe that there can be no trust in Americans while their president changes his words every day. All are counting the lies of the U.S. president... is it possible to build trust in a liar?"

The remarks come while President Hassan Rouhani is in New York to give a speech at the annual meeting of the United Nations General Assembly on Wednesday.

Tensions between Tehran and Washington have ratcheted up since May 2018, when U.S. President Donald Trump withdrew from the 2015 nuclear deal and reimposed harsh economic sanctions on Iran.

Washington has recently called on other countries to join a coalition against Iran in the Persian Gulf.

In response to Washington's calls to form the anti-Iran coalition, Rouhani has said he will unveil the details of his plan for security in the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz, dubbed HOPE (Hormuz Peace Endeavour), at his speech at the United Nations.

Rouhani said on Monday that any solution to calm tensions must come from the region.

There's overwhelming consensus to boost Iran's missile power: minister



POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Defense Minister Brigadier General Amir Hatami said on Wednesday that there is an overwhelming consensus in Iran that the country should boost its missile power.

Hatami also strongly rejected the calls for reducing Iran's missile power as a condition for ending sanctions on the Islamic Republic, Tasnim reported.

He warned that the enemies are after restricting the Iranian nation's resistance through limiting Iran's missile capabilities.

"A bargain with the arrogant system over Iran's missile power would be tantamount to removing the ceiling and walls of a house," he remarked.

"In spite of all malicious activities, the enemies have failed to make our

country insecure, and this results from the Islamic Republic's deterrent power," the defense chief added.

Iranian authorities have repeatedly underscored that the country will not hesitate to strengthen its military capabilities, including its missile power, which are entirely meant for defense, and that Iran's defense capabilities will be never subject to negotiations.

In February 2018, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei called for efforts to maintain and boost Iran's defense capabilities in the face of the enemies disputing the country's missile program.

"Without a moment of hesitation, the country must move to acquire whatever is necessary for defense, even if the whole world is opposed to it," the Leader said.

Jeremy Hunt: Britain would repay Iran £400m



POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Former British Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt has said his country would obey a court order to repay £400m to Iran, if the precise sum owed is agreed.

The debt relates to a deal in the 1980s over the UK's non-delivery of Chieftain tanks for which the former Iranian regime of Shah had paid.

"Our policy as the British government had always been absolutely clear. We are a law-abiding government, so if there is a court order that says that this money has to be paid ... then we obey the law," Hunt said, The Guardian reported on Tuesday.

"The court process is still continuing, it is still deciding the exact amount that has to be paid," he said.

"We obey court rulings, but what we will not do is link it to the release of a hostage because if you do that you then you encourage countries like Iran to take hostages in the future when they have another dispute."

Tensions broke out between Tehran and London on July 4, after Britain's naval forces unlawfully seized oil tanker Grace 1 and its cargo of 2.1 million barrels of oil off the Strait of Gibraltar. The oil tanker was released in August.

Iranian forces also seized a British-flagged oil tanker in the Strait of Hormuz for involvement in an accident with an Iranian fishing boat, after the tanker ignored distress calls. The tanker's release has been finalized according to Iran's Foreign Ministry.

IRGC chief slams European trio's allegations against Iran as fictitious

1 -> "It is clear to us that Iran bears responsibility for this attack. There is no other plausible explanation," a statement by the three leaders said.

Salami also hailed as true the recent remarks by the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who said the Europeans are no better than the Americans.

"This is the nature of Europe and the U.S.," the IRGC chief stated.

On September 14, as many as 10 drones bombed the Abqaiq and Khurais oil facilities run by the Saudi state-owned oil company Aramco.

Although Yemen's Houthi movement claimed responsibility for the attacks on the Abqaiq and Khurais facilities, Riyadh, Washington and the three European countries have laid the blame on Iran.

Tehran, however, rejects any involvement.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has said linking Iran to the attack is a "maximum deceit" in line with Washington's "maximum pressure" on Tehran.

In remarks on Friday, Zarif also said "even the Saudis themselves don't believe the fiction of Iranian involvement" in the attacks on the Aramco oil facilities, citing Saudi Arabia's retaliation attack on Hodaideh in Yemen as a reason.

E3 statement showed negotiations would yield no results, says cleric

TEHRAN (MNA) — Ayatollah Ahmad Khatami, a member of the presiding board of the Assembly of Experts, says a statement by the European trio - E3 - in which it accuses Iran of a role in the recent attacks on the Saudi Aramco oil facilities revealed that negotiating with them would be fruitless.

Speaking to Mehr correspondent on Wednesday, Ayatollah Ahmad Khatami said the Leader of the Islamic Revolution banned negotiations with the U.S. administration at any level, adding that the recent joint statement issued by leaders of Britain, France and Germany about Tehran's involvement in drone attacks on the Saudi Aramco oil plants showed that the Europeans and the Americans are "cut from the same cloth."

The cleric added that the E3 statement showed that nobody must pin hope on the Europeans as negotiating with them would yield no results.

Khatami went on to describe reliance on internal resources as the only solution



to tackle the problems and confront with the enemies, noting that the Europeans are tasked with implementing U.S. mission.

Ayatollah Khamenei's fatwa against nuclear weapons 'honorable': Abe

TEHRAN (Tasnim) — Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said during his speech on Tuesday at the 74th United Nations General Assembly that the Leader of the Islamic Revolution's Fatwa banning possession, production and use of nuclear weapons is "honorable".

"Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, has told me directly that his country has made the three no's - 'possessing, producing, and using' nuclear weapons -- into a Fatwa to ensure full enforcement. I believe that his words are honorable," Abe said.

He had a meeting with Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei during a landmark visit to Iran back in June.

Abe became the first Japanese leader to visit Iran in more than 4 decades.

In a meeting with Iranian President Hassan Rouhani during the visit, Abe said that the main purpose of his trip to Iran was to ease the tensions between Iran and the U.S., and expressed hope



that his visit would result in the reduction of tensions and establishment of security in the region.

Release of UK-flagged oil tanker finalized: Tehran

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said on Wednesday that the procedure to release a detained British-flagged oil tanker has been finalized with cooperation of Iranian Foreign Ministry, Judiciary and Ports and Maritime Organization.

However, Mousavi said, the case is still open to address some of the tanker's violations concerning



the environmental damages it caused, IRNA reported on Wednesday.

He said the owner and captain of the oil tanker have made a written commitment.

On July 19, the 30,000-ton UK-flagged Stena Impero tanker was seized by Iranian naval forces, after it ignored distress call as it collided with a fishing boat on its route.

The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) said at that time that the ship had also used a wrong path to enter the Strait of Hormuz.

A day after the seizure of the Stena Impero, Iran released footage showing Iranian speedboats cruising near the tanker as a military helicopter hovered over the vessel.

Earlier, an Iranian maritime official said the Stena Impero would be released soon.

"Pursuant to a court order requiring an end to detention of the British oil tanker Stena Impero, this vessel will soon be released after 65 days of detention and begin its movement from the port of Bandar Abbas toward international waters," Allahmorad Affipour, the head of the Ports and Maritime Department of Iran's Hormozgan Province said on Sunday, Press TV reported.

Rouhani says E3's statement on Aramco attacks is counterproductive

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said on Tuesday that a statement issued by the E3 countries - Britain, Germany and France - is not constructive and useful.

"We regret the three European countries' recent statement. Issuance of this unfounded statement in the current sensitive and complicated situation is not useful and constructive at all," he said during a meeting with British Prime Minister Boris Johnson on the sidelines of the annual UN meeting in New York.



In a joint statement on Monday, the leaders of France, Germany, and the United Kingdom strongly condemned the September 14 attacks on oil facilities in Saudi Arabia, and pinned the blame on Tehran.

Rouhani also urged the United Kingdom to meet its commitments under the 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the JCPOA.

For his part, Johnson said that London seeks to improve ties with Tehran.

Johnson also said his country attaches great importance to Iran's role in the region.

Rouhani discusses 'Hormuz Peace Endeavor' with Spanish PM

In a separate meeting with Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, Rouhani discussed Iran's initiative for securing the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz called "Hormuz Peace Endeavor (HOPE)".

The top officials also exchanged views on expansion of relations between Tehran and Madrid.

Rouhani also held separate meetings with Swiss President Ueli Maurer and Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Lofven.

Rouhani unveiled the details of the peace initiative at his speech at the United Nations on Wednesday.

The initiative seeks cooperation among the regional countries for maintaining security in the Persian Gulf, including the strategic Strait of Hormuz.

The Strait of Hormuz is a major strategic waterway through which about one-fifth of global oil consumption passes on its way from Persian Gulf producers including Saudi Arabia, Iraq, the UAE and Kuwait as well as Iran.

Suspicious attacks on oil tankers in June and July in the Gulf of Oman caused anxiety among regional countries and the larger world.

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	314409.2
IFX	4168.02

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	46,198 rials
GBP	52,351 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$61.15/b
WTI	\$56.48/b
OPEC Basket	\$64.51/b
Gold	\$1,531.15/oz
Silver	\$18.59/oz
Platinum	\$956.40/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

EAEU Business Council, ICCIMA ink cooperation MOU

➔ Iran signed a trade agreement with the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) in late July and the country is expected to become an official member of the union in near future.



ICCIMA Head Gholam-Hossein Shafei (R) exchanging signed documents with President of the Kyrgyz Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs Danil Ibraev on the sidelines of the Eurasian Week 2019 international exhibition forum in Bishkek, on Wednesday

In late August, Iran’s Ambassador to Russia Mehdi Sanaei attended a meeting with a senior EAEU official to finalize the agreement on formation of a free trade zone between Iran and the regional union.

A press release from Eurasian Economic commission (EEC) in the same month, also showed that Sanaei and EEC Chief Tigran Sarkisyan had exchanged the documents needed to complete formalities for the deal would come into force in late October.

The Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) is an economic union of states located in central and northern Asia and Eastern Europe.

EAEU member states, namely Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan have a market of 183 million people and a gross domestic product of over 4 trillion dollars (PPP).

Zadboum appointed new head of TPO

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iranian Industry Minister Reza Rahmani appointed Hamid Zadboum as the new head of Trade Promotion Organization of Iran (TPO) and also a new deputy minister, TPO announced.



following the implementation of a new law banning employment of the retired officials.

French consumer confidence keeps rising as tax cuts filter through

French consumer confidence levels hit their highest since January 2018, data showed on Wednesday, as households grew more confident about spending after tax cuts earlier this year and fears over unemployment receded sharply.

According to reuters.com, the French data is a bright spot of economic news for a euro zone fighting recession and will help President Emmanuel Macron push his case for Germany to act sooner rather than later to revive its own faltering economy.

The INSEE national statistics office said its consumer confidence index for September rose for a ninth straight month to 104 from a revised 103 in August - the highest since it reached 105 points in January 2018. A Reuters poll of 13 economists had forecast 102 points for September.

The data showed that a raft of tax cuts and bonus schemes earlier this year for the poorest workers and pensioners worth more than 10 billion euros (\$11 billion) was beginning to alter household spending trends.

The data showed a further increase in consumers considering it to be a good time to splurge on big-ticket items. But it also suggested households might be more inclined to squirrel away extra income rather than spend it. The survey showed a jump in their confidence over their ability to save in the future.

Domestic companies ink \$1.2b port development deal

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iran’s private sector has signed a 50-trillion-rial (nearly \$1.2 billion) contract for developing Shahid Rajaie port in southern Iran, IRNA reported, quoting the head of Hormozgan Province Ports and Maritime Department as saying on Tuesday.

“Based on the signed investment agreement, the largest mechanized mineral terminal will be built at Shahid Rajaie Port, with the private sector’s funding,” Allah-Morad Afifpour said.

Speaking in the signing ceremony on Tuesday, the official noted “With the construction of this terminal, all the requirements of the country’s steel companies for importing feed stock through ports could be supplied.”

“Facilitating the exports of minerals is also another feature of this terminal and it is expected that the mineral export operations in this port would increase significantly,” he added.

Ahifpour further said this terminal is going to create direct job opportunities for over 504 people, while reducing the costs of transportation in the port.

Located in Iran’s southern province of



Hormozgan, Shaidd Rajaie is the country’s largest and best-equipped container port.

Enjoying the most modern container terminals and port equipment, Shahid Rajaie

accounts for 85 percent of the total loading and unloading at the Iranian ports.

Given its significant role in the country’s import and export of products as well as transit

Forming ministry of trade and commercial services a must: official

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iran’s deputy industry, mining and trade minister in parliament affairs said establishing a separate ministry for trade and commercial services is a requirement for handling such affair in the country, Shata reported on Tuesday.

According to Seyed Sharif Hosseini, integrating the ministries of industry and trade has decreased the efficiency of the affiliated organizations and institutions.

At present, the Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade is in charge of industries, mines and trade sectors in Iran, which is divided into three main sections in terms of organizational structure: the staff, affiliated organizations, and provincial organizations that are stationed in 31 provinces of the country.

Hosseini noted that although eight years has passed since the merger of the two ministries of trade and industry, however the affiliated organizational complexes in this ministry lack the agility and efficiency required.

Iran’s Industry, Mines and Trade ministry was established in August 2011 as a result of a merger of the Ministry of Industries and Mines and Ministry of Trade

The official further emphasized the fact that the country’s current economic situation has created some urgent needs in the field of trade and commerce which can’t be met efficiently without an independent ministry.

“For instance, given the importance of foreign trade in the current situation, further attention should be paid to this sector, and supporting exports and removing investment barriers should be pursued in a specialized and independent manner,” Hosseini explained.

“Creating an optimal and functioning economic system requires an integrated management in this sector, one which can provide high quality goods and services demanded by the public and which is able to balance prices when necessary,” he added.

The deputy minister finally expressed hope that MPs would vote in favor of the re-formation of the Ministry of Trade and Commerce.

■ **Trade ministry maybe formed by March 2020**

Following the deputy industry minister’s comments, Vice President for Parliamentary Affairs Hossein-Ali Amiri said on Wednesday that the ministry of trade is anticipated



to be established again by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 19, 2020).

“As approved by the Majlis (Iran’s parliament), the Ministry of Trade and Commerce Services is going to be formed again and is expected to start operating before the New Year,” Amiri said after a cabinet meeting on Wednesday.

German downturn ‘taking a breather’ but recession still looms: Ifo

By Paul Carrel and Rene Wagner

German business morale rose in September for the first time in six months but Europe’s largest economy is still likely slipping into recession as the U.S.-China trade conflict and Brexit bite, the Ifo economic institute said on Tuesday.

Ifo’s business climate index rose to 94.6 from 94.3 in August, snapping a run of five consecutive falls. September’s reading compared with a consensus forecast for 94.4.

The “downturn is taking a breather,” Ifo President Clemens Fuest said in a statement. But he added: “In manufacturing, the business climate has only one direction: downward.”

Germany’s export-reliant economy is suffering from slower global growth and business uncertainty caused by U.S. President Donald Trump’s ‘America First’ trade policies and Britain’s planned, but delayed, exit from the European Union.

Ifo’s current conditions index rose to 98.5 from 97.4 in August but his expectations index fell to 90.8 from 91.3.

Ifo economist Klaus Wohlrabe said the German economy is likely to shrink again in the third quarter.

■ **In the second quarter**

That would put it in recession - usually defined as a period of at least two consecutive quarters of contraction - after it shrank by 0.1% in the second quarter.

“This is not the start of a change of trend,” Wohlrabe said of Tuesday’s firmer overall sentiment reading. The “slowdown is only taking a break,” he told Reuters, adding that no signs of improvement were to be seen for German industry.

Economy Minister Peter Altmaier, speaking immediately after the release of the Ifo data, said Germany’s growth dynamics have deteriorated but insisted: “We are not in a recession.” Much of the German economy’s fortunes are tied up in factors beyond its control: mainly weaker global growth, developments in the U.S.-China trade conflict and the question of whether Britain can achieve an orderly exit from the European Union.

U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said on Monday that he and U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer would meet with Chinese Vice-Premier Liu He for trade talks in two weeks.



On Brexit, EU negotiator Michel Barnier struck a downbeat note on Tuesday, saying there was no reason to be optimistic that Britain and the bloc will find a solution to the thorny question of the Irish “backstop.”

ING economist Carsten Brzeski said the likelihood of a third quarter contraction in Germany was rising “almost by the day”.

■ **The manufacturing recession**

On Monday, a purchasing managers’ survey showed that German private sector activity shrank for the first time in 6-1/2 years in September as a manufacturing recession deepened unexpectedly and growth in the service sector lost momentum.

Highlighting the weakness in the manufacturing sector, engineering lobby group VDMA also said on Monday production in Germany’s engineering sector will decline by 2% both this year and in 2020. It cited trade conflicts and uncertainties linked to Britain’s planned exit from the EU.

“While a ‘light’ technical recession is not the end of the world for an economy which has been growing for more than 10 years and has an unemployment rate at all-time lows, it is the lack of any signals of an imminent rebound which is more concerning,” Brzeski said.

“Calls for government action will continue,” he added.

Finance Minister Olaf Scholz said earlier this month Germany is ready to pump “many, many billions of euros” into its economy to counter any significant slowdown in growth.

But on Friday, the government said a new package of measures to protect the climate would be budget-neutral and that it was sticking to its ‘black zero’ balanced-budget policy, dashing economists’ hopes for a fiscal splurge.

(Source: finance.yahoo.com)

Asia seeks ways to cope with trade war’s hit to China demand

By Patturaja Murugaboopathy and Gaurav Dogra

Asian countries are looking for catalysts beyond China to drive their economies as the Sino-U.S. trade war forces Chinese demand for their exports to shrink.

Luring foreign companies to their shores, finding ways to boost domestic consumption and scouring for alternate export markets are part of that policy mix as China’s neighbors cope with flagging demand from the mainland, hitherto a large market for Asia in the regional supply chain.

Thailand has unveiled a “relocation package” comprising tax incentives and changes in laws to attract foreign firms.

Malaysia set up a panel to fast-track investments to woo businesses, and said it approved more than \$500 million (£401 million) in proposals this month.

Indonesia’s Central Bank cut its benchmark interest rates for the third time in three months last week, while also announcing measures to prop up domestic spending. India and the Philippines have cut rates multiple times.

Exports to China from Asia have slowed this year, prompting the sellers to look for substitute markets. Japan and South Korea saw their exports to China fall in the first half, but their shipments to the United States, United Kingdom and Russia rose during that period.

Malaysia and Thailand’s exports to markets such as United States, Singapore and Vietnam grew.

■ **Unconventional markets**

“Efforts to look for unconventional markets have seen an increase in shipments to countries like Chile, Qatar, and Sri Lanka,” Bank Indonesia deputy governor Dody Budi Waluyo told Reuters.

“We have diversified our export destinations so we can cover the disappearing shipments to China or to America.” A Reuters analysis of eight major economies including South Korea, Indonesia and Taiwan showed the contribution of export revenue from China to the total GDP fell to 8% at the end of 2019’s first half, compared with 9.3% a year earlier.

Meanwhile, domestic demand added 0.7 percentage point to Japan’s GDP growth of 1.8% in the second quarter, more than offsetting the 0.3 point negative contribution from external demand.

Malaysia’s economy saw solid growth

and transshipment via Iran, development of Shahid Rajaie Port is among the most important development projects in the country.

And to expedite its development, benefitting from the potential and capabilities of private sector is seriously pursued.

Designing, building, transporting, installing and launching 15 gantry cranes which increased the number of these cranes to 60 at Shahid Rajaie Port could be mentioned as some of the major projects implemented by the private sector to develop this port.

The port’s capacity is planned to rise 2.1 million TEUs to reach 8 million TEUs through implementing the first stage of the third phase of its development plan by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 19, 2020), Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO)’s director of engineering and infrastructure development said in mid-August.

Mohammadreza Allahyar said: “We have implementation of the third phase on agenda and it has already some good progress.”

Once the third phase is fully implemented, the vessels with the capacity of 18,400 TEU can berth at the port, he added.

of 4.9% in the second quarter, on the back of strong private consumption.

“Economic growth is showing signs of slowing in emerging Asia, partly due to trade tensions. However, domestic private consumption is holding up well,” OECD said in a July report.

A recent trend of Asian companies shutting factories in China and shifting them home would help lower their dependence on China, economists said.

According to a Nomura note this month, Taiwanese companies such as Flexium Interconnect <6269.TW> and Quanta Computer <2382.TW>, South Korean firm SK Hynix <000660.KS> and Japanese firms such as Mitsubishi Electric <6503.T> and Toshiba Machine <6104.T> are looking to move production back to home from China.

■ **Lower-cost countries**

Also, some U.S. and European companies are shifting their factories from China to other lower-cost countries such as Vietnam, Philippines and Cambodia.

German sportswear group Puma <PUMG.DE> has moved some of its production to Vietnam and Bangladesh from China, while U.S. retailers like Gap Inc. <GPS.N>, Steve Madden Ltd <SHOO.O> and Macy’s Inc. <M.N> are also moving out of China.

India is targeting companies including Apple <AAPL.O>, Foxconn <2354.TW> and Wilstrong Crop <3231.TW>, according to a document seen by Reuters.

Foreign direct investment (FDI) has risen sharply in some of these low-cost markets in the region, bolstering their current account balances and helping give more room for their central banks to cut policy rates this year.

FDI into Vietnam climbed to \$12 billion in the first eight months of 2019, from \$11.25 billion a year earlier. Malaysia and Thailand have also seen an increase in FDI.

Tommy Wu, senior economist at Oxford Economics, said production processes that require high skills would move to economies such as South Korea and Taiwan while others would likely go to countries such as India and Vietnam.

“Even before the U.S-China trade war, a lot of companies had been looking to relocate due to rising production costs in China. But then, the U.S.-China trade war is a stimulating factor to speed up this whole process.”

(Source: euronews.com)

Iran Plast 2019, a showcase for Iranian petchem power

By Ebrahim Fallahi

TEHRAN – After four busy days, the 13th edition of Iran's International Exhibition of Plastic, Rubber, Machinery and Equipment (IRAN PLAST 2019) was finally wrapped up on Wednesday.

As one of the largest and most important exhibitions in the Middle East region and Asia, in the fields of raw materials, machinery, auxiliaries and services for plastics & rubber industries, Iran Plast is a showcase for presenting Iranian petrochemical industry's capacities, capabilities and advances in recent years.

Although, like every year, this edition of the exhibition also hosted several foreign companies and exhibitors from various countries, but the main theme of the event was a little different from the previous editions.

This year the exhibition's slogan was "supporting domestic production" and one could see the manifestation of this goal in every corner of the exhibit.

While touring the exhibition, the number of Iranian companies attending, and great variety of the products and services presented, absolutely amazed me.

Another aspect of the exhibition which was eye-catching for me, was the significant presence of knowledge-based companies with several innovative solutions and products such as Nano-size polymers and fibers, as

well as Iranian-made machinery and facilities which could help the industry in great ways.

In my visit to the exhibition, I managed to talk to some of the exhibitors to be a part of their Iran Plast experience. What comes below is a short selection of those interviews.

■ Still an attractive market

Fabrizio Vanzen, a representative of Italian Astics and Rubber Processing Machinery and Moulds Manufacturers Association, believed that despite the U.S. sanctions Iran is still an attractive market for European companies especially in Italy, however various problems including banking and financial issues are preventing them from being more active in the Iranian market.

Vanzen further mentioned some of the association's activities and its presence in Iran Plast, saying "We represent 160 Italian companies which are active in the field of manufacturing rubber and plastics processing machinery. We have attended Iran Plast since the very beginning, so we didn't want to miss out this edition too."

"For the first two days, the exhibition was quite good and I think it was even on a higher level than expectations," he added.

Mentioning the significant presence of Iranian companies in the exhibition, Vanzen said: "It is very obvious that Iranian companies' interest in new technologies has grown and they do value new platforms which can help them boost their productivity."



"It is clearly a shame that these political constraints [U.S. sanctions] are preventing more businesses from flourishing as it used to be in the past before the sanctions."

"Of course we didn't want to abandon our Iranian partners in this difficult time, so we wanted to show a sign of our attendance to let them know that we would be always be available to be involved in any trade transaction with our Iranian partners", he added.

■ Iran, a very safe market for investment

Eric Wang, the sales manager of Jiangsu Sanyang Textile Machine Company, which is a company active in the field of manufacturing and promoting textile production lines in China, said he found Iran to be a very lucrative and safe market for investment.

It was Wang's second time in Iran Plast exhibition, he believed that Iran Plast was one of the biggest exhibitions in this industry and he expressed hope to attend the exhibition in the years to come.

Asked about the impact of the U.S. sanctions on their approach toward the Iranian market, Wang said "It's OK, we don't care about the Americans, we need to make money, and Americans don't feed us."

He noted that this year, more than 25 Chinese companies active in a variety of fields were attending the exhibition.

"Some people might think Iran is not a safe market for investment, I thought so too, but after coming to this exhibition, I have found it to be a very safe and lucrative market despite all the political restraints," he added.

■ An exhibition beyond expectations

Ending my exhibition tour, I met Anil Kalia from KLJ India Company, a manufacturer of polymer and plasticizers based in New Delhi.

It was his first time attending Iran Plast and also his first time in Iran. When asked about the exhibition, he said "It is very great, it was beyond our expectations, and it was also very nicely organized."

He noted that his company has had some positive negotiations with Iranian companies.

"We've had some really good meetings and we are looking forward for doing business in Iran."

Asked about the impact of U.S. sanctions on their activities in Iran, Kalia said, "Between India and Iran, the companies can use national currencies for business, so there would be no problem in that regard."



Oil falls on Trump's bearish China trade comments

Oil prices fell for a second day on Wednesday on worries that fuel demand could fall after U.S. President Donald Trump doused recent optimism over China-U.S. trade talks, at a time of rising U.S. crude oil stockpiles.

As per Reuters.com, Brent crude futures LC0c1 were down \$1.03 cents to \$62.07 a barrel by 0811 GMT on Wednesday, erasing all gains made after an attack on Saudi oil facilities sent the benchmark up around 20% last week.

Nevertheless, the benchmark remains on track for its first monthly gain since June.

U.S. West Texas Intermediate crude CLc1 dropped to \$56.49 a barrel, down 80 cents.

"Focus will return to faltering oil demand concerns as there is unlikely to be any quick resolution to U.S.-China trade differences to positively shift economic expectations," global oil strategist at BNP Paribas Harry Tchilinguirian told the Reuters Global Oil Forum.

"Barring a repeat attack on Saudi infra-structure, oil will weaken further."

Trump criticized China's trade practices at the United Nations General Assembly on Tuesday and said he would not accept a "bad deal" in U.S.-China trade negotiations. China is the world's largest oil importer and second-largest crude user. The United States is the largest consumer of oil.

Trump also said he saw a path to peace with Iran.

Others, like OCB economist Howie Lee, saw more potential upside, pointing to the possibility that buyers of Saudi crude could be made to look for supplies in the spot market and push prices higher again if Saudi stocks run out. For graphics on Saudi oil stocks, click

"Right now, the market is very concerned about the demand side of the equation, but I would caution against being complacent about what's happening in the Middle East," Lee said.

Oil rallied last week following a crippling attack on Saudi Arabia's oil installations that has disrupted supplies from the world's top exporter. To meet its supply obligations to Saudi refineries overseas, Saudi Aramco is buying oil



from other Middle East producers.

Prices were also weighed down by an unexpected build in U.S. crude inventories USOIA=ECI last week.

U.S. crude inventories rose 1.4 million barrels last week, the American Petroleum Institute said on Tuesday, compared with analysts' forecasts of a 200,000-barrel drawdown.

Three EU countries bump up renewable energy goal for 2030

By Frédéric Simon

France, Greece and Bulgaria have pledged to update their national targets for renewable energy and bump up the share of wind, solar and other renewables to 33%, 35% and 27% of their energy consumption respectively by 2030.

The announcements were made on 24 September as part of a public debate among EU energy ministers on the National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs) submitted by the bloc's 28 member states.

"France has decided to raise its objective from 32 to 33%," said Fabrice Dubreuil, the deputy permanent representative of France to the European Union, who represented his country at today's ministerial meeting in Brussels.

Other countries announced similar pledges, with Greece and Bulgaria saying they will raise their own renewables target from 31 to 35% and from 25 to 27%, respectively. Greece had already surprised observers at the UN climate summit in New York on Monday by announcing plans to phase out coal entirely by 2028.

In introductory remarks to Tuesday's meeting, the EU Commission vice-president in charge of the energy union, Maroš Šefovič, reminded national governments about the "ambition gap" in meeting Europe's objectives on renewables and energy efficiency.

According to the European Commission, renewable energy deployment is on track to fall short by 1.6 percentage points against a 32% target for 2030. And energy efficiency measures risk leaving a gap of 6.2 percentage points versus a 32.5% benchmark agreed last year.

"Where I see the bigger challenge is energy efficiency," Šefovič said. "We're doing the most



but we know we can do better."

■ The European Commission

The European Commission warned EU countries on 18 June that draft national plans for the coming decade are insufficient to achieve the bloc's 2030 energy and climate targets.

"Substantial" gaps have been identified on renewables and energy efficiency.

Former communist countries like Poland, Czechia and Hungary, for their part, underlined the need to increase financing available to meet the bloc's 2030 energy and climate objectives.

Poland, one the staunchest opponents to raising the bloc's energy and climate targets, was among the most outspoken.

"It's easy to lay down political objectives but more difficult to realize them," said Krzysztof Tchorzewski, the Polish energy minister. The Polish targets "are already very ambitious," Tchorzewski pointed out, saying any increase would come at "dangerous socio-economic costs" for his country.

Further moves from Poland "should be covered by EU funds in the spirit of European

solidarity," the minister insisted, referring to ongoing discussions about the EU's long-term budget for 2021-2027.

According to a study by McKinsey consultants for power industry association Eurelectric, the transformation of Poland's energy sector will require some €147 billion in investments until 2045.

Poland's views were echoed by other former communist states. "We are currently analyzing whether there are sufficient funds available" to increase the share of energy efficiency and renewables, said the Czech representative, who insisted that "affordability" was crucial to meeting climate objectives.

The Latvian representative added that it was "essential to find additional public financing for the implementation of targets" and said more ambitious targets could be envisaged if more money was made available.

As negotiations on the EU's next long-term budget continue, EU countries are jockeying for funding opportunities to assist them in the transition to clean energy. A number of schemes

are being envisaged to ensure the transition leaves no-one behind as industrial sectors such as coal and automotive face closures or deep restructuring.

■ The cost of energy transition

Poorer Eastern European nations were not alone in complaining about the cost of the energy transition.

Germany's energy state secretary, Andreas Feicht, underlined the importance of relaxing the EU's strict state aid rules when it comes to financing renewables and energy efficiency. Meeting the 2030 targets "will depend very largely on offshore wind," said the German secretary of state. "This is important to take into account when revising state aid rules," Feicht added.

This position was echoed by Fabrice Dubreuil, the French representative, who said a "revision of state aid rules is indispensable" to meet the EU's 2030 objectives.

Earlier this year, the European Commission proposed updating its state aid guidelines, saying subsidies for renewable energies should be phased out as wind and solar were becoming competitive with fossil fuels.

EU ministers have sometimes differed sharply as to the technologies needed to meet the EU's 2050 climate neutrality goal, which is being resisted by Poland and three other East European countries.

While Warsaw wants nuclear power to complement renewable energy sources, Germany opposed any suggestion that EU money could be used to back nuclear.

"Nuclear energy is not safe and sustainable or cost-effective," Feicht said. "So we reject the idea of EU money to extend the life of nuclear power stations."

(Source: euractiv.com)

Asia to lead offshore wind market by 2030

Asia, with China in the lead, will become leader in offshore wind energy with 100 GW of offshore eolic capacity installed by 2030, according to a report by the Global Wind Energy Council (GWEC).

As stated by plenglish.com, since 2013, the global wind turbines market has grown by an average of 21 percent each year, with more than 4GW of new wind farm capacity installed each year in 2017 and 2018.

According to the research available on GWEC's official website, in addition to China, the Council stressed that other Asian markets such as Taiwan, Japan, South Korea and India will also be increasingly critical for coming years.

Based on GWEC's Market Outlook, the share of the new offshore wind power capacity will increase to 10% and higher going forward.

While much of the current facilities are coming from mature markets such as Europe, where there were 18 GW installed capacity by the end of 2018, most of the new growth will come from emerging markets.

It is clear that markets across the world are now opening their eyes to the huge business and investment opportunities that offshore wind can offer, creating thousands of jobs and helping to contribute to their climate goals in the process, the GWEC reported.

On top of this, floating offshore wind is becoming more and more cost-competitive with pilot projects being developed globally.

Combined with GWEC's expectations that the government of existing offshore markets will increase their targets and volumes towards 2030, offshore wind growth shows no signs of slowing down with GWEC Market Intelligence forecasting an upside scenario of over 220 GW by 2030.

To take offshore wind market global and to support the creation of a global offshore wind energy industry, it is critical that governments and investors show long-term commitment.

This will be necessary so we can continue reducing across all areas, such as technology, financing and project planning.



This year's biggest story in mobility is oil, not technology

By Greg Rogers

Amid all of the excitement around new mobility technologies, a single, inescapable reality often gets lost: modern transportation does not run on lidar, telematics, or any other technologies. That is why 2019's biggest story in mobility is not about Waymo, Hyperloop, or Lime – nor is it about innovations coming out of Detroit, Silicon Valley, or Germany.

Abqaiq, a Saudi Arabian oil processing facility that also happens to be the largest in the world, was attacked by 10 drones on September 14. Reports estimated that the attack immediately halted the production of 5.7 million barrels of oil per day at the facility – cutting the global supply by about 5 percent. On the first day of trading after the attacks, oil prices experienced their largest surge on record.

While this was bad, it could have been far worse. Although the strikes may increase oil price volatility overall, potential price shocks were tempered by factors including a well-supplied oil market and slower economic growth. It also helped that Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman, Saudi Arabia's Energy Minister, stated last Tuesday that the country would restore the majority of its output and recover within weeks.

But the alarm bells should not be drowned out by the sighs of relief. This is yet another reminder in a decades-long string of reminders that transportation's overwhelming reliance on oil is its greatest vulnerability.

One of the most infamous examples is the 1973 oil crisis, when the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) proclaimed an oil embargo, shooting gasoline prices through the roof and triggering long lines at gas pumps across the United States.

■ Oil a globally-traded commodity

Since oil is a globally-traded commodity, a supply disruption anywhere affects prices everywhere. Even worse, this single commodity has a virtual monopoly over mobility: the U.S. relies on oil to power 92% of its transportation sector. This renders American commuters and businesses vulnerable to price shocks caused by, say, a drone strike halfway across the world at an oil processing facility that they have probably never heard of, by a rebel group they know nothing about.

The bitter irony for the transportation sector is that policymakers at every level of government invest a tremendous amount of effort in optimizing the flow of goods and people by attempting to manage hundreds of variables.

City planners attempt to reduce traffic and expand mobility options for residents; states regulate driver licensing, insurance, and build highways; the federal government distributes funds to aid in the construction of infrastructure and regulates vehicle safety.

These interlocking authorities have been painstakingly designed and tweaked to keep the economy moving, but everything could still slow to a crawl if the price of a single commodity spikes.

Put simply, oil reliance is the proverbial putting all your eggs in one basket.

■ The future of mobility

In order for the future of mobility to deliver on its promises, it must also be the future of choice. This means choice in transportation modes like transit, shared autonomous vehicles, scooters, and bikes – but also a choice in fuel sources.

Electrification presents the most readily-scalable opportunity to provide that choice. Transportation trends in the past few years have already shown where this is headed: electrification allows us to power scooters, bikes, cars, delivery vehicles, and trucks by using and expanding infrastructure that exists today.

This Wednesday, Oct. 17, 2018 photo shows a Chevrolet Volt hybrid car charging at a ChargePoint charging station at a parking garage in Los Angeles.

States by American businesses and workers, using a variety of fuels that are available to us today: solar, wind, hydropower, natural gas, coal, and nuclear. This diversity breeds certainty: since our power grids generate electricity from a wide range of sources, the cost of electricity has largely remained stable over time. This makes electric vehicles (EVs) a truly domestic solution to the energy security challenges confronted by our transportation sector.

The future of mobility will not be realized until these truths are absorbed and political leaders recognize the importance of fuel diversity to our transportation sector. Only when our policymakers embrace this truth will we realize the full potential of a transportation sector that serves every American, rather than rendering them vulnerable to an opaque commodity market driven by entities that do not share their interests or values.

(Source: forbes.com)

Netanyahu on steroids: What a Gantz-led government means for Palestine

By Ramzy Baroud

ANTIWAR — Experience has taught Palestinians not to pay heed to Israeli elections. But to every rule there is an exception.

Although it is still true that no Israeli Zionist leader has ever been kind to the Palestinian people, the dynamics of the latest Israeli elections on September 17 are likely to affect the Occupied Palestinian Territories in a profound way.

Indeed, the outcome of the elections seems to have ushered in a new age in Israel, ideologically and politically. But the same claim can also be made regarding its potential influence on Palestinians, who should now brace themselves for war in Gaza and annexation in the West Bank.

Former chief of general staff of the Israeli army, Benny Gantz, who had orchestrated the destructive war on the besieged Gaza Strip in 2014, is likely to be tasked with the job of forming Israel's new government. Gantz had recently boasted about sending "parts of Gaza back to the Stone Age".



There is little discussion in Israeli, and, by extension, western media of Gantz's numerous war crimes during the Gaza war. The focus is mainly placed on the fact that he seems to have finally dislodged Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu from a position he had held for nearly 13 years, a scenario that was, until recently, deemed inconceivable.

The leader of the Kahol Lavan (Blue and White) party had plotted the ouster of Netanyahu back in January 2018, when he formed the Israeli Resilience Party. Following several political mergers and a strong showing in the previous elections in April, the centrist politician has finally edged past Netanyahu's right-wing Likud party in the most recent elections.

With 33 seats in the Israeli Knesset — compared to Likud's 31 seats — Gantz now needs a broad coalition to rule Israel. The vehemently anti-Palestinian politician has made it clear that he will not enter into a coalition with the Joint List, the alliance of various Palestinian Arab political parties. The latter has managed to achieve an outstanding 13 seats, making it the third largest political force in Israel.

But, according to Gantz's previous statements, the inclusion of Arab parties in the coalition is out of the question, despite the fact that Ayman Odeh, the leader of the Joint List, had indicated his willingness to join a Gantz-led government.

It is now likely that Gantz will seek a coalition government that includes the Likud, along with Avigdor Lieberman's Yisrael Beiteinu. The country's former ultra-nationalist defense minister, Lieberman, with 8 seats, has restored his previous "kingmaker" status. He, too, is keen on such a coalition. Gantz is open to such a scenario, with one condition: Netanyahu should stay out.

While the "king of Israel" has finally been dethroned, however, Palestinians have little to rejoice over. True, Netanyahu has destroyed any chance of a just peace in Palestine through the entrenching of the illegal military occupation and inhumane siege of the West Bank and Gaza. However, future possibilities are equally, if not even more, grim. Once upon a time, outright discussion of annexing large parts of the Occupied Palestinian Territories were relegated to the margins of Israel's political discourse. This is no longer the case. The call for annexing major illegal settlement blocs, along with the Jordan Valley, is now a common demand made by all of Israel's main political parties, including Gantz's own.

Gantz, possibly Israel's next prime minister, has repeatedly made it clear that he would be strengthening, rather than dismantling, the illegal settlements in the West Bank, and has even attempted to take ownership of Netanyahu's pledge to annex the Jordan Valley.

"We are happy that the Prime Minister has come around to adopt the Blue and White plan to recognize the Jordan valley," Gantz's party said in a statement shortly before election day. The annexation of these areas would amount to illegally seizing more than 60 percent of the West Bank.

Given that Israel has successively normalized the concept of annexation in its own, political discourse, and that it has already received an American nod on the matter, it is then a matter of time before such a step takes place.

The likelihood of it taking place sooner than later is that a broad, center-right-ultranationalist coalition would serve as an insurance to Israel's leadership, in case of a political or security fallout once the decision is taken and enforced.

That political insurance simply means that no single party or official would bear the blame or shoulder the consequences alone, should Palestinians rebel or the international community push back against the flagrant Israeli violation of international law. The same logic is applicable to the case of a future war on Gaza.

Israel has been itching for a major military campaign in Gaza since its last onslaught of 2014. Since then, Gaza has been bombed numerous times, and hundreds of innocent lives have been lost. But Netanyahu steered clear of an all-out war, fearing a high death toll among his soldiers and the blame game that often follows such military misadventures.

Mandated by a large coalition, bringing together Israeli army generals, right-wing politicians and ideologues, Gantz would feel far more empowered to go to war, especially since the former military chief has repeatedly accused Netanyahu of being "weak" on Gaza, "terrorism" and security.

If a future war goes as planned, Gantz would be happy to claim the accolades of victory; if it does not, due to Gaza's stiff resistance, the political damage is likely to remain minimal.

When it comes to war, Gantz is Netanyahu on steroids. He has participated, orchestrated or led many military campaigns, including ones aimed at suppressing any resistance in Gaza, in Lebanon and during the previous popular uprisings.

For Gantz, war is the answer, as indicated by one of his campaign slogans, "Only the strong survive."

While it is typical, and understandable, to dismiss all Israeli governments as one and the same, a Gantz-led government will possess the needed political legitimacy, popular mandate and strategic tools to achieve a job that Netanyahu himself couldn't finish: a war on Gaza, and annexation of the West Bank.

U.S. should support Israeli land grabs say AIPAC Think-Tankers

American cash for weapons and Israeli settler relocation

By Grant Smith

ANTIWAR — It is always worthwhile to monitor — before it's too late — policy recommendations emerging from the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, AIPAC ecosystem. Since 1984 that ecosystem includes AIPAC's associated think tank, the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. Two WINEP thought leaders are currently advancing a serious proposal for the US to help Israel avert the fate of becoming a "bi-national state." It's a two-step process. First the US would formally recognize Israeli sovereignty over large Israeli-annexed West Bank settlement blocs. Then the U.S. would use its powers of persuasion to win European, U.N. and Arab acceptance of the deal, all the while giving Israel billions more in foreign assistance.

All of these policy prescriptions appear in the new Dennis Ross/David Makovsky book, *Be Strong and of Good Courage: How Israel's Most Important Leaders Shaped its Destiny*. Dennis Ross worked on the "peace process" within US government for decades. Though trying to maintain a pretense of impartiality, Israel partisans like Ross working within such teams always managed to make the US appear to operate as "Israel's lawyer." WINEP's David Makovsky labored as a journalist and then executive editor of the Jerusalem Post reporting on the "peace process" before joining WINEP.

The rocket boosters for the new book's delivery vehicles are lessons Makovsky and Ross reveal from decisions made by Israel's "founding fathers." According to the book, whenever Israel was at an existential inflection point, David Ben-Gurion, Menachem Begin, Yitzhak Rabin and Ariel Sharon made near-unilateral and controversial decisions necessary for Israel to prevail.

For example, just prior to Israel's declaration of statehood in 1948, David Ben-Gurion had to overcome opposition from the venerable US Secretary of State George Marshall. Marshall famously argued for a US funded plan to rebuild post-WWII Europe. Less known is that Marshall wanted "Zionists to delay declaration of statehood" based on department views of how to best advance US policy toward the Soviet Union and Arab states.

In David Ben-Gurion's estimation, according to the book, "a declaration of statehood, by contrast, would allow the Zionists to tap their greatest resource — supporters abroad — who could help smuggle weaponry into the nascent country..." Ben-Gurion convinced members of his cabinet, who preferred postponement and accepting a truce, that immediately declaring statehood was the proper strategy.

Key to Ben-Gurion's success — according to the book — was cultivating "a mass US movement to pressure leaders in Washington..." Ben-Gurion believed that Western democracies would, whenever a crisis arose (whether precipitated by Israel or not) respond to well-organized public pressure campaigns. This is



why Ben Gurion spent ten months in 1940-1941 "rallying American Jewish organizations, coaxing them toward realizing that Zionism did not threaten their identity as Americans." The book omits the precise details — which are available thanks to the release of FBI investigation records and a handful of prosecutions — about precisely how the Jewish Agency American Section, which was under Ben-Gurion's command, organized a massive illegal weapons procurement and smuggling network in the US. Ben-Gurion also reached out to churches and labor unions to build a broader lobby for Israel within the US. Although, again, the book does not mention known details about the public relations and lobbying campaigns of the Israel lobby's umbrella group the American Zionist Council which became AIPAC, it acknowledges the key role of proto-Israeli leaders in their formation.

Today the US Israel lobby must help Israelis avoid the fate of becoming a binational state, where Palestinians have the right to vote and other accoutrements of citizenship, according to Makovsky and Ross. It's only fair, since Israel has provided a rallying point for Jewish identity in the US, according to the pair.

"Jewish leaders, too, have a stake in Israel preserving its basic Zionist character; it is very much part of their ethos and belief system. In addition, they well know that Jewish identity in America has, at least in part, been influenced by the ability to identify with Israel. Should that become more difficult, it would certainly produce a critical loss of support for Israel in the Jewish community, especially among the younger Jewish demographic that embraces more progressive, liberal values."

If the delivery vehicle of *Be Strong and of Good Courage* is a collection of enticing founding father bios, what is the payload? It appears in the final chapter. As to be expected, it is an appeal for additional withdrawals from the U.S. Treasury Department and already dangerously overdrawn bank account

of US international standing.

The status quo drift toward a binational state is unsustainable and a "prescription for endless conflict." The root cause of that problem, which the authors intensely fixate upon, is the high "Arab" birth rate in East Jerusalem, parts of Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza. Israel can't hang onto or annex everything. So, decisions must now be made.

Israel's occupations, human rights violations and blockades vex European leaders, generate controversy on American college campuses and are now even being exposed by some elite opinion makers. While, according to the book, these diplomatic costs of militarily occupying and subjugating Palestinians to dire human rights conditions remain "manageable," maintaining the pretense that there is a viable "peace process" that will lead inevitably to the "two state solution" the authors claim to prefer — is no longer feasible. And the Israelis are utterly oblivious to the true "demographic trends." The book also cites a litany of supposed evidence that Palestinians "never missed an opportunity to miss an opportunity" to obtain a state of their own. This has long been an Israel lobby canard, first deployed by Abba Eban, and no doubt plays well to Ross and Makovsky supporters.

The book proposes that in exchange for ending settlement construction east of the separation wall Israel built, much of it on Palestinian land, and a halt in Jewish real estate acquisition within Arab neighborhoods in occupied East Jerusalem, Israeli settlers would move to locations within Israel or to lands that will soon become part of Israel. Israel will of course maintain the right to conduct military operations east of the wall, but would abide Palestinian development of Dead Sea tourism and mineral industries.

The book recommends that the US Israel lobby, which partly owes its existence, identity and power to Israel, do what it does best: extract what Israel needs from America to realize Israel's

national ambitions. The US should provide "cash" to relocate settlers to areas within the Green Line or to newly annexed West Bank settlement blocs. The US should then block any UN resolutions opposed to unilateral Israeli annexations, and "work with the Europeans and others to gain their public support for Israel's unilateral moves to ensure separation." The US should also fight the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement and publicly criticize European and Arab leaders who fail to wholeheartedly approve. Of course, Israel's annexations will create new security challenges, so the US should also promptly increase Israel's "qualitative military edge."

Given the plan's source, it is unsurprising the book carries no compelling case about what the US and average Americans could possibly get out of this latest joint Israel-lobby cash and land grab. The book's intense fixation on physical separation along religious and ethnic lines feel like a poor fit for a US popular conscience beginning to better come to terms with its own legacy of genocide against indigenous Americans and the enslavement of Africans. For growing numbers of newly sensitized Americans now familiar with the brutal realities of settler colonialism in the US (thanks to the work of such cross-disciplinary scholars as Walter Hixson) and Palestine (Ilan Pappé), it is impossible to not feel increasingly uneasy while reading the almost forensic research into the implications of Palestinian birth rates in *Be Strong and of Good Courage*.

The authors are determined not to let Israel's expansion transform it into a country resembling the United States, because that would create pressure for representative government. "Indeed, it is hard to imagine American administrations and the American public simply dismissing Palestinian calls for one person, one vote if Israel absorbs most of the West Bank."

This book should serve as a warning. Americans should not allow their elected representatives to yet again be captured by Israel and its lobby and harnessed into supporting its ongoing violations of legitimate Palestinian claims. Instead, readers should accept the authors' admissions about the true heritage and undue negative influence of Israel's highly active lobbying appendages within the US. The worst admissions are true.

Americans' next logical response should be organizing to elect representatives and a White House administration that is finally willing to enforce the JFK-era Justice Department order requiring AIPAC's predecessor (which is applicable to successor AIPAC) register as an Israeli foreign agent and put a halt to the massive and ongoing Israeli (and unregistered pro-Israeli lobby) meddling in the US political system. Only then will US Middle East policy be able to return to a Marshall-like pre-state condition of being allowed to adequately consider the broader interests of all Americans and the rest of the world.

Chomsky calls U.S. secondary sanctions against Iran 'Act of War'

TEHRAN (Tasnim) — Noam Chomsky, a leading American intellectual and political analyst, described US secondary sanctions against Tehran as an "act of war" under international law.

"As I've often discussed, the sanctions, in my opinion, are illegitimate in the first place, doubly so because they are secondary sanctions, imposed on other countries because of US domination of the international financial system and other elements of its unique power. That means that they in effect amount to a blockade, which would be an act of war under international law," Chomsky told Tasnim in an exclusive interview.

Avram Noam Chomsky (born December 7, 1928) is an American linguist, philosopher, cognitive scientist, historian, social critic, and political activist. Sometimes called "the father of modern linguistics", Chomsky is also a major figure in analytic philosophy and one of the founders of the field of cognitive science. He holds a joint appointment as Institute Professor Emeritus at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and laureate professor at the University of Arizona and is the author of more than 100 books on topics such as linguistics, war, politics, and mass media. Ideologically, he aligns with anarcho-syndicalism and libertarian socialism. An outspoken opponent of US involvement in the Vietnam War, which he saw as an act of American imperialism, in 1967 Chomsky rose to national attention for his antiwar essay "The Responsibility of Intellectuals".

Following is the full text of the interview.

■ US President Donald Trump has imposed fresh sanctions on Tehran over Iran's alleged involvement in



the 14 Sept. Saudi oil attacks. What is your take on this?

A: As I've often discussed, the sanctions, in my opinion, are illegitimate in the first place, doubly so because they are secondary sanctions, imposed on other countries because of US domination of the international financial system and other elements of its unique power. That means that they in effect amount to a blockade, which would be an act of war under international law. No action is taken against them in the international arena because of US power. If this was being done by some other country, there would be an international outcry, including UN resolutions and possibly more. That includes China, in partial answer to question three.

■ It seems that the US is facing political confusion in the face of Iran, as it no longer can affect regional equations. What do you think?

A: The US has enormous power, but it is not omnipotent. In the case of Iran, the Trump administration states quite openly that it aims to destroy the Iranian economy, provoking an uprising that might produce a regime more compliant with US wishes, like the Shah's. But military planners are well aware of the risks of a military strike.

■ Experts argue that the US hegemony is in decline as China is becoming a rising power and that the end of this hegemony means an end to liberalism. What are your thoughts on this?

A: At the end of World War II, the US had an unprecedented level of global dominance. It was bound to decline and began to almost at once. By the 1970s, the global economy was tripolar: US-based North America, German-based Europe, and Japan-based East Asia. China has indeed risen greatly since, but is still a poor country, with per capita wealth far below the West, and facing internal problems unknown in the more developed countries. In the UN Human Development Index it ranks 86th, right below Algeria and Thailand. In military power, of course, the US ranks supreme, far beyond others — indeed potential combinations of others -- both in scale and technological sophistication. In answer to your question, US hegemony is likely to continue the decline of the past 75 years, while Chinese power is likely to increase. But US global dominance seems fairly secure for as far ahead as one can predict with any confidence. The last phase is crucial. Unless the world begins to address seriously the two existential crises — global warming and nuclear war -- it won't matter who dominates what's left.

Does Merkel follow Trump's footsteps on Iran?

➔ Under the deal, Iran undertook to put limits on its nuclear program in exchange for termination of nuclear-related sanctions.

All Macron's initiatives

In New York, Rouhani also met earlier with French President Emmanuel Macron in a meeting that lasted for 100 minutes. In spite of its long history of misconduct towards Iran both in bilateral relations and during nuclear talks leading to the conclusion of the JCPOA, France has relatively had better diplomatic relations with Iran.

France proposed offering Iran a \$15-billion credit line to persuade Tehran to fully comply with the nuclear deal after the country started to reduce its commitments under the deal following the failure by Europeans to secure Iran's interests.

Macron also invited Iranian Foreign Minister to France back in August, during the G7 summit and held several lengthy phone calls with Iranian president over the past months. The French president dispatched his top advisor Emmanuel Bonne to Tehran to hold talks with the country's officials with the aim of contributing to easing tensions in the Persian Gulf region.

Having said that and given Germany's status as a leading member of the European Union and an economic power, why unlike Paris, has Berlin not played a visible and significant role with regards to saving Iran's nuclear deal? Moreover, considering Germany and the United States' deeply intertwined relationship, could Berlin adopt an independent foreign policy from Washington in a bid to keep Iran nuclear deal alive?

When I posed these questions to diplomats, officials and foreign policy experts in Germany, some of them simply declined to answer, while others said they prefer not to discuss these issues in the media "at the present time." Their reluctance to talk could be comprehensible to some extent, given the complicated and contradictory stances of Berlin towards the nuclear deal. But perhaps more concerning is their fear of becoming the target of powerful German media outlets that are opposed to any improvement in the relations between Germany and Iran. One prominent German historian and political expert wrote to me: "If I gave an interview to an Iranian newspaper, my enemies would use it against me."

Germany's role in nuclear talks

Since reunification in 1990, Germany has embarked upon a new course of playing a



greater role in international relations, especially in the Middle East.

From the very start of the intense diplomatic efforts and technical negotiations over Iranian nuclear program, Germany turned into one of the key players in the talks and had always sought to adopt balanced stances. However, after Donald Trump pulled the U.S. out of the nuclear deal, it seems the Europeans and Germany atop, adopted a dual and contradictory policy with respect to saving the nuclear deal.

Abbas Aslani, a political analyst based in Tehran, says "EU countries including Germany and France have participated in the (nuclear) negotiations. I remember back then and afterwards when the Americans were talking about withdrawing from the nuclear deal, Germany was active in order to stop that process and to try to save the nuclear deal."

Germany has always criticized the U.S. decision to withdraw from the 2015 nuclear agreement with Iran, and worked with France and the European Union to set up an alternative financing mechanism that would allow European firms to do business with Tehran despite U.S. financial sanctions. Since its inception last January, the EU-Iran trade mechanism, known as INSTEX, has been led by three presidents, all Ger-

man nationals but without much success. In August, Bernd Erbel, former Germany's ambassador to Iran was forced to resign just days after his appointment, apparently for comments he made a month earlier criticizing Israel and supporting Iran's missile program. Since then Berlin has appointed another German diplomat Michael Bock to head this mechanism.

Moreover, German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas's brief visit to Iran in June was described by German media and politicians as "too little, too late" with no tangible results. Instead, Maas said during a news conference with his Iranian counterpart in Tehran that "we are working to preserve the JCPOA, but we cannot work miracles."

An element of 'immaturity' among Germans

Meanwhile, it seems Germany is convinced that it would be in its best interests to let France take the lead as part of efforts to salvage the nuclear deal.

Riccardo Alcaro, a senior fellow with the Transatlantic Program of the Istituto Affari Internazionali in Rome, says Berlin's decision is due to the fact that "Macron seems to get on relatively well with Trump (who is very critical of Germany instead. Also because Germany has more pressing issues to think about as far as its relationship

with the U.S. is concerned, especially the possibility that Trump adopts high tariffs on imports of European cars (the German car sector would suffer considerably from this)".

Alcaro further refers to an element of "immaturity" among Germans that keep them from taking bold foreign policy positions.

This lack of tangible action by Germany could be interpreted in the context of Germany's dependence on the United States for its security and defense. "France has developed a culture of strategic autonomy, has significantly more capable armed forces than Germany, and has of course also acquired nuclear power status since the 1960s," Alcaro noted.

Merkel out of options

Based on the foregoing, one could argue that Berlin may not have a lot of options under the current circumstances and because Merkel's coalition government has had enough problems to deal with in regard to domestic and political issues.

Alcaro attributes this reluctance to take action to "political expediency". "Merkel is on her way out and her ruling coalition with the SPD is fragile. This said, Germany's quieter role with regard to the JCPOA is also a function of France's activism, as France is in a way doing the job for Germany (and the rest of the EU) too. The upholding of the JCPOA is still extremely important for Germany."

Limited chances of success

Trump's belligerent policy toward Iran has exposed Europe's principal players' weaknesses in the face of the American hegemony. Until Europe does not want to confront its own weaknesses and adopt an independent foreign policy from the United States, it would have no option but to act as an obedient player and follower of U.S. policies.

"A break from the U.S. is conceivable only if the U.S. were to continuously pursue a policy aimed at weakening and dividing the EU, but that would need to happen for several years before Germany reaches the conclusion that it has to 'decouple' from the U.S. And even if it does take that decision, it will find it very hard to implement," Alcaro remarked.

Until then, the chances of success for Germany's diplomatic intervention in the Iranian crisis are very limited.

A look at London's suspicious positions on Iran and Aramco

➔ On Monday, he wrote in a message on Twitter, "London is cooperating with international partners to offer a strong diplomatic response to the attack on Aramco oil facilities, and to establish security in the Middle East. Britain believes that Iran is most likely responsible for illegal attack on Saudi oil facilities."

In the meanwhile, Johnson made statements against Iran, claiming that Iran is in charge for the attack on the Saudi oil facilities, and British military is likely to participate in protecting Saudi Arabia against future attacks.

Saudi Arabia turning from the U.S. to Britain

The way that Saudi Arabia responded to the attacks on the Aramco oil facilities shows well that Riyadh is not satisfied with U.S. reaction to these attacks. The positions taken by American officials toward the incident does not meet Riyadh's desires. Therefore, Saudi rulers decided to use another actor to achieve their goal, so which option is better than Britain?

Donald Trump and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo have repeatedly stated in recent days that they are willing to use diplomacy in case of Iran. In case of Aramco, Saudi Arabia should make the final decision about Iran and possible action.

Of course, Trump agreed to dispatch new troops to Saudi Arabia and the UAE to make Riyadh keep quiet, but this position failed to meet Riyadh's demand.

Supplying Brexit costs

There are many reasons why Britain has entered the game, but the main one is the cost of leaving the European Union.

Leaving the EU, if possible, will have great financial cost for London, one of which is paying £39 billion to Brussels. Johnson has claimed several times that Britain would not pay this sum to the EU, and has announced some conditions for paying the bill at a lower cost.

In addition to the financial costs, leaving the European Union will also have political costs for Britain. One of the main costs will be a gap between London and European allies. So being next to Saudi Arabia, a country that world powers bow to its dollars, can minimize Brexit's political consequences for Johnson.

Increasing the gap between London and France

Britain has launched a propaganda campaign against Iran, while the French president has made every efforts to maintain the JCPOA. Britain's measures can at least disrupt the space that Emmanuel Macron is trying to create, and it means a gap between Paris and London. In other words, France is seeking to reduce tensions in the region, but Britain's recent actions are intensifying them.

Britain has earlier displeased France with a careless action in recent months. It was related to a French plan to create a European maritime coalition in the Strait of Hormuz, while Britain backed the U.S. alternative plan all at once. As a result France proposed European coalition without Britain.

Relying on the fleeting government

Saudi Arabia has selected Johnson and Raab to carry out the mission, while the situation of the British government is not stable at all. There are arguments about no confidence vote to Johnson as the parliament will start its work after a vacation.

Britain is dealing with Brexit, a crisis that has so far victimized administrations of David Cameron and Theresa May, and Johnson's cabinet may be its third victim.

However, the claims against Iran regarding attacks on Aramco are so futile that the U.S. has so far refused to accompany Saudi Arabia properly. The result of these changes will lead to isolation of Johnson and Raab among European allies.

Rights groups urge senate to reject nomination of torture advocate marshall billingslea to top human rights post

ANTIWAR — Billingslea's nomination has alarmed human rights advocates due to his unapologetic embrace of torturing suspected terrorists during the George W. Bush administration

In keeping with his administration's consistent practice of appointing people who are inimical to the stated missions of the government agencies they're tapped to lead, President Donald Trump has nominated a staunch advocate of torture to a top human rights position at the State Department.

Last week 21 human rights groups including Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and Human Rights First published an open letter to US senators urging them to reject the nomination of Marshall Billingslea as Under Secretary for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights. If confirmed, Billingslea, who currently serves as Assistant Secretary for Terrorist Financing at the Treasury Department, would be the senior-most executive branch official directly responsible for creating and implementing US government policy on promoting human rights around the world.

Billingslea's nomination has alarmed human rights advocates due to his unapologetic embrace of torturing suspected terrorists during the George W. Bush administration, in which he served as Deputy Under Secretary of the Navy, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict, and Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Negotiation Policy. During his tenure at the Defense Department, Billingslea recommended the use of interrogation techniques that constitute torture under US and international law.

According to the 2009 Senate Armed Services Committee report on detainee treatment, Billingslea, who participated in a 2003 Pentagon working group on interrogation, pressed for the use of torture of detainees at the US military prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, despite the objections of high-ranking military officials, including Gen. Thomas Romig, the Army's Judge Advocate General. Billingslea and other members of the working group recommended Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld authorize

the use of 35 interrogation techniques, many of which constitute torture or cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment under domestic and international law. According to the report, when Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Richard Myers recommended to Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld in April 2003 that only 24 of the 35 techniques be used, Billingslea pushed for the approval of all 35.

"Guys, it's time to wake up and smell the coffee," Billingslea said, according to Romig, "It's time to take the gloves off." That euphemism for torture – "take the gloves off" – was first used by Rumsfeld and appears numerous times in the Senate report. Alberto J. Mora, who at the time was the Navy's general counsel, called the standard being used to determine the legality of harsh interrogation "a travesty of the applicable law." Officials at the Office of Legal Counsel (OLC) had issued memos asserting sweeping presidential powers during wartime, including the authority to suspend constitutional free speech and anti-torture protections, and to ignore domestic and international laws against torture. OLC attorneys including John Yoo infamously argued that detainee abuse only crossed the threshold of torture when the pain inflicted upon the victim was equal to "organ failure, impairment of bodily function, or even death." Yoo, who is now a professor at the University of California, Berkeley School of Law, later admitted that some detainee abuse went too far.

Most of the torture techniques approved by the Bush administration – which included the interrupted drowning technique known as "waterboarding," sleep, sensory and food deprivation, shackling in excruciating "stress positions," the use of loud music and dogs to torment detainees, slamming into walls, solitary confinement, exposure to extreme heat or cold and sexual humiliation – are illegal under both domestic and international law. Many of the techniques also violate the Army Field Manual, the US military standard for detainee treatment. In addition to these approved "enhanced interrogation" techniques, US military and intelligence personnel subjected terrorism detainees – many of them innocent men, women and children – to additional abuses, including

homicide, rape, imprisonment of innocent relatives as bargaining chips, exposure to sometimes lethally extreme temperatures and brutal beatings.

Saying Yes to Torture

In a memo to Rumsfeld, Billingslea falsely claimed that the Pentagon working group had endorsed some of the torture techniques he was recommending. In fact, senior military and civilian lawyers vehemently opposed the methods, and Billingslea completed the group's final report without the knowledge of its dissenting members.

Rumsfeld approved all of the techniques recommended by Billingslea, which were then used to torture Mohamedou Ould Slahi, a Mauritanian who allegedly helped plan the hijacking of United Airlines Flight 175, the plane that al-Qaeda militants crashed into the south tower of the World Trade Center in New York City on September 11, 2001. Slahi was tortured with beatings, solitary confinement, repetitive loud music, sleep deprivation, exposure to extreme temperatures, sexual abuse, mock execution and threats to rape his mother. Guantanamo prosecutor Col. Stuart Crouch, whose Marine Corps buddy was the pilot of Flight 175, believed Slahi was guilty as charged. However, Crouch refused to proceed with prosecuting him after determining that "what had been done to Slahi amounted to torture." Slahi was released from GITMO in 2016 after 14 years of imprisonment.

Torture doesn't seem to bother President Trump very much. On the 2016 campaign trail he promised to "bring back a hell of a lot worse than waterboarding." He also said he will seek to change US law so that waterboarding is no longer considered a war crime. Trump's predecessor, Barack Obama, issued an executive order banning torture. However, instead of prosecuting any of the Bush torture architects as required under the law, the Obama administration actively shielded them from any accountability for their crimes. Furthermore, Obama attempted to undermine publication of the Senate torture report and prosecuted and jailed former CIA agent John Kiriakou for blowing the whistle on torture.

Second Announcement											
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N.I.O.C 1398.3968		National Iranian Drilling Company									
Tender descriptions: <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>The Tender holder</th> <th>Registration No. through national electronic tendering sys tem</th> <th>Tender No. /Andent No.</th> <th>Estimated value (Rial/Euro)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>National Iranian Drilling Company</td> <td>3215363</td> <td>PPF/AZD/98/004 48-22-9822017</td> <td>194,542,000,000</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>				The Tender holder	Registration No. through national electronic tendering sys tem	Tender No. /Andent No.	Estimated value (Rial/Euro)	National Iranian Drilling Company	3215363	PPF/AZD/98/004 48-22-9822017	194,542,000,000
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1. The tenderers who have more than four (4) active contracts with NIDC are not allowed to attend in this tender. 2. The tenderers who have more than two (2) active contracts with same subject (exactly compliance with this subject) with NIDC are not allowed to attend in this tender.											
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Tender Documents Distribution by Company	Distribution Place	Hall No. 316, 3th floor, Foreign Procurement Dept. (DRILLING PROJECTS), National Iranian Drilling Company, After Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN. Tel: 061341468222 B) jomhuri street , yaghma alley nioc 8th building floor no : 04 room no 428 – tehran -iran . Tel: 02166700249									
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Tender Guarantee <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Value of guarantee</th> <th>5,859,000,000 Rial/ 124,443 Euro</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Type of guarantee</td> <td> ✓ Bank guarantees or guarantees issued by non-bank institutions that obtain activity license from the central bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran. ✓ Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt under account number 4001114006376636 (Shaba No. IR350100004001114006376636) in name of "NIDC saving account" by the central bank of Islamic Republic of Iran. </td> </tr> <tr> <td>Duration of credit & quotation</td> <td> "NIDC saving account" by the central bank of Islamic Republic of Iran. Tender Guarantee and quotation should be valid for 90 days and extendable maximum for one time in initial validity duration. </td> </tr> </tbody> </table>				Value of guarantee	5,859,000,000 Rial/ 124,443 Euro	Type of guarantee	✓ Bank guarantees or guarantees issued by non-bank institutions that obtain activity license from the central bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran. ✓ Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt under account number 4001114006376636 (Shaba No. IR350100004001114006376636) in name of "NIDC saving account" by the central bank of Islamic Republic of Iran.	Duration of credit & quotation	"NIDC saving account" by the central bank of Islamic Republic of Iran. Tender Guarantee and quotation should be valid for 90 days and extendable maximum for one time in initial validity duration.		
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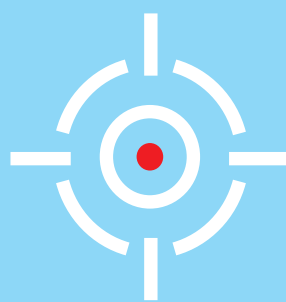
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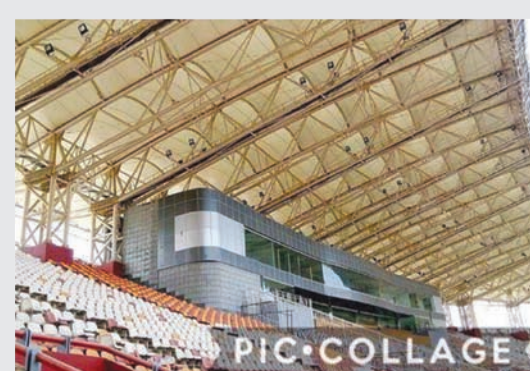
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2nd interstellar visitor to our solar system confirmed and named

An unusual object detected streaking across the sky last month was a comet that originated outside our solar system, observations have confirmed, becoming only the second observed interstellar object to cross into our solar system.

It has been named 2I/Borisov by the International Astronomical Union's Minor Planet Center. And it's anywhere between 1.2 and 10 miles in diameter, Karen Meech and her colleagues at the University of Hawaii say.

Observations by NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory Solar System Dynamics Group have supported that this comet has the most hyperbolic orbit out of the thousands of known comets.

«The orbit is now sufficiently well known, and the object is unambiguously interstellar in origin,» according to a release by the IAU, which has designated the object as the second interstellar object, 2I.

It first was spotted on August 30, almost two years after the first interstellar visitor detected in our solar system, known as ʻOumuamua, was found in October 2017. Interstellar means that the object originated outside our solar system.

Gennady Borisov spotted a new comet while at the MARGO observatory in Crimea. The amateur astronomer used a 0.65-meter



telescope he built and saw something that resembled a comet with a short tail.

After this initial observation, the Scout system at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory also flagged the object as possibly originating outside our solar system. Scout assesses recently found objects from the Minor Planet Center for hazards and potential trajectories.

Follow-up observations of the comet were made, including by Davide Farnocchia at

NASA's Center for Near-Earth Object Studies and by the European Space Agency's Near-Earth Object Coordination Center.

And we'll get a chance to know the comet better soon. It's due to enter the inner part of our solar system on October 26. To look at it right now through telescopes from Earth, the comet appears close to the sun. It will be visible through professional telescopes for months.

The comet is making its way toward our sun and is now 260 million miles away. It will get closest to Earth -- 190 million miles -- on December 8.

«The comet's current velocity is high, about 93,000 mph, which is well above the typical velocities of objects orbiting the Sun at that distance,» Farnocchia said. «The high velocity indicates not only that the object likely originated outside our solar system but also that it will leave and head back to interstellar space.»

The object was designated as a comet because it appears fuzzy. Comets tend to look fuzzy because they're icy and release dust and particles as they heat up on approach to the sun.

ʻOumuamua only had a quick visit with us in 2017. This comet's stay should be a bit longer.

«The object will peak in brightness in mid-December and continue to be observable with moderate-size telescopes until April 2020,» Farnocchia said.

«After that, it will only be observable with larger professional telescopes through October 2020.»

Future observations will shed more light on its size, rotation and path.

(Source: CNN)

Summer-born children 'more likely to be diagnosed with depression' than older pupils



Summer-born children could be more likely to be diagnosed with depression by the time they reach GCSE age than older children in the school year, a study has suggested.

Researchers found children born in the last quartile of the academic year were estimated to have a 30 per cent increased risk of depression compared with those born in the first quartile.

The study, led by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM), should be a catalyst for more research into the causes of depression in pupils and how to prevent it, researchers have argued.

The findings follow earlier research that revealed younger children in the school year tend to do less well academically than their older classmates.

Researchers used electronic GP records for a sample of 1 million young people in the UK, but did not set out to determine the potential reasons for links between age and depression.

However, they highlighted that younger children may find it harder to concentrate, leading to over-diagnosis of hyperactivity.

Other issues, such as inferior academic performance and poorer peer relationships, can also lead to mental health problems, the report says.

In the observational study, published in Jama Paediatrics, the scientists say there are a number of potential interventions to address the differences, but limited evidence on their effectiveness exists.

They point out that in some countries,

parents of relatively young children can defer school entry for a year, but parent choice has the potential to increase socioeconomic inequality.

Parents in England of children born between April and August are able to request a delayed start to Reception so children would begin at five years old, rather than at four years old.

Each year, about 800,000 children start primary school in the UK. Among these children, about 500 more of the youngest in the year might be diagnosed with depression compared with the oldest, the researchers predict.

Professor Ian Douglas, senior author from LSHTM, said: "Just 1 per cent of the youngest quartile in a school year will be diagnosed with depression by age 16, and fortunately there is an increasing awareness about mental health as a priority.

"However, we should focus on reducing the number of children affected. Better recognition of this as a problem might help."

Pauline Hull, leader of the Summer Born Campaign that has called for more flexible admissions, told The Independent: "This study recognizes the adverse effect on social and emotional outcomes for many summer-born children, and is a pattern we hope to see reversed in future years."

She added: "It's vital that the government acts to ensure all parents understand their right to wait until compulsory school age before their child starts school."

(Source: The Independent)

DNA analysis details relationships between coral, algae and bacteria



New DNA analysis has offered fresh insights into the ways corals partner with algae and bacteria.

"Symbiotic relationships are incredibly important for thriving corals," Steven Robbins, a researcher at the University of Queensland, said in a news release. "The mostly striking example of this is coral bleaching, where corals expel their algal symbiotic partners at higher-than-normal water temperatures."

The algae that partner with coral are dinoflagellates, a group of phytoplankton. The algae get shelter from coral, while the coral usurp some of the energy algae harvests from sunlight via photosynthesis. The coral use some of that energy to synthesize calcium carbonate to build out the skeleton architecture that forms coral reefs.

If this symbiosis breaks down for long enough, coral die.

"It's possible that equally important interactions are happening between corals and their bacteria and single-cell microorganisms, archaea, but we just don't know," Robbins said. "To properly manage our reefs, we need to understand how these relationships work, and genomics is one of our best tools."

For the new study, published this week in the journal Nature Microbiology, scientists collected samples of the coral *Porites lutea* from a reef off the coast of Australia. In the lab, researchers sequenced and separated out the DNA of the coral and its microscopic partners.

"Once we've sequenced the genomes, we used computer algorithms to look at the

entire library of genes that each organism has to work with," Robbins said. "This allows us to answer questions like, 'What nutrients does the coral need, but not make itself?'"

The initial genomic analysis of the algae and bacteria inside coral suggests microbial partners help supply coral with fixed carbon, B vitamins and amino acids. Scientists also identified microbe genes capable of producing ammonia, urea, nitrate, dimethylsulfoniopropionate and taurine transformation, all of which may be important for nutrient acquisition and retention.

The research is only in its infancy, however, and researchers expect their work to inspire insights into coral health the way genomics has precipitated advances in human medicine over the last 20 years.

"For the first time, we now have the genomes of a large number of the microbes that make up this coral, which is incredibly important for their survival," said David Bourne, an associate professor at James Cook University and the Australian Institute of Marine Science. "It's truly groundbreaking -- this is the blueprint for coral and their symbiotic communities."

Researchers hope that followup studies will reveal new strategies for enhancing the resiliency of coral threatened by climate change. Previous studies have shown some corals can pass along communities of microbes to their offspring that help protect the young coral from the stresses of marine heatwaves.

(Source: UPI)

Venus puts on variety show among its cloud tops

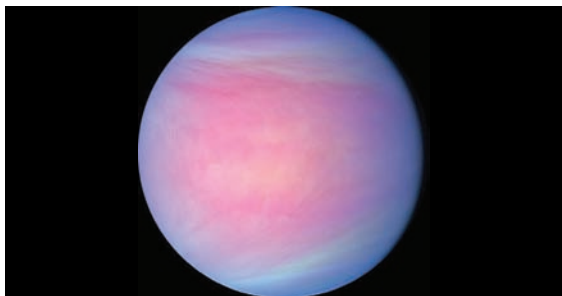
Studies of the cloud-tops of Venus by JAXA's Akatsuki spacecraft show striking variety in wind speeds year-on-year and between the planet's northern and southern hemispheres. The first fine-scale observations of cloud-top temperatures have also revealed a tendency for clouds to converge towards the equator at night, in contrast to poleward circulation seen previously in daytime studies.

The results, which have been presented at the EPSC-DPS Joint Meeting 2019 in Geneva, provide new insights into the mystery of why the Venusian atmosphere rotates much faster than the planet itself.

Prof Masato Nakamura, Project Manager of Akatsuki at JAXA, said: "The Venusian 'super-rotation' is most pronounced at the tops of Venus's clouds, making this an important region for understanding the dynamics of the planet's atmosphere. The Akatsuki mission is in a highly elliptical orbit around Venus that enables the spacecraft to image both the north and south hemispheres of the planet simultaneously."

An international team of researchers has used advanced cloud-tracking and quality control techniques to analyze with high accuracy the direction and speed of cloud top winds using data collected by the Ultraviolet Imager (UVI) instrument over three years.

The study, led by Prof Takeshi Horinouchi of Hokkaido University, Japan, and Dr. Yeon Joo Lee of JAXA/ISAS and TU Berlin, found that the super-rotation speed at the cloud tops not only changes over time but is different in the northern and southern hemispheres. The team also detected



planetary-scale atmospheric waves at the cloud tops, which may interact with the super-rotation.

The degree of difference between the hemispheres, or "asymmetry," may be linked to a second mystery at Venus: an as-yet unidentified chemical species in the atmosphere that strongly absorbs ultraviolet radiation from the Sun.

Prof Horinouchi said: "The asymmetry in super-rotation speeds in cloud tops in the northern and southern hemispheres might be caused by variability in the distribution of the so-called 'unknown' ultraviolet absorber, which plays a key role in regulating how much radiation from the Sun that Venus can absorb. Our results provide new questions about the atmosphere of Venus, as well as revealing the richness of variety of the Venus atmosphere over space and time."

A separate study has revealed a detailed picture of Venus's cloud temperatures for the first time on both

the dayside and night side of the planet. A team from the University of Tokyo, Rikkyo University and the National Institute of Advanced Industrial Science and Technology in Japan tracked the development over time of mottled clouds and streaky features in imagery from Akatsuki's LIR infrared camera.

The observation of cloud motions throughout the day and night has enabled the team to determine the average circulation in north-south directions and to detect thermally driven tides that create waves in the atmosphere and could play a key role in maintaining the super-rotation.

Mr. Kiichi Fukuya of the University of Tokyo, who presented the results at the EPSC-DPS Joint Meeting 2019, said: "The most exciting discovery is the frequent occurrence of equatorward motions on the night side--this is in contrast to the strong poleward circulation on the dayside we have observed previously at other wavelengths."

The findings suggest that there are as-yet unknown processes that are affecting cloud formation and atmospheric dynamics." Akatsuki team members have been presenting their hottest topics today at the EPSC-DPS Joint Meeting 2019. The main goal of Akatsuki is to understand the Venusian atmospheric dynamics and cloud physics, which is quite different from that of the Earth. As the culmination of these studies, we believe that we will give a definitive answer how the super-rotation is maintained at Venus very near future," said Prof Nakamura.

(Source: phys.org)

Can time travel survive a theory of everything?

By Tom Siegfried

In many universes, typically those on TV shows or in movies, time travel is not much more difficult than driving downtown in any major city during rush hour. Sure, the traffic can get gnarly, but no law of physics prevents you from reaching your destination eventually.

In real life, time travel isn't so easy. In fact, it's probably impossible, a fantasy more farfetched than visiting Alice's Wonderland, finding gold at the end of a rainbow or cleansing all the hate speech off of Facebook.

Yet time travel does not necessarily violate the laws of physics. In Einstein's theory of gravity -- general relativity -- space and time are merged as spacetime, which allows for the possibility of pathways that could bend back to the past and loop back to the future.

Such paths are known as closed timelike curves. They're a little like great circles around the surface of the Earth -- if you start out in one direction and keep going straight, eventually you come back to where you started from. In that case the Earth's curvature guides you back to your previous point in space; with closed timelike curves, the geometry of spacetime guides you back to an earlier moment in time.

Nobody thinks that general relativity's time loops would be practical for time travel even if they are possible. For one thing, they might exist only under certain circumstances -- the universe would have to be rotating, and not expanding -- as the mathematician Kurt Gödel showed in the 1940s. But the universe is expanding, and probably isn't rotating, so that dampens the prospects for revisiting the Stone Age or acquiring a pet dinosaur.

Besides, even if such pathways did exist, building a ship to traverse them would cost more than all the DeLoreans (and all other transportation vehicles) ever made. It would need a cruising speed of 140,000 miles per second. And with no place to stop for gas (or whatever), the fuel tank would have to be more than a trillion times the size of an oil tanker.

So for practical purposes, time travel's time has not yet arrived. But even if it's possible only in principle, the potential ramifications for the basic physics of the universe might make it worth the time to investigate it. Time loops might not enable you to traverse the cosmos in a TARDIS, but perhaps could still help you understand the cosmos more deeply.

A first step would be to attempt to figure out exactly what the relevant laws of physics really are. Einstein's general relativity is great, but indubitably not the last word about the physics of the universe. After all, it coexists uneasily with quantum mechanics, which rules the subatomic world and presumably, since everything is made of subatomic stuff, the rest of the universe as well. Whether the quantum-general relativity combo truly permits time travel might depend on what the ultimate correct theory combining the two turns out to be.

Several candidate theories have been developed for merging general relativity and quantum mechanics into a unified theory. It's an open question whether these candidates would allow time travel in something like the way general relativity does, philosopher Christian Wüthrich of the University of Geneva notes in a new paper.

It's possible, he says, that a theory that supersedes general relativity might still in some way include the equivalent of general relativity's timelike loops. And even if the basic theory does not include such loops, they still might emerge in practice.

"Although the fundamental theory would then remain inhospitable to time travel itself, it would tolerate the possibility of time travel at some other, less fundamental, scale," Wüthrich writes in his paper, posted online in June. "Depending on what the relationship between the fundamental theory and emergent spacetime may be in each case, we may find that the emergent, macroscopic spacetime structure permits time travel."

Reviewing the major proposals for quantum gravity theories does not provide a lot of hope, though. One approach, known as causal set theory, requires sets of events to be ordered in a proper cause-and-effect relationship. So its central idea seems to rule out closed timelike curves.

Another popular approach, known as loop quantum gravity, envisions space to be constructed of fundamental loops (kind of like "atoms of space"). This view has encountered technical difficulties, one of which is how to work time into the picture with space. "Thus, we seem to be faced with a temporally innocuous structure in which no meaningful sense of time travel is permitted," Wüthrich writes.

It's possible that the networks of these "atoms of space" could produce high-level spacetime that did contain closed timelike curves. But analysis of the details at this stage of loop quantum gravity's development does not offer much reason for optimism, Wüthrich concludes.

Time travel's future might look a little brighter if the correct approach to quantum gravity turns out to be string theory, currently the most popular contender. In string theory, matter's basic particles are tiny vibrating snippets of energy, called "strings" because they extend in one dimension. Multiple versions of string theory have been constructed, suggesting that they are different manifestations of a more fundamental master theory known as M-theory.

"As M-theory does not yet exist, it is impossible to determine its verdict on time travel," writes Wüthrich. But investigations of various string theory scenarios do suggest that the ultimate theory would, in fact, naturally incorporate closed timelike curves.

Even if time loops exist in the fundamental theory, though, there's still no guarantee that they would be preserved in the emergent large-scale spacetime that would be relevant in real life. For that matter, Wüthrich points out, predicting the existence of time travel loops might be taken as evidence against the theory, considering the serious likelihood that time travel really isn't possible at all.

So whether general relativity's time loops will survive in a deeper theory remains an open question. "A more fundamental theory may well admit structures amounting to closed timelike curves and thus permit time travel," Wüthrich asserts. "This clearly remains a live option at the present stage of knowledge."

In any case, investigating whether quantum gravity theories retain general relativity's time travel loophole can illuminate many tough questions that must be answered to develop a successful theory and understand how it relates to general relativity. "For this reason alone," Wüthrich writes, "the question of time travel beyond general relativity is worth our while."

Iran’s 5-month foreign tourist arrivals surge 30 percent

TOURISM TEHRAN — The number of foreign visitors arriving in Iran surged 30 percent during the first five months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21 – August 22), compared with the same period last year, deputy tourism minister has said.



“Some four million foreign nationals visited Iran during the first five months of the year, which shows 30 percent growth year on year,” Vali Teymouri said on Tuesday, Mehr reported. “It’s the first time that the number of outbound passengers equals to the inbound ones,” he said, addressing a press conference at the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts, and Tourism to brief about national programs on World Tourism Day. “International arrivals [in Iran] seem to be fair given the conditions in the region... However, Iran is a safe destination for foreign travelers,” The Islamic Republic welcomed 7.8 million foreigners last year, which shows 50 percent growth year on year, he said. World Tourism Day is annually commemorated on September 27 with worldwide celebrations under the auspices of the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). This year, the UNWTO has adopted the motto of “Tourism and Jobs: A Better Future for All” as the organization has set goals on development of skills, education and jobs, wishing to realize a better future. The 2019 Travel Risk Map, which shows the risk level around the world, puts Iran among countries with “insignificant risk”, a category where the UK, Denmark, Switzerland, Norway, and Finland are placed in. Under the 2025 Tourism Vision Plan, the country aims to increase the number of tourist arrivals from 4.8 million in 2014 to 20 million in 2025.

Florida’s Walt Disney World to be first U.S. Disney Park to go vegan

ORLANDO (CBSMiami/CNN) – Florida’s Walt Disney World will be the first Disney Park to go vegan. Disney announced Tuesday that plant-based food options will be added to every dining location in their U.S. theme parks starting with Walt Disney World in Orlando. The vegan menu, featuring more than 400 vegan dishes will be available at quick-service and table-service restaurants at the Orlando theme park starting in early October, followed by Anaheim, California’s Disneyland in spring 2020. It’s a major undertaking: There are more than 602 places to eat at The Walt Disney World in Orlando and Disneyland Resort in Anaheim, California, most of them uniquely themed to a theme park land or hotel. Soon each one will have a themed vegan option to match, such as the Star Wars-inspired “Tatooine Two Suns Hummus” in Disney’s Hollywood Studios in Orlando, or “Le Fou Festin” at the Be Our Guest Restaurant at Disney’s Magic Kingdom, also in Orlando.

ROUND THE GLOBE

Historic Fortified Town of Campeche

The Historic Fortified Town of Campeche, located in the State of Campeche, was founded in the 16th century on the coast of the Gulf of Mexico, in the Maya region of Ah-Kim-Pech by Spanish conquerors. It was the most important seaport at the time and played a major role for the conquest and evangelization of the Yucatan Peninsula, Guatemala and Chiapas.



Its commercial and military importance made it the second biggest town in the Gulf of Mexico, after Mérida. Due its port importance in the sea route: Spain, Havana, Campeche, and Veracruz; as point of embarkation of the natural riches of the peninsula and political differences of the kingdoms of the old continent, ring the second half of the 16th century, Campeche, like other Caribbean towns, was systematically attacked by pirates and corsairs in the pay of enemies of Spain; this is why a large-scale defensive system was installed. This military defensive system for mid-17th century was inadequate and poorly strategic so a new fortification, hexagonal wall, integrating eight bastions, four doors and walls, was authorized, with construction started in 1686 and concluding in 1704. Subsequently, to complete the system of fortifications, the redoubt of San Jose on the east Hill of the village and the redoubt of San Miguel on the west Hill, as well as the batteries of San Lucas, San Matias and San Luis, is mainly in the area of historic monuments, at both ends and facing the sea were constructed. (Source: UNESCO)

Austria shares know-how to boost sustainable tourism in Iran: envoy

By Afshin Mailesi

TEHRAN — Vienna’s ambassador to Tehran, Stefan Scholz, said on Wednesday that Austria has launched a new partnership with Iran to promote an inclusive growth of tourism and economy. In an interview with the Tehran Times, the envoy also attached great importance to make collective efforts to maintain Iran’s landmark nuclear deal known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. “Austria is small [country] but strategic contribution for maintaining and preserving the JCPOA is to create a network of sector partnerships. Eco-tourism will be the latest, new sector partnership,” Scholz said as he visited the Sustainable Eco-tourism Symposium in Tehran. The two-day event is hosted by University of Science and Culture in close collaboration with the Austrian Embassy, the European Union National Institutes for Culture (EUNIC), Austrian Cultural Forum, and Iran’s Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts. “It [the partnership] is aimed at bringing and promoting inclusive growth in Iran in assisting the endeavors by the government for a transformation of the economy towards a vibrant private sector-based, SME-driven economy, and to create jobs,” the ambassador stated. “It’s all about jobs, jobs, jobs for the youth. Some 900,000 young people are waiting for jobs in the labor market every year.” Talking about commonalities and the history of relations between the two nations, Scholz said “Austria and Iran have a long history in common. It’s an incredible special profile that distinguishes us from many other countries. We have 700 years of documented contacts, 500 years of partnership and about 60 years of full diplomatic relations.” And this is a wonderful narrative on which we are now building this network of sector partnership. Austria just gave you (Iran) an idea. Austria last year had 1.5 million stayovers and 45 million arrivals. It’s an incredible number that just shows our great potential for Iran.” He went on to say: “this is the know-how that we want to share with the partner country Iran to really expedite the transformation of economy, creating jobs in this all sustainable manner.” The Tehran Times also had an interview with deputy tourism minister Vali Teymouri during the event. “We are nearing the World Tourism Day, which is September 27th, and our programs to mark this event have commenced [in Iran] in universities, the private-owned and government-run bodies that will be continuing up to the end of the next week (October 4),” Teymouri said. “The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has selected the theme of “Tourism and Jobs — A Better Future For All”, that accentuates education, skills, and employment,” he stated. “This symposium and exhibition fits such a framework. It is being hosted in a university place revolving around arenas of sustainable development of tourism, eco-tourism.” “We have in fact a memorandum of understanding with the European country, which three [Iranian] workgroups formed by academic, private, and government departments have so far held meetings with Austrian side,” Teymouri said. Talking about the outcomes of the event, the official said “Outputs of the symposium will be collected in order to



“Austria and Iran have a long history in common. It’s an incredible special profile that distinguishes us from many other countries. We have 700 years of documented contacts, 500 years of partnership and about 60 years of full diplomatic relations.”

exchange experiences that definitely will help Iran witness more sustainable tourism industry.” The event, both in regional and international scales, helps us to use other nations’ experiences to unlock more potential of eco-tourism in Iran particularly in rural areas without inflicting damages to the environment and natural resources... Such an approach enables us to make the best use of the country’s wealth and yet preserve them for the subsequent generations,” the deputy minister explained. Iranian and Austrian officials also on Wednesday cut the ribbon on an international handicrafts and culinary exhibition, which opened to the public at the premises of the university. “Iran and Austria can expand cooperation on exchanging tourists and professors, as the sector cannot be put under [U.S.] sanctions,” Alexander Rieger, deputy head of mission of the Austrian Embassy, said earlier this week. Rieger presides over the European Union National Institutes for Culture (EUNIC) and he is also head of the Austrian Cultural Forum in Tehran. Talking on similarities that Iran and Austria have in tourism, Rieger said that the two nations can have a good cooperation in this sector without being worried about the U.S. sanctions. He added that a group of officials from Austria and five EU countries have visited some of Iran’s ecotourism sites to become familiar with the Iranian culture in various parts of the country.

On July 31, 2018, and on the occasion of the Damavand Anniversary Project 2018, some 100 Austrian and Iranian mountaineers together with a group of European ambassadors jointly ascended the Mount Damavand. The two-day event marked the 175th anniversary of the first Austrian ascent of Mount Damavand by the botanist and scholar Theodor Kotschy in 1843, Mehr reported. The event sent a strong signal that Europe and Iran are making good on their promises to engage in an ever-increasing number of sectors and areas, Scholz said at the time. “Iran is more than a country, it’s a civilization in its own right and one of the most ecologically diverse places in the world,” the Austrian ambassador had said. “Austria stands ready to partner in further developing Iran’s great tourism potentials in a sustainable way, protecting natural resources and supporting the life and culture of mountain populations. This new sector partnership is part of Austria’s bilateral contribution to preserving and maintaining the JCPOA by bringing concrete and measurable economic benefits to the Iranian people,” he added. Last November, the Trump administration reinstated sanctions on Iran, mainly the ones that had been lifted under the 2015 nuclear deal, in order to batter Iran’s economy, however, according to official data, they have so far failed to lessen foreign arrivals to the Islamic Republic.

Factbox: Thomas Cook collapse prompts international response



The collapse of British travel operator Thomas Cook left hundreds of thousands of holidaymakers abroad and forced governments and insurers to coordinate a huge operation to get them home. The company ran hotels, resorts and airlines ferrying 19 million people a year to 16 different countries. Here is a summary of the impact of the collapse in different countries and efforts to salvage parts of the group:

- Germany** Thomas Cook’s German tour business filed for insolvency on Wednesday in a move aimed at separating its brands and operations from its failed parent, and it said it was in talks with potential new investors. The German government is planning to guarantee a 380 million euro (\$418 million) bridging loan for the group’s German airline, Condor, to keep it flying. Thomas Cook has said there are roughly 140,000 holidaymakers currently traveling with its German units.
- Poland** Thomas Cook’s Polish unit, Neckermann Polska, said on Wednesday that it has filed for insolvency. Poland regional authorities says around 3,600 customers of Neckermann Polska are still abroad.
- Belgium** Thomas Cook’s Belgian unit ceased carrying passengers on Tuesday and liquidated two businesses, seeking protection from creditors and ultimately a buyer for Thomas Cook Retail Belgium. It still has some 13,400 customers on holidays abroad.
- Nordics** Several planes operated by Thomas Cook Scandinavian Airlines have not been able to take off because their leasing contracts remained with the British parent, Danish subsidiary Spies said. It was not immediately clear how the situation would be resolved. Thomas Cook’s Nordic business said on Monday it would continue to operate as it is a separate legal entity from its London-listed parent and added that it was looking for new owners. The Nordic business consists of two legal

entities, Thomas Cook Northern Europe and Thomas Cook Scandinavian Airlines, and is also known as Ving Group. The business operates under several brands: Ving in Norway, Spies in Denmark, Tjareborg in Finland, as well as Ving and Globetrotter in Sweden.- Britain** Emergency flights had brought 14,700 people back to the United Kingdom on 64 flights on Monday, and around 135,300 more were expected to be returned over the next 13 days, Britain’s aviation regulator said. More than 70 flights were scheduled to operate on Wednesday to bring back 16,500 people.
- Mexico** The collapse of British travel firm Thomas Cook will not have a “significant impact” on Mexico’s tourist industry as it only represents about 0.4% of the sector’s foreign income, the Mexican tourism ministry said on Tuesday.
- Bulgaria** Thomas Cook’s collapse poses a serious challenge to Bulgarian tourism, with dozens of Black Sea hotels facing losses totaling tens of millions of dollars as negotiations for the next summer season take place, its

tourism minister said on Tuesday.- Tunisia** Tunisian tourism minister Rene Trabelsi told Reuters that 4,500 Thomas Cook customers are still on holiday in Tunisia. The British government repatriated about 1,200 tourists via planes sent to Tunisia’s Enfidha airport, and another 4,000 still in Tunisia will return after their holidays.
- France** The French arm of the business said on Tuesday it was asking the French commercial court of Nanterre for creditor protection. Thomas Cook France will hold a meeting of its works council on Thursday about a plan to declare insolvency and to start a recovery procedure. French organization Entreprises de Voyage said that about 10,000 French tourists could be affected by the bankruptcy.
- Spain** The collapse has affected 53,000 Britons in Spain, Spanish Acting Tourism Minister Reyes Maroto told reporters. The ministry has been in touch with German and Swedish authorities to ensure Thomas Cook subsidiaries continue to operate at least for the winter season, she added.

- Greece** A Greek tourism ministry official told Reuters that about 50,000 tourists were affected.
- Cyprus** Cyprus says 15,000 Thomas Cook customers were stranded on the island.
- Hungary** Thomas Cook’s Hungarian unit Neckermann Magyarorszag said it was continuing its operations and all passengers would be able to return from abroad as planned. It said its financial situation was stable and its assets were sufficient guarantee that its passengers would not suffer any financial damage. It said passengers should contact its offices directly about upcoming flights.
- The Netherlands** The Dutch unit of Thomas Cook canceled all travel booked through Thomas Cook Netherlands and subsidiary Neckermann.
- Russia** Thomas Cook’s Russian tour operator subsidiary, Intourist, said the bankruptcy of Thomas Cook will have no impact on clients, Executive Director Sergei Tolchin told Interfax.
- Turkey** The Turkish Ministry of Tourism said it will provide support for local companies affected by the Thomas Cook collapse. The head of the country’s Hotelier Federation said about 45,000 tourists from the UK and elsewhere in Europe are in the country.
- Morocco** Morocco’s tourism ministry said it had created a crisis unit to handle the fallout from Thomas Cook’s collapse. Thomas Cook operated two flights to Marrakesh a week. No official numbers were given.
- Egypt** Thomas Cook operator Blue Sky Group said that 25,000 reservations in Egypt booked up to April 2020 had been canceled. Blue Sky currently has 1,600 tourists in Egypt’s Hgharda resort.
- India** Thomas Cook India said it had been unaffected as it has been a separate entity since August 2012.

(Source: Reuters)

Holes in Aramco attack narrative might draw Washington into Iran war

TEHRAN — In recent days, the world has witnessed moves by the western political and media class that could lead to a war with Iran, with the western officials pointing fingers at Iran and the corporate media amplifying those claims to produce the consensus needed for the war.

Tensions between Saudi Arabia and Iran are escalating to new heights, drawing the United States into a confrontation with the Islamic Republic after a sophisticated attack targeted Saudi Arabia's Aramco oil facility knocking out half of the country's oil capacity, or more than 5 million barrels a day, and leaving the oil fields in flames, Mnar Muhawesh writes for Mint Press News.

The attack was nothing the Kingdom had seen before or expected: According to U.S. and Saudi intel, 18 drones and seven cruise missiles were launched and went undetected by both American and Saudi radar systems. The weaponry even went unnoticed by the U.S. military base nearby, the Prince Sultan Airbase, which is guarded by an American Patriot missile defense system and over 500 U.S. military personnel.

You better believe an attack at this level targeting a crossroad for global oil supplies did more than ruffle a few feathers.

Panic not only struck the Kingdom and the international economy, where oil prices spiked 19 percent — the highest ever recorded one-day increase — but U.S. and Saudi politicians, as well as a chorus of mainstream pundits, began to beat the drums of war targeting an old foe: Iran.

Saudi and U.S. military analysts have presented satellite images of where the missiles landed in the oil fields, purporting to show that the drones/missiles came from the direction of Iran. However, some experts are already countering these claims, pointing out that the images show impact points that are indeed west-northwest, which is the opposite direction of Iran.

Despite providing no substantial evidence and citing so-called anonymous intelligence — you know, the same intelligence that, to justify war with Iraq, claimed Iraq had weapons of mass destruction and that Saddam was working with al-Qaeda — the corporate media has amplified and endorsed the Saudi and Trump administration's claims to manufacture consent for an all-out war with Iran.

NBC and CNN repeated the official line that Iran was likely behind the attack, and CNBC took Saudi officials' words as gospel, without once questioning this government narrative that is setting us up on a warpath with the Islamic Republic.

Saudi Arabia said it would "forcefully respond to these aggressions." Meanwhile, President Trump announced that the U.S. was "locked and loaded" and ready to retaliate, then escalated tensions by announcing that he was introducing



a "substantial" new round of sanctions, thereby further revving up the economic war against Iran.

And Iran is not taking these threats of war very lightly.

Indeed, while the media is choking up the airwaves with pro-war and anti-Iranian propaganda, what's been lost or perhaps purposely left out from this coverage is who actually took responsibility for this attack and why.

Yemen's Ansarullah Houthi movement immediately claimed responsibility. Houthi military spokesman Brigadier Yahya Saree announced, "We assure the Saudi regime that our long hand can reach any place we want at any time we choose."

This wouldn't be the first time Yemen's resistance movement launched an attack on Saudi soil.

Just last year, Saudi officials said they intercepted more than 100 missiles fired from Yemen.

The Houthis, quite obviously, have no interest in conquering Saudi Arabia or even damaging their warring neighbor apart from what is needed to counter and deter ever-increasing Saudi attacks and defend what is left of Yemen.

Ansarullah has spent the last five years resisting the U.S./Saudi-backed bombardment of Yemen, which has created the worst humanitarian crisis in the world — leaving over 100,000 dead, over 23 million people starving, a cholera health crisis, and a human trafficking epidemic.

The humanitarian crisis kills a Yemeni child every 10 minutes from preventable diseases, starvation and malnutrition.

Saudi Arabia enforced an illegal blockade, preventing food and medical supplies from entering the war-torn nation and effectively weaponizing humanitarian aid after taking a key seat on a UN human rights panel.

Perhaps if the media did their job in reporting these facts, it would be an embarrassment for

the U.S. military machine. It would expose the utter failure of billions of dollars worth of Saudi and American military defense systems against a grassroots resistance movement taking on the Goliath of the U.S.-Saudi backed Coalition's genocidal war against the Middle East's now poorest country.

But this conflict goes further back than 2015. The U.S. has occupied Yemen in its pursuit of expanding its military empire under the guise of the war on terror. Since 2002, the U.S. has been drone bombing Yemen, setting up military outposts and torture facilities while exploiting the nation's rich mineral resources.

Yemen was once called a living museum, a cradle to many civilizations and home to some of the world's oldest human carved landscapes and architectural structures that date back to the time of Christ. Yemen is considered the richest country in the region in terms of minerals, culture and history.

But today UNICEF described its economy and society as on the verge of collapse.

The military occupation of Yemen has given the people there a death sentence so the U.S. can rattle its saber at Iran to justify the expansion of its military empire that feeds the maw of the military industrial complex.

Blaming Iran for an attack on the world's largest oil processing site suits the interests of American allies in the region, including Saudi Arabia and Israel, which have directed Trump's foreign policy in the Middle East that has included isolating Iran.

The story presented to Western audiences by the mainstream corporate media is rationalized by a carefully crafted and false narrative that the U.S.-backed, Saudi-led war against Yemen, which has dropped over 50,000 bombs on that country — bombs made and supplied by the USA — is to prevent an expanding Iran that is arming the Ansarullah Houthi movement.

But leaked internal documents show that many of these connections made by military intelligence were deliberately fabricated, and Yemenis are actually capable of manufacturing their own modern weapons. This shows how the Houthis in Yemen are apparently more capable than the Saudis have been in manufacturing the weapons they have used to pulverize Yemen, which are being sold to the kingdom by the US at a rate of \$8 billion.

Just as the U.S. claimed that all their interventions during the Cold War were to defend against Soviet aggression, now any region in the Middle East the Empire wants to expand, exploit and occupy is conveniently labeled an Iranian outpost, justifying more wars.

Beyond this, it is of course "inconceivable" to the United States that a "rag-tag" force like Yemen's Ansarullah Houthis might with home-made weapons outdo the hundred-billion-dollar might and sophistication of the state-of-the-art systems Washington has lavished upon the Saudis. Almost as embarrassing as losing to the North Vietnamese — so that couldn't be what happened.

For decades, manufacturing consent for war by using false pretenses has been seized by both parties, whether Democratic or Republican. Both have spread disinformation to demonize an entire nation in order to drum up support for war.

Now, with the Saudi oil fields burning, the disinformation campaign moves into high gear — ignoring or selectively reporting not just key physical evidence but also the whole context of the humanitarian crisis in Yemen that has given rise to the desperate measures to which the Houthis have been forced to turn to — a right to self defense under the Geneva conventions.

If the media cared to report on this context it would expose the U.S. coalition as a paper tiger, which would mean that all of the blood & billions spent by Washington in the Middle East was essentially for nothing. It would also show the world that a united front organizing against war does work.

After landing in Saudi Arabia last week, Mike Pompeo scolded the media for asking about the Houthis claiming responsibility for the attack. His response was that they are liars and when referring to them you should call them the lying Houthis — this coming from the man who on video admitted to lying and deception while heading the CIA.

And just as before, it is not the politicians like Pompeo that pay for their lies, but the ordinary people, who pay with their lives.

Highlight: the corporate media has amplified and endorsed the Saudi and Trump administration's claims to manufacture consent for an all-out war with Iran.

Aramco attack: The latest false flag

By Robert Fantina

The United States has long been itching to do Israel's bidding and invade Iran. This desire was somewhat subdued during the administration of Barack Obama, but returned like gang-busters with the ascendance of the unstable, narcissistic Donald Trump to the U.S. throne. First was the U.S. withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA); Trump and his minions apparently hoped that the economic damage resulting from this would cause the Iranian people to rise up against their own government. The U.S. would then, of course, have to invade for 'humanitarian' purposes.

That failed, so then the former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, the clown-like Nikki Haley, went on and on about Iran's alleged nefarious dealings throughout the Middle East. Not only was any evidence of this lacking, but the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) was inspecting Iran's nuclear sites, and certifying Iran's compliance with the JCPOA several times a year. Unfortunately, no one was inspecting the U.S. for compliance, because in 2018, it violated the agreement. Any while Haley was looking for any excuse to criticize Iran, she had nothing but praise for the brutal apartheid regime of Israel.

But Haley's accusations didn't amount to much, and she faded into obscurity, where she certainly belongs. So the U.S. tried to blame Iran for damaging two Saudi Arabian oil tankers in May of this year, and again in June. Still, this didn't resonate with the world sufficiently for the U.S. to invade.



Iran shot down a U.S. drone flying in Iranian airspace, and again, Donald Trump and his minions when ballistic (please forgive the pun). In retaliation, Trump proclaimed that the U.S. shot down an Iranian drone, but didn't bother to show any evidence of it, while the Iran's government spokespeople stated that all of their drones returned on schedule.

What is an unstable, war-mongering president to do? Well, the answer, perhaps, was to hit everyone where it hurts the most, in their pocketbooks. Enter Abqaiq. The possibility of oil supplies being disrupted might be sufficient to cause the world to act in a totally irrational manner.

As shown, this is just the latest in the long list of false flags the U.S. raises in its attempt to justify an invasion of Iran.

Is this a new concept? Hardly! We need not look very far back in history to see other examples; in fact, the entire ugly and violent history of the United States is littered with such false flags, each of them bloodier than the next. A few examples will suffice.

In early 2018, the U.S. bombed Syria to punish the government after it accused Bashar al-Assad of using poison gas on his own people. Shortly thereafter, then Secretary of Defense James Mattis said that the U.S. had no evidence that Assad had done what the U.S. bombed his country for doing. The U.S. wanted to bomb Syria, because it wasn't rolling over and dying in its intense battle with U.S.-financed terrorists, so some additional violence needed to be perpetrated against it.

Let us go all the way back to 2002 and 2003, when then President George Bush told the world that Iraq had 'weapons of mass destruction', all of which threatened the very existence of the United States, if not civilization itself. The fact that much of the weaponry Iraq once had was provided to it by the U.S. wasn't much discussed back then. But Bush and his cohorts told the U.S. and the world, from the United Nations, that something needed to be done. And while most of the U.S.'s major allies took a pass on participation in the subsequent invasion, the U.S. went forward with its 'Shock and Awe' (who on earth comes up with these names? And is naming an invasion even necessary) campaign against the people of Iraq. But lo and behold, no 'weapons of mass destruction' were ever found in Iraq's possession. Of course, no one talks about the weapons of mass destruction that the U.S. used against Iraq.

For those who are a bit older, they may remember that the start of the Vietnam War was another significant false flag. Two U.S. destroyers patrolling the Gulf of Tonkin, where they had no legitimate business to be, reported that they'd been fired upon. Within 24 hours, the ships' captains realized that there had been no attack, just some 'ghost' images on the radar that falsely signaled an attack. But President Lyndon Johnson, a major war criminal if ever there was one, used this non-event to astronomically escalate U.S. troop presence in Vietnam; up to this point, U.S. soldiers were ostensibly just 'advisers'. At least 2,000,000 Vietnamese men, women and children died as a direct result of this; over 50,000 U.S. soldiers died; Cambodia and Laos were also bombed. The U.S. was nearly bankrupt by the war, students across the country fought the U.S. government, and the reputation of the U.S. was in tatters. And the goal of the people of Vietnam, the uniting of their country which the U.S. so vehemently and violently opposed, was eventually realized when the U.S. fled in defeat.

And now we have Iran firmly in the crosshairs of U.S. imperial adventurism. We see one baseless accusation by the U.S. after another, against a nation that hasn't invaded another country since 1798. Yet the list of nations the U.S. has invaded is a mile long.

The U.S. policy of Middle East destabilization has been wildly successful, evidenced by the blood of innocents that the U.S. has shed in that part of the world. But Trump & Co. had better think twice before invading Iran; this is not an isolated, Third-World country, but a major Middle East powerhouse, with allies including Russia. U.S. militarism should tread very lightly in that part of the world.

But will Trump exercise restraint? Possibly. He has promised his base of support, for whom he will do anything, including depriving them of health care (that's a topic for a different essay), not to get into any more wars. And with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, another major war criminal, on the cusp of losing power, Trump may not be so willing to do his bidding. Trump likes 'winners', as he always says, and Netanyahu's days of winning may be over.

If there were any cooler heads in the White House to prevail, one would have some hope. But relying on the whim of the self-proclaimed stable genius, who is quite patently neither, is not much to hold onto.

(Source: globalresearch.ca)

Media omit context behind latest North Korean missile tests

By Joshua Cho

In his 2004 book North Korea: Another Country, historian Bruce Cumings described the irony of corporate media's perpetual narrative of North Korea as an unheeding or devious adversary of the US with hostile nuclear ambitions:

Almost always, media discussion of North Korea assumes that Washington is in a position of original innocence, and the North is assiduously trying to obtain and then to use "weapons of mass destruction"—the ubiquitous media trope for the arsenals of American enemies since the Cold War ended. Yet the American record in Northeast Asia since the 1940s is one of consistent use of, or threats to use, those same weapons.

Little has changed since then, as FAIR has documented the media's one-sided tendency to cast Washington's actions as defensive responses to "threats" from Official Enemies (Extra!, 5/13; FAIR.org, 6/6/19).

In covering North Korea's series of missile tests over the past few months, US media continue to portray Pyongyang's actions as unwarranted provocations to obtain an advantage over the US in negotiations, while dismissing the North's stated objectives for their missile tests.

USA Today's "Trump Dismisses North Korea Missile Tests. Experts Say He's Giving Kim's Regime a Free Pass" (8/2/19) portrayed Trump as an indulgent and careless leader taken advantage of by Kim Jong-un, for correctly noting that the latest short-range missile tests aren't a violation of their 2018 Singapore commitment to halt long-range and nuclear missile testing, despite their violating UN Security Council resolutions.

The "expert" sources in the report described Trump as giving Kim an "invitation to push the envelope when it comes to additional provocations," and dismissed North Korea's stated rationale for these missile tests—that they are a protest against US/South Korea joint military exercises—as a "pretext" to "gain leverage" in future negotiations, without explaining the outcomes they hope to obtain from these negotiations.

The Washington Post's alarmist "Fast, Low and Hard to Stop: North Korea's Missile Tests Crank Up the Threat Level" (8/15/19) featured yet more "experts" who noted that North Korea's missile tests "significantly raised the country's military capabilities and the threat they pose to South Korea and US forces on the peninsula," and showcased weapons designed "specifically to confound South Korea's missile-defense system." Like USA Today, the Post noted that the missile tests have the "additional benefit" of ramping up "pressure on the United States to return to the negotiating table with a better offer" than the one Trump presented to North Korea at Hanoi in February, without explaining how North Korea would like the agreement to be improved.

The New York Times' "North Korea Missile Tests, 'Very Standard' to Trump, Show Signs of Advancing Arsenal" (9/2/19) informed readers that North Korea is testing missiles "with greater range and maneuverability" that could "overwhelm American defenses in the region," and provide more evidence of a "program designed to defeat the defenses Japan has de-



An elderly woman and grandchild survey the ruins of the Pyongyang home, bombed by the US during the Korean War.

played, with American technology, at sea and on shore." This in addition to threatening "at least eight American bases in those countries, housing more than 30,000 troops."

The Times casually referred to US efforts under the Obama administration to launch covert cyberattacks on the country to sabotage its missile tests, as well as Trump's threats to unleash "fire and fury like the world has never seen," without describing his statements as "threats," or noting that the Trump administration's 2018 Nuclear Posture Review considers cyberattacks on "American infrastructure" grounds for a nuclear response (New York Times, 1/16/18).

CNN's "North Korea Testing 'Creative' Weapons That Could Threaten US, Experts Say" (9/9/19) reported that "experts" claim that North Korea's missile tests this year show that Pyongyang is "testing weapons to target weak points in the advanced missile defense system that protects the US, Japan and South Korea," for "the first time" since it halted ballistic missile testing for 17 months since November 2017. Like the above reports, CNN noted that North Korea "suggested" that its missile tests are a response to US/South Korean joint military exercises, and Seoul's purchase of American F-35 stealth fighter jets, without explaining why North Korea considers these actions so provocative.

I've noted before how the media consistently mislead readers by refusing to acknowledge how US "missile defense systems" are actually offensive systems (FAIR.org, 5/17/19, 7/12/19). One can easily imagine that US media would characterize as "threatening" countries allied against the US placing such systems near US borders, because it would help secure a nuclear first-strike advantage against the US by reducing the threat of retaliatory strikes. But media fail to acknowledge the US and South Korea's own efforts to upgrade their missile capacities, and give scant coverage to US plans to install medium-range missiles near North Korea, following Trump's unilateral withdrawal from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (FAIR.org, 3/7/18; Newsweek, 8/14/19).

Although some of the above reports correctly note that US/South Korean military exercises "have been scaled back to be less provocative," and are now largely computer simulations, they diminish any rationale behind North Korea's missile tests by omitting why the previous military exercises were

so provocative in the first place. These "military exercises," or war games, were notorious for simulating the invasion and occupation of North Korea, decapitation of the North Korean leadership and a nuclear first-strike (CounterSpin, 2/23/18). These reports also omit how these new war games continue to simulate the occupation of North Korea after an invasion (NK News, 8/10/19), and how the North's missile tests began in May, months after the US first broke its Singapore agreement not to conduct more of these provocative war games (Financial Times, 8/28/18).

But more importantly, these reports effectively pretend that North Korea isn't serious about wanting a halt to provocative US/South Korean war games, insisting that North Korea is actually seeking "leverage" for some hidden objective that is conveniently never outlined. This is consistent with corporate media's tendency to obscure and misrepresent North Korea's repeated offers to give up its nuclear weapons program as saying the opposite (Intercept, 8/25/17), while the Trump administration continues to reject China and North Korea's numerous offers to suspend missile tests in exchange for a suspension of the threatening annual war games (South China Morning Post, 11/17/17; New York Times, 6/21/19).

These "war games" are not just theoretical exercises for the North Korean government; while both the US and North Korea have traded threats, only one of them has ever killed millions of the other's people, and only one has used nuclear weapons offensively (FAIR.org, 9/27/17). The North remembers how up to 20 percent of the population were killed in the Korean War as the US dropped more bombs in Korea than it did in the entire Pacific theatre in World War II, targeting "everything that moved in North Korea, every brick on top of another," as war supporter Dean Rusk, later secretary of State, put it (Washington Post, 3/24/15). The war is technically still ongoing, as the US never withdrew its troops or signed a peace treaty, as required by the 1953 armistice.

FAIR has already documented how corporate media consider the possibility of peace between North Korea and South Korea to be a threat to the US, despite reducing the likelihood of nuclear war (FAIR.org, 2/14/18, 3/15/18, 6/14/18). The false depiction of North Korea as an intractable enemy serves as a convenient scapegoat for the failure of Washington's aggressive policy of "maximum pressure" to achieve peace and denuclearization in the Korean peninsula.

Preserving the North Korean bogeyman bolsters the longstanding bipartisan US policy of maintaining a military presence in Asia against China (CounterPunch, 9/22/17; Wall Street Journal, 1/15/19). It also allows the US to pursue the same objectives it had when it entered the Korean civil war on behalf of South Korea's capitalist system in 1950, and supports what the Trump administration calls a "free and open Indo-Pacific" (for US investments). Compared to this agenda, torpedoing the denuclearization of the Korea peninsula (Truthout, 9/24/18) seems a small price to pay.

(Source: FAIR.org)

Wetland home of critically endangered eels bulldozed by council

A unique wetlands habitat that was home to critically endangered European eels was “destroyed overnight” when the local council used it as a dumping ground for silt, ecologists say.

Wetlands at Sean Walsh Memorial Park in Tallaght in south Dublin were once home to protected newts, frogs and bats as well as an abundance of insects and wildflowers – but now the area is said to look more like a car park.



Collie Ennis, a research associate at Trinity College Dublin and science officer with the Herpetological Society of Ireland told The Independent he was heartbroken by the “vandalism”.

“It’s absolutely devastating. It was a pristine wilderness and it’s just beyond belief. They killed thousands and thousands of animals by pouring silt over a beautiful wetlands and then steam-rolling it into the ground,” said Mr Ennis.

“Every council, not just Dublin county council, must step up their game. They can’t be preaching to ordinary members of the public about environmental consciousness and then continuously doing stuff like this.”

Mr Ennis said the frogs and newts – which would have been buried alive – were protected under the Wildlife Act 1978. The space also supported a number of birds as well as mammals such as pine martens and badgers which will no longer have a source of food.

The wetlands were also home to European eels which are more endangered than giant pandas or elephants, with numbers having dropped by more than 90 per cent since the early 1980s. Populations of these fish have plummeted due to land reclamation, over-fishing and the damming of rivers.

They have one of the greatest migrations known in the animal kingdom. In autumn, mature eels travel more than 3,000 miles to reproduce in the Sargasso Sea near the Bahamas, crossing both freshwater and seawater as they do.

Mr Ennis said: “European eel numbers across the continent have completely crashed so each adult is massively important for the survival of the species.”

South Dublin County Council was supporting plans to protect the one-hectare large reserve as part of its six-year masterplan, Mr Ennis said. It had agreed there would be minimum interference with the area, except for potentially implementing a boardwalk so it was more accessible to the public.

He said: “All their flashy campaigns and Internet ads mean nothing. It’s all greenwashing. If they are serious about their green policies and biodiversity they should step up now and fix this issue.

“I honestly believe there was no malicious intent on their part because they have been unbelievably supportive to us. I think it’s a miscommunication,” he said.

“It just isn’t good enough anymore. It happens nationwide with hedgerow destruction, wetlands being drained and it’s always ‘We’re sorry, shouldn’t have happened’ and nothing is done. It won’t be the same for years but they need to start restoration work as soon as possible.”

Wetlands are among the most threatened habitats, with a global loss of 87 per cent since the 1700s.

“The rate of this loss has increased with the growth of urbanisation and with the demise of wetlands, you also lose the species that depend on them,” said Alison Debney, a senior conservation programme manager at Zoological Society London (ZSL).

“This includes the critically endangered European eel.

“Urban wetlands are also essential for local people. They trap dirt and pollutants that run off road systems or other hard paved areas before they enter rivers and provide excellent opportunities for people to connect with the natural world.”

(Source: The Independent)

WORDS IN THE NEWS

Milosevic appears again before War Crimes Tribunal

(October 29, 2001)

Slobodan Milosevic has again refused to recognize the War Crimes Tribunal in The Hague. Speaking at his third appearance before the court since his transfer, he rejected attempts by the court to provide a fair trial. This report from Janet Barrie. Mr Milosevic said he had **no intention of addressing the charges** against him. He said he didn’t **recognize** the Tribunal. He said what he’d been accused of was just defending his nation. He said he’d protected the Yugoslav people from terrorism. He hadn’t read **the indictments** against him, he added, and didn’t intend to.

Mr Milosevic won’t appoint a defense counsel - the Tribunal’s appointed for him three so-called friends of the court to put his case **in the interests of a fair trial**. Mr Milosevic said he wanted nothing to do with them. He says the Tribunal’s **politically motivated**, and illegal. Today, for the first time, he’s hearing a new indictment related to war crimes **allegedly** committed in Croatia, and new details dealing with the **campaign** in Kosovo.

Words

no intention of: if you have no intention of doing something, you don’t intend to do it or you have decided you won’t do it
addressing: here, giving attention to or dealing with a matter or problem
the charges: the formal statements saying that someone is accused of a crime
recognize: here, to accept that something is legal or true
the indictments: the formal statements of accusation; similar to the charges but more formal
in the interests of: in order to achieve something
a fair trial: the process of judging, in a balanced and correct way, whether a person is guilty of a crime
politically motivated: politics is the reason behind it
allegedly: said to have happened
campaign: political and military activities planned with a certain aim

(Source: BBC)

Tehran to host international conference on children’s rights

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — An international conference on children’s rights will be held in Tehran on November 19-20, Mahmoud Abbasi, the deputy justice minister for human rights and international affairs said.

Abbasi who is also served as secretary of the National Body on the Convention of the Rights of the Child (NBCRC) said that “we intend to hold an international conference on children’s rights and the national festival of children’s rights in November this year.”

He made the remarks in a meeting with the UNICEF representative in Iran Mandeep O’Brien on September 22.

The two officials discussed potential for solidifying partnership on child rights as well as plans for commemorating the 30th anniversary of the CRC.

Organized by the NBCRC bodies and UNICEF, the event will be attended by thinkers, experts, political and executive officials of the region, he added, IRNA reported on Tuesday.

“We put child rights in priority and try to address the key challenges in the field of child rights by the end of the year (March 20).”

The NBCRC is responsible for policy making, coordination, monitoring and promoting children’s rights in Iran, he said, noting, “We have common goals with UNICEF, so



holding such meetings can bring our views closer together.”

He also explained that marking the 30th anniversary of the Convention, “we will hold specialized conferences nationwide in 31 provinces of the country, identifying and summarizing the challenges faced by the children.”

Lake Urmia water level on the rise



ENVIRONMENT **TEHRAN** — The level of water at Lake Urmia increased by 1.04 centimeters on Tuesday compared to the same day last year, according to the studies conducted by the Lake Urmia conservation program committee.

Currently, the volume of water at Lake Urmia has increased by 3.46 billion cubic meters compared to that of the previous year.

Water level has also increased to 1.2 meters demonstrating a rise of 45 centimeters compared to the corresponding period last year.

Water is now covering some 2,835 square kilometers of the lakebed, which increased in comparison to the last year and the long-term mean by 1,722 and 1,679 square kilometers, respectively.

On September 1, the volume of water in Lake Urmia was 3.4 billion cubic meters which was 1.05 billion cubic meters more than the same day last year, and also 16 billion cubic meters compared to the long-term average.

Shared between West Azarbaijan and East Azarbaijan provinces in northwestern Iran, Lake Urmia, was once the largest salt-water lake in the Middle East. It was a home to many migratory and indigenous animals including flamingos, pelicans, egrets and ducks and attracted hundreds of tourists every year who had bathed in the

water to take advantage of the therapeutic properties of the lake.

However, decades of long-standing drought spells and elevated hot summer temperatures that speed up evaporation as well as increased water demands in agriculture sector shrank the lake drastically. In 1999 the volume of water which was at 30 billion cubic meters drastically decreased to half a billion cubic meters in 2013. Moreover, the lake surface area of 5,000 square kilometers in 1997 shrunk to one tenth of that to 500 square kilometers in 2013.

Alireza Shari’at, head of monitoring and supervision department of the Lake Urmia restoration program said in September 2018, that in order to maintain the Lake Urmia ecological balance of 14 billion cubic meters over the next 10 years, an annual amount of 3.3 billion cubic meters of water is required.

The sharp rise in precipitations rates in the area has raised hopes for total restoration of the once glorious Lake Urmia.

Based on the latest data published by the National Drought Warning and Monitoring Center, during the past crop year (September 23, 2018), precipitation in the country considerably increased to 314.5 millimeters from 159.3 millimeters in a water year ago, demonstrating a 95.9 percent rise.

‘She seems very happy’: Trump appears to mock Greta Thunberg’s emotional speech



Donald Trump appears to have taken a swipe at teenage climate activist Greta Thunberg, tweeting a video of an emotional Thunberg with an apparently sarcastic comment that she seems to be “very happy” and looking forward to a bright future.

“She seems like a very happy young girl looking forward to a bright and wonderful future. So nice to see!” tweeted the US president late on Monday night.

The president tweeted out a video with the comment showing visibly upset Thunberg as she delivered a blistering speech to world leaders at a United Nations summit, saying they had betrayed young people through their inertia over the climate crisis.

In the stinging speech on Monday, the 16-year-old Swedish climate activist told governments: “You are still not mature enough to tell it like it is. You are failing us. But the young people are starting to understand your betrayal.”

“You have stolen my dreams and my childhood with your empty words,” she said.

“The eyes of all future generations are upon you. And if you choose to fail us I say we will never forgive you.

promote child rights nationwide, he added.

O’Brien, for her part, said that when countries look at their actions over the past thirty years, they come to the conclusion that promoting child rights is definitely a holistic approach.

She lauded Iran for its efforts on promoting children right, such as reducing child mortality and increasing girls’ access to education.

UNICEF has partnered with organizations active in the field of children, but the capacity of the NBCRC, which has more than 16 bodies, is an ideal capacity to pursue children’s rights, she highlighted.

The basic philosophy of the Convention on the Rights of the Child is to ensure that all children, especially children at risk, have equal access to quality social services, so with programs and policies pursued by the NBCRC in cooperation with UNICEF, the goals can be achieved, she concluded.

The NBCRC was established under the Ministry of Justice in January 2010 with a special mandate to monitor implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in Iran. Since then, UNICEF has partnered with the NBCRC on a number of program for children. As a follow-up to the meeting, the two sides are finalizing areas of partnership for children.

We will not let you get away with this. Right here, right now is where we draw the line.”

Thunberg, who kickstarted the global School Strike movement with her weekly Friday school strikes in Sweden, has been in New York for the climate summit. She briefly crossed paths with Donald Trump at the United Nations on Monday, as he arrived to attend a meeting on religious freedom. The US president decided to snub a major UN climate summit, held on the same day.

As Trump passed in front of Thunberg, she fixed him with a steady stare, video of which quickly went viral. Julián Castro, the Democratic presidential contender, tweeted the video with the words: “I think a lot of us can relate.”

When Thunberg arrived in New York late in August, she said she had little hope she would be able to convince the president to take action on the climate emergency: “I say ‘listen to the science’ and he obviously does not do that. If no-one has been able to convince him about the climate crisis and the urgency, why would I be able to?” she said.

(Source: The Guardian)

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → ع

\$7b to be allocated to retrofit, rebuild flood-devastated houses

A budget of 290 trillion rials (nearly \$7 billion) will be allotted to reconstruct and repair housing units destructed by flood in 18 provinces across the country, Mehdi Jamalinejad, deputy interior minister for urban and rural development has announced.

Flood has devastated some 169,377 housing units, 68,333 of which are beyond repair and must be reconstructed, he stated.

Moreover, household appliances of 109,832 families also have suffered damages, he further regretted.

He went on to say that 20,000 housing units, undergone devastation by recent flooding in Aq-Oala county in northern Golestan province, are under construction.

Non-repayable loans amounting to 25 trillion rials (nearly \$600 million) will be provided for retrofitting of houses, 7.4 trillion rials (around \$177 million) will also be earmarked to compensate for the infrastructure damages, he explained.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“co-, col-, com-, con-, cor-”

■ **Meaning:** with or together

■ **For example:** What will it take for us to **coexist** in peace?

PHRASAL VERB

Nose out

■ **Meaning:** to find out or discover information, secrets, etc.

■ **For example:** He nosed out their plans.

IDIOM

Crocodile tears

■ **Explanation:** To shed crocodile tears means to shed false tears or show insincere grief

■ **For example:** Caroline pretended to be sad but we all knew her tears were crocodile tears.

Pelosi: U.S. House will start formal impeachment inquiry of Trump

TEHRAN — The United States House of Representatives will launch a formal impeachment inquiry into President Donald Trump over reports he sought foreign help to smear a political rival, setting up a dramatic clash between Congress and the White House that could spill into the 2020 presidential campaign.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi announced the inquiry on Tuesday after a closed-door meeting with Democratic politicians, saying Trump's actions appeared to have undermined national security and violated the U.S. Constitution.

"The president must be held accountable. No one is above the law," said Pelosi, who had for months been reluctant to embrace an impeachment effort.

Trump fired back quickly on Twitter, calling the inquiry "Witch Hunt garbage".

After more than two and one-half years of sharp Democratic criticism of Trump, the formal impeachment quest sets up the party's most urgent and consequential confrontation with a president who thrives on combat - and injects deep uncertainty in the 2020 White House race. Trump has all but dared Democrats to take this step, confident that the spectre of impeachment led by the opposition party would bolster his political support.

Pelosi's change of heart followed reports that Trump had pressured Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky in a July 25 phone call to investigate Democratic presidential frontrunner Joe Biden and his son.



Trump promised on Tuesday to release a transcript of his phone call. He also confirmed he had withheld nearly \$400m in U.S. aid to Ukraine but denied he did so as leverage to get Zelensky to initiate an investigation that would damage Biden.

'Full steam ahead'

Pelosi said the six congressional committees currently investigating Trump would continue with their probes as part of the inquiry. Those panels would work collaboratively, and then decide whether the House Judiciary Committee should draft articles of impeachment, House aides said.

"The urgency of the moment is just full steam ahead and that is different. You will see everything moving ahead very quickly," Representative Pramila Jayapal, who serves on the House Judiciary Committee, told reporters.

Jayapal said she expects the committee to move now towards drafting articles of impeachment.

"That is clearly the direction we are going," she said.

Representative Steve Cohen said, "Trump doesn't even know right from wrong - what he did in Ukraine, talking to the president

there about Joe Biden's son, was to buy a result, clear and simple."

It remains unclear if the House will vote to authorize their official inquiry as has been done in the past.

Biden on Tuesday called on Trump to fully comply with congressional investigations into the matter or risk impeachment.

"If he continues to obstruct Congress and flout the law, Donald Trump will leave Congress in my view with no choice but to initiate impeachment proceedings," Biden told reporters in Wilmington, in his home state of Delaware.

Trump, who has withstood repeated scandals since taking office in January 2017, said a "complete, fully declassified and unredacted" transcript of the July 25 call would be released on Wednesday.

The controversy came to light after a whistle-blower from within the U.S. intelligence community lodged a complaint with an internal watchdog about Trump's conversation with Zelensky.

House Intelligence Committee Chairman Adam Schiff said his panel was communicating with a lawyer representing the whistle-blower and that the individual would like to testify this week.

According to Al Jazeera, Trump said the transcript would show the call was "totally appropriate", that he had not pressured Zelenskiy to investigate Biden and that there had been no "quid pro quo" for U.S. aid in exchange for a probe. Quid pro quo is a Latin phrase meaning a favour that is exchanged for a favour.

Skippping UNGA, Putin and Maduro hold talks in Russia

TEHRAN — Leaders from around the world have headed to New York this week to attend the 74th session of the United Nations General Assembly - but Vladimir Putin and Nicolas Maduro are not among them.

Having skipped the annual diplomatic gathering, the presidents of Russia and Venezuela instead held their own talks in Moscow on Wednesday.

Putin reiterated his support for Maduro's government, but also highlighted the importance of dialogue between the government and the "opposition forces".

"No doubt we support the dialogue that you, Mr. President, and your government are having with the opposition forces," Putin said. "We believe that any refusal to have dialogue is irrational, harms the country, and only threatens the population's well-being."

The two leaders were scheduled to hold a one-on-one meeting before attending a working lunch with other officials to discuss bilateral cooperation among other issues.

Before leaving Venezuela, Maduro has said his agenda included holding meetings with "important business groups".

No major deals are expected, but Kremlin



spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the "implementation of joint projects" will be on the agenda.

Venezuela has been mired in a deep political crisis since January, when opposition leader Juan Guaido declared himself interim president, arguing Maduro's re-election in May 2018 was illegitimate.

Guaido has since been backed by dozens of Western countries and their regional allies.

Israel irked as Erdogan takes UN podium to rap occupation

TEHRAN — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has lashed out at Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, accusing him of "lying" after he drew the world's attention to the Tel Aviv regime's occupation of Palestinian territories during his speech at the United Nations General Assembly.

Speaking at the 74th session of the UNGA on Tuesday, Erdogan censured Israel's unlawful expansionist policies in the occupied territories.

He brandished a famous time-lased map showing facts and figures about a "shrinking" Palestine and the Zionist regime's gradual encroachment on Palestinian land.

"The Palestinian territory under Israeli occupation has become one of the most striking places of injustice," he told world leaders. "Israel, which was almost non-existent in 1947, has continued until this day to seize Palestinian land with the aim of eliminating the state."

"How can the Golan Heights and the West Bank settlements be seized just like other occupied Palestinian territories before the eyes of the world? Is the aim of the initiative to promote, as the Deal of the



Century, to entirely eliminate the presence of the state and the people of Palestine? Do you want bloodshed?" Erdogan asked, Press TV reported.

The Turkish leader further censured Israel's disregard of "human values" and international law, which is reflected in the regime's "acts of aggression such as the inhuman blockade in Gaza, illegal settlements and attacks against the historical and legal status of Jerusalem (al-Quds)."

Beijing hits back at Trump over China-bashing at UN

TEHRAN— China has struck back at U.S. President Donald Trump over his rebuke of Chinese trade and development models, warning Washington against making trade threats or meddling in Chinese internal affairs.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said on Tuesday that China had no intention to "play the Game of Thrones on the world stage," but also warned that Beijing would not bow in the face of threats on trade and other matters.

"Negotiation cannot take place under threat or at the expense of China's legitimate right to development," Wang said while addressing an event organized by the U.S.-China Business Council on the sidelines of the annual United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) meeting in New York.

He said the trade war between China and the U.S. was inflicting unnecessary damage on both sides, increasing costs to U.S. firms, triggering consumer price hikes, and diminishing the American growth potential.

The remarks were in reaction to Trump's speech at the UNGA, in which he said that Washington would no longer tolerate Beijing's trade practices and that he would not accept a "bad deal" with China on trade.

According to Press TV, Wang dismissed the notion that Beijing intended to outperform the U.S. as a world power, emphasizing that "seeking hegemony is not in our DNA" and that China was still a developing country far behind the United States.



Two million Yemeni children out of school: UNICEF

TEHRAN — The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) estimates that two million children are out of school in Yemen, which has been the subject of a destructive Saudi-led military campaign for more than four years.

In a statement released on Wednesday, UNICEF representative in Yemen Sara Beysolow Nyanti said that a fourth of the two million Yemeni children have dropped out since the beginning of the Saudi war in

March 2015.

She also warned that the education of a further 3.7 million children is at risk as teachers have not received their salaries for over two years, adding that one fifth of schools in Yemen can no longer be used as a direct result of the conflict.

"Violence, displacement and attacks on schools are preventing many children from accessing school," Nyanti said.

The UNICEF representative further raised concerns about the future of Yemeni children out of school, saying they "face increased risks of all forms of exploitation including being forced to join the fighting, child labor and early marriage."

"They lose the opportunity to develop and grow in a caring and stimulating environment, ultimately becoming trapped in a life of poverty and hardship," she added.

According to Press TV, Saudi Arabia and its allies launched a deadly military aggression against Yemen in an attempt to reinstall a Riyadh-backed former regime and eliminate the Houthi movement, which has been defending the country along with the armed forces.

The Western-backed offensive, coupled with a naval blockade, has destroyed the country's infrastructure.

'Congress is helping Saudi Arabia destabilize the Middle East. It needs to stop.'

➔ I first met Khashoggi during my time as U.S. ambassador; he was a proud Saudi whose calls for domestic reforms and respect for human rights stemmed from a desire to see his country thrive. But he was brutally murdered by Saudi agents for daring to criticize MBS.

The Trump administration long ago should have condemned the twin Saudi outrages of the war in Yemen and Khashoggi's execution and curtailed U.S. military aid and other support. Instead, Trump has stood by a reckless Saudi leader, failed to criticize even the most horrific Saudi violations and expanded sales of the very weapons that have killed thousands of innocent Yemeni civilians. The president cites U.S. arms sales to justify support for Saudi Arabia, sending the terrible message that America's values are for sale and undermining our core principles.

But the status quo also poses increasing dangers to both Saudi Arabia and the United States. The war in Yemen has strengthened Iran's ties with the Houthis, providing Tehran with an ally poised to strike Saudi Arabia and U.S. interests in the region—as seen by the false Houthi claim of responsibility for last week's attacks. Moreover, both al-Qaida and the Islamic State have taken advantage of the war to further establish themselves inside Yemen, likely planning future attacks against America and its interests. The war in Yemen even threatens the partnership between Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates; their Yemeni allies, who previously had joined forces to fight the Houthis, recently began fighting against each other.

In the face of the dramatic September 14 attacks and given years of Saudi misconduct, Congress should resist pressure to reflexively stand in solidarity with Riyadh and should advance—not pause—its recent moves to restrain U.S. military support for Saudi Arabia. Congress is debating several provisions in the annual defense bill that would suspend U.S. support for the war in Yemen and provide modest accountability for Khashoggi's murder, including a temporary halt to U.S. bomb sales to Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Enacting these measures both would demonstrate that America's values have no price and help deescalate tensions in the region rather than pouring fuel on an already crackling fire. Despite bipartisan support in both the House and Senate, Senate Republicans fearful of contradicting the president have resisted these measures, but it is time they step up to rein in Saudi Arabia's misconduct before Riyadh launches a war with Iran that would be even more deadly than its catastrophic intervention in Yemen.

Suspending U.S. arms sales at this juncture also could help seize a brief window to end the war in Yemen by making clear to Saudi Arabia that it cannot prevail militarily in its conflict with the Houthis. Last year, an end to U.S. midair refueling of Saudi jets helped persuade Riyadh to back a limited ceasefire for Yemen's main port for humanitarian aid. A suspension of bomb sales by Congress now could similarly incentivize the Saudis to return to negotiations, before the metastasizing of the conflict renders peace out of reach. In dealing with Saudi Arabia, America's choice has never been between blithely accepting Saudi conduct or severing our relations; presidents from FDR to Ronald Reagan have found ways to preserve American values while selectively cooperating when it is in our interests. Ideally, Congress and the president would work together on foreign policy, but the president's unwillingness to rein in Saudi misconduct means Congress now has a responsibility to act; Yemen can't wait for a course correction by a future administration.

The stakes are too great for Congress to be cowed by calls for sympathy with Saudi Arabia after this month's attacks. If Congress fails to act, U.S. arms will kill more innocent civilians in Yemen as the chance for peace dwindles, impunity for Khashoggi's murder will embolden tyrants around the world, and the war in Yemen will continue empowering terrorists and destabilizing an already risky region.

Robert W. Jordan served as U.S. ambassador to Saudi Arabia from 2001 to 2003, and is the author of the book Desert Diplomat: Inside Saudi Arabia Following 9/11.

Macron tightens migration stance: 'We can't host everyone'

TEHRAN — Emmanuel Macron has said France "cannot host everyone", intensifying his tough rhetoric on immigration.

Macron had last week signaled a tougher line on immigration in the second half of his mandate, arguing the government must stop voters drifting to the far-right. "France cannot host everyone if it wants to host people well," Macron told Europe 1 in an interview from the United Nations in New York where he is attending this week's annual General Assembly (UNGA).

Macron said France had seen a sharp increase in the numbers of people asking for asylum since the 2017 presidential election and said much tighter European cooperation was needed.

"There is not enough cooperation in Europe and we need to look at this migratory phenomenon and take decisions," he said.

According to Al Jazeera, Macron's comments come as the French parliament is set next week for a major debate on migration policy, with the lower house National Assembly discussing the issue on Monday and the Senate on Wednesday.

Egypt arrests more than 1,000 after anti-Sisi protests: NGOs

TEHRAN— Egyptian authorities have arrested more than 1,000 people, two rights groups and lawyers said Wednesday, in the wake of rare anti-government protests last week.

The Egyptian Centre for Freedoms and Rights said 1,003 had been arrested, while the Egyptian Centre for Economic and Social Rights reported the figure of 1,298 detained.

Three prominent academics were also detained, relatives and lawyers said. The three detained activists are Hazem Hosny, Hassan Nafaa and Khaled Dawoud.

Dawoud is an opposition leader and former head of the liberal Al Dustour party, and was arrested Wednesday. Hosny and Nafaa are both political science professors at Cairo University, and were arrested Tuesday. The interior ministry could not immediately be reached for comment.

Egypt has seen a wave of arrests following small but rare anti-government protests over the weekend. Defying a ban on protesting without a permit, hundreds took to the streets in Cairo and other cities Friday in response to calls for protests against alleged government corruption. The protests continued in the Red Sea city of Suez Saturday. Police quickly dispersed the protests, but they marked a startling eruption of street unrest.

TEHRAN — British MPs return to Parliament Wednesday following a momentous Supreme Court ruling that Prime Minister Boris Johnson's decision to suspend parliament was unlawful.

The judgment has dented Johnson's authority, prompting calls for his resignation and casting further doubt on his promise to pull Britain out of the European Union on October 31, come what may.

The Conservative leader was due to arrive back from New York, heading straight into a political maelstrom triggered by Tuesday's damning court ruling that his decision

to suspend Parliament for five weeks was unlawful.

Britain's right-wing tabloids reacted angrily to the ruling, with The Sun saying it had been bombarded with letters from readers expressing "fury."

The Daily Telegraph said Johnson was "seen as the champion of the people against an establishment determined to stop Brexit", while for the Daily Mail, "The real political vandals are the out of touch MPs blocking Brexit."

The Speaker of the House of Commons, John Bercow, announced that MPs would reconvene at 11.30 a.m. Wednesday, while the upper House of Lords said it would return

later the same day.

Labour opposition leader Jeremy Corbyn called on Johnson to resign but said he would not call a no-confidence vote in parliament until the possibility of a no-deal Brexit had been eliminated.

"Our first priority is to prevent a no-deal exit from the European Union on October 31," Corbyn told BBC radio.

Bercow said there would be no Prime Minister's Questions — a weekly session held on Wednesdays — but there would be "full scope for urgent questions, for ministerial statements, and for applications for emergency debates."

Swimmer Shayna Jack ‘struggling’ with lengthy drug probe

Drug-tainted Australian swimmer Shayna Jack has claimed she could have to wait nine months for a chance to prove her innocence, after testing positive to a banned substance.

Jack, part of Australia’s 4x100m freestyle team that set a world record last year, tested positive outside competition to the banned muscle-building drug Ligandrol in June.

In her first public comments since meeting with Australian Sports Anti-Doping Authority (ASADA) officials in early August, Jack wrote in an Instagram post late Tuesday that the uncertainty surrounding the lengthy drug probe and her swimming future had taken its toll.

The 20-year-old, who has denied knowingly taking the drug, said the “whole process has been a test” of the strength of her mental health.

“I have found that I am struggling most with accepting the current situation, how much it has not only impacted my swimming career but my everyday life,” she wrote.

She said she did not expect her case to be heard until June 2020, which would coincide with trials to qualify for Australia’s swimming team that will compete at the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games.

But ASADA said in a statement to AFP that “each case is different and is treated on a case-by-case basis” and there was “no set timeline” for dealing with anti-doping rule violations.

Jack said her support team was attempting to fast-track the process, adding she “would never stop fighting for her dream as an Australian Dolphin”.

The controversial young swimmer faces a four-year ban from competition -- the standard penalty for athletes who test positive for anabolic agents -- unless she can prove her innocence.

(Source: AFP)

Pique blames pre-season tour for Barca’s slow start

Barcelona defender Gerard Pique blamed the club’s pre-season trips to the United States and Japan for their shaky start to the season.

The Catalans narrowly beat Villarreal 2-1 on Tuesday to provisionally move up to fourth in La Liga with 10 points from six games.

Barcelona have not won away from home all season and failed to keep a clean sheet in the league.

“We have not been able to train a lot, we have had many trips and it shows, there are players who are still not in form, others who have (injury) discomfort,” Pique told reporters.

“The pre-season we had has not helped us, but this is Barca and there are no excuses.”



Barcelona played Chelsea and Vissel Kobe in Japan in July, before heading back to Catalonia to host Arsenal in the Joan Gamper Trophy.

The Spanish champions then flew to the United States to play Napoli twice, in Miami and Michigan.

Six days later they travelled to face Athletic Bilbao in La Liga’s opening game, where they capitulated to a 1-0 defeat.

Luis Suarez suffered an injury in the game and recently returned, but has struggled to find his best form.

Some supporters whistled the Uruguayan off against Villarreal as he failed to make an impact.

“I understand that fans have their opinion and express it, but I wouldn’t pay too much attention to it,” added Pique.

“We would like to win every game by four or five goals but it’s not always possible.”

(Source: Reuters)

Sources: Utd don’t expect title bid until 2022

Manchester United’s owners, the Glazer family, have sanctioned a three-year plan to restore the club’s on-field fortunes, with sources having told ESPN FC there is now an acceptance the team is unlikely to challenge for the Premier League until the 2021-22 season at the earliest.

With traditional rivals Manchester City and Liverpool setting the standard in domestic and European football, the United hierarchy have noted how at Anfield, in particular, they have arrived at their status after rebuilding behind the scenes and backing manager Jurgen Klopp during the German’s difficult first 18 months in charge.

United, the most successful club in English football with 20 league titles, have not won the Premier League since 2012-13 -- the final season of Sir Alex Ferguson’s 27-year reign as manager.

And in the six seasons since, under the management of David Moyes, Louis van Gaal, Jose Mourinho and now Ole Gunnar Solskjaer, United have finished an average of 21.5 points behind the eventual champions.

Under Solskjaer, United have made an unconvincing start to the campaign, with the team sitting in eighth position, 10 points behind leaders Liverpool after six games.

Executive vice-chairman Ed Woodward said on Tuesday, during a conference call with the club’s investors, that Solskjaer needed to be afforded “patience” in his attempts to overhaul the squad and make United competitive again at the top level of the Premier League.

And sources with knowledge of the club’s plans have told ESPN FC that the “patience” of the United hierarchy extends to the belief that the so-called “cultural reset” cited by Woodward last season will require three full seasons, and accompanying transfer windows, before the mistakes of the post-Ferguson years can be properly rectified.

As well as investing in the playing squad, United are also determined to improve their structure off the pitch, with the search for a technical director still ongoing.

(Source: ESPN)

Bayern Munich threaten boycott of German national team if Manuel Neuer is dropped

Bayern Munich have remarkably threatened to boycott the German national team if Joachim Low drops No 1 Manuel Neuer.

Neuer and German goalkeeping rival Marc-Andre ter Stegen have been involved in a petty war of words recently over the No 1 spot, with the latter becoming frustrated with a lack of game time.

And Bayern president Uli Hoeness has got involved in the debate, threatening to stop players from Germany’s biggest club joining up with the national team if Low decides to replace Neuer with Ter Stegen between the sticks.

‘Before that takes place, we won’t be sending any more national players,’ the Bayern president told Sport Bild after the Champions League match against Red Star Belgrade.

‘We will never accept that there will be a change here,’ he added.

However, the Bavarian president has rejected the chance to hold a conversation with Low in the future if the opportunity arises: ‘He’ll already hear what we’ve said, his ears will ring.’

Bild recently confronted German national team manager Oliver Bierhoff with



Hoeness’ controversial statements, which left the former less than impressed.

When asked if he was afraid of a potential Bayern boycott, Bierhoff replied: ‘No,

because a club is obligated to release its players for international duty as per FIFA regulations.’

Barcelona goalkeeper Ter Stegen be-

lieves he should be starting for Germany and claims people can’t expect him to be ‘happy about it’.

Hoeness recently shared his thoughts on the situation, backing Bayern’s goalkeeper by claiming Ter Stegen ‘doesn’t have a right to play there’.

And now Hoeness expects the German national team to put the Barcelona shot-stopper in his place: ‘You put Mr Ter Stegen in the corner and tell him clearly that it doesn’t work like that’.

A potential Bayern boycott could lead to a real selection headache for Low, who has heavily relied on the likes of Serge Gnabry, Niklas Sule and Joshua Kimmich recently in his young squad.

Low has previously dropped some of Bayern’s biggest stars from the national team, discarding Jerome Boateng, Thomas Muller and Mats Hummels, who now plays for rivals Borussia Dortmund.

Low has recently been planning for the future following a dismal defence at the 2018 World Cup, as well as struggling in the Nations League.

(Source: Daily Mail)

Pochettino misses another chance to end Tottenham trophy drought



Less than four months on from losing the Champions League final, Mauricio Pochettino’s Tottenham saw another chance at a trophy disappear on Tuesday evening in the more humble surroundings of Colchester United as the fourth-tier side progressed to the last 16 of the League Cup on penalties after a 0-0 draw.

Despite resting Harry Kane, Pochettino had every reason to believe a team that ended the game with Dele Alli, Christian Eriksen, Lucas Moura, Erik Lamela and Son Heung-min on the field should have enough firepower to break down a side that sits 10th in League Two, 70 places below Spurs in the English football ladder. Now into his sixth season at Spurs, Pochettino is still yet to win a trophy in his managerial career and there are growing signs that the huge progress made under his stewardship has stalled.

Tottenham have now won just four of their past 17 games in all competitions and are already 10 points off Premier League leaders Liverpool just six games into the new campaign.

After the difficulties of playing at a temporary home in Wembley with a stretched squad for most of the past two years, this season was meant to signal a fresh start.

The club’s sparkling new stadium opened in April and Pochettino has been able to add to his squad for the first time in 18 months with the signings of Tanguy Ndombele, Giovanni Lo Celso and Ryan Sessegnon.

■ ‘Different agendas’

Eriksen spoke publicly of his desire to leave at the end of last season and the Dane, along with Jan Vertonghen, Toby Alderweireld and Danny Rose have entered

the final year of their contracts.

“When you have an unsettled squad always it’s difficult and you lose time and then you need time to recover the time you lose,” said Pochettino.

“That’s where we are. Maybe our performances are good but you need this extra, which is mental, a connection, it’s energy to be all together, not to have different agendas in the squad.

“We need time again to build that togetherness that you need when you are competing at this level.”

Pochettino is not looking at a quick fix and is already eyeing up the next two transfer windows to refresh a group that appears to have grown stale.

“January is going to be a good opportunity to try and fix this type of situation and sort it,” said Pochettino.

“Then the next transfer window, again. To keep the successful period in football you need to be different every single season and act differently and find different solution.

“Maybe we need to do something different.”

Spurs can be grateful that traditional ‘top six’ rivals Arsenal, Chelsea and Manchester United have also suffered early season struggles, which means they are just three points off the top four ahead of kind run of Premier League fixtures, starting with the visit of Southampton on Saturday.

But after four seasons of Champions League football, a top-four finish is no longer enough to satisfy Spurs’ ambitions.

“Starting my sixth season I need to lift a trophy,” said Pochettino before the season started.

(Source: Eurosport)

Swiss AG Lauber, under cloud of FIFA scandal, elected to third term



The Swiss parliament on Wednesday approved Attorney General Michael Lauber for a third term, opting for continuity despite impending disciplinary proceedings over his handling of a soccer corruption probe.

Lauber was thrown into the limelight last year when details emerged of confidential meetings he and another high-level prosecutor held with FIFA officials while investigating suspected corruption in world soccer.

The resulting questions over their impartiality sent shockwaves through the Swiss justice system.

The narrow vote keeping Lauber attorney general until the end of 2023 contradicted a recommendation against his re-election this month by parliament’s courts committee.

The panel had said a scandal surrounding meetings he held with FIFA President Gianni Infantino had damaged the reputation of Switzerland’s highest prosecutorial office and put federal attorneys’ ability to act at risk.

Lauber has defended his office’s handling of the case, noting global soccer body FIFA itself was not a target of the probe.

While Lauber had acknowledged two meetings with Infantino in 2016, he had denied a third meeting reported by media to have occurred in 2017, prompting a disciplinary probe by the agency that supervises the attorney general’s office. He later said he did not recall the third meeting but that it must have occurred based on diary entries and text messages.

■ Political football

With 129 votes, Lauber eked out the majority he needed to stay in his role after some lawmakers spoke out in favour of keeping his office running smoothly and not prejudging his actions before the disciplinary probe -- whose start has been delayed by wrangling over docu-

ments - wraps up.

“It is important to me as a member of parliament that institutions continue to function properly,” said Christian Luescher of the pro-business Liberals, warning against making the attorney general’s office a political football.

A tense-looking Lauber watched from the gallery during parliament’s debate, his jaw working furiously.

“I am grateful to parliament for the confidence it has placed in me,” he said after the vote. “Strengthened by this election I will continue to commit myself to an effective, independent and modern prosecution.”

Lauber’s office has handled a number of sprawling, high-profile money laundering and corruption cases linked to Brazilian state oil firm Petrobras, Malaysian state development fund IMDB, and FIFA. It faces criticism for bringing a dearth of charges in matters that secured multiple convictions elsewhere.

The former chief of his office’s white-collar crimes unit, which is overseeing all three of these investigations, was suspended last September over questions regarding his conduct in the FIFA case. He was ultimately cleared, but resigned in December.

A court in June ordered Lauber to recuse himself from his office’s investigations into soccer corruption, ruling that his closed-door meetings with Infantino raised the appearance of bias.

Lauber, 53, subsequently tried in vain to get one of the presiding judges recused.

In August, with the probe into his conduct under way and a statute of limitations approaching over suspicions linked to the awarding of the 2006 World Cup, prosecutors in Lauber’s office filed fraud charges against three former German soccer officials and one Swiss.

(Source: Reuters)

Kyrgios blames ‘clicking shoulder’ for first-round exit



Asked if he could sit out the next few weeks or even the rest of the season, Kyrgios replied: “For sure, I mean at this rate I wouldn’t be surprised.

“I wasn’t able to even serve at a reasonable pace.

“I’m probably not going to bother playing until I can get it right again,” he added.

Kyrgios elicited a few giggles from a sparse crowd in

Zhuhai with an underarm serve in the first set.

Coasting 3-1 and 40-0 up, Kyrgios served weakly into the net, before surging into a 4-1 lead.

But the Australian faded alarmingly from there and his previously dominant serve collapsed.

Kyrgios, who appears to revel as the “bad boy” of men’s tennis, repeatedly felt his shoulder and his game disintegrated as lost the first-set tie break.

The second set was a non-contest as Seppi, 35, ranked 74th in the world, strolled into round two in 65 minutes.

Kyrgios said that he still hopes to play for Australia in the Davis Cup in November.

“So until now and then I’ve got a lot of time, I can rest, recover, get my shoulder right,” he said.

Kyrgios has long divided tennis fans.

He is an undoubted talent but has a long list of misdemeanours including rowing with umpires and spectators, and throwing an on-court chair.

The Australian says he deploys underarm serves for tactical reasons, but Spanish player Rafael Nadal accused him of “lacking respect”.

(Source: AFP)

Taftian aims to make history at 2019 IAAF Worlds

By Masoud Hossein

TEHRAN — Iranian sprinter Hassan Taftian is going to make history at the 2019 IAAF World Athletics Championships.

The prestigious even will be held in Doha, Qatar from Sept. 27 to Oct. 6 at the renovated multi-purpose Khalifa International Stadium.

Mehdi Pirjahan and Ehsan Hadadi will also represent Iran in the competitions at the 400 meters hurdles and discus throw, respectively.

Taftian can be the first Iranian sprinter to win a medal at the World Championships, however he has a difficult task ahead.

Christian Coleman (9.81), Justin Gatlin (9.87), Yohan Blake (9.96), Aaron Brown (9.96), Michael Rodgers (9.97), Andre de Grasse (9.97), Xie Zhenye (10.01), Yoshihide Kiryu (10.01) and Jimmy Vicaut (10.02) will compete at the men's 100 meters preliminary round on Friday.

Taftian, who recorded a personal best of 10.03 in Paris last year, can make history to stand on podium in Doha, however his opponents seem hard to beat.

Hadadi, 2012 Olympics silver medalist, will take part at the World Championships for the fifth time. He has already partaken at the 2007 (Osaka, Japan), 2011 (Daegu, South Korea), 2015 (Beijing, China) and 2017 (London, England).

Hadadi recently finished in sixth place in Brussels Diamond League with a 64.75m throw and it's not enough to win a medal in Doha.

In form Swede, Daniel Stahl (71.86), Jamaican Fedrick Dacres (70.78), Austria's Lukas Weissshaidinger (68.14) and Spaniard Lois Maikel Martinez (67.98) are looking for a medal at the competitions.

Pirjahan has recently won a gold medal at the National Inter State Seniors Championships in India with a time of 49.33 seconds. Doha competitions could be a real test for the young Iranian hurdler.

Karsten Warholm from Norway (46.92), Qatari Abderahman Samba (46.98), American Rai Benjamin (46.98)



and Turkey's Yasmani Copelloare (47.81) are competing in the event and the Iranian has a tough task ahead.

Worlds in Doha will be the first championship to take place since the new eligibility regulations were put in place.

Final lists for the IAAF World Athletics Championships Doha 2019 confirm that 1972 participants comprise 1054 men and 918 women from 210 teams will be in action in the Qatari capital.

Iran win two golds at IBSA Judo Grand Prix



S P O R T S TEHRAN — Two Iranian judo athletes won gold medals at the IBSA Judo Grand Prix 2019 on Tuesday.

Vahid Nouri seized a gold, throwing Georgian Lasha Kizilashvili at the -90kg B2 category with a beautiful left uchi mata to grab the gold.

The bronze medal went to Uzbekistan's Jaloliddin Avazov and Oleksandr Nazarenko from Ukraine.

In the +100kg B2 category Mohammadreza Kheirollahzadeh took home the gold. With a clever turnover, he held down Shirin Sharipov of Uzbekistan for twenty

seconds to score the final ippon of today.

Russian Gaidar Gaidarov and Ilham Zakiyev from Azerbaijan won bronze medals.

The IBSA Grand Prix was held under the leadership of IBSA Judo, with the support of the IJF for the technical aspects of the competition, therefore the suspension of Iran Judo Federation announced last week, didn't affect the participation of athletes from Iran.

* B2: Athletes with a B2 sport class have a higher visual acuity than athletes competing in the B1 sport class and/or a visual field of less than five degrees radius.

Iran's Dehdar claims bronze at IWF World Championships



S P O R T S TEHRAN — Iran's Reza Dehdar claimed a bronze medal at the International Weightlifting Federation (IWF) World Championships on Wednesday.

The Iranian representative lifted 175kg in the snatch before winning the clean and jerk with his final attempt at 219kg to register a total of 394kg.

Yauheni Tsikhantsou from Belarus won the gold medal in the total with 398kg, having ranked second in the snatch with 180kg and also second in the clean and jerk on 218kg.

The silver medal went to Korean Yunseong Jin who lifted 397kg in total. He lifted 181kg in the snatch and 216kg in clean and jerk.

Ali Miri from Iran had already won a silver medal at 89kg event.

The 2019 World Weightlifting Championships are being held in Pattaya, Thailand.

The World Weightlifting Championships is an event organized by International Weightlifting Federation (IWF). The first competition, held in March 1891, was won by Edward Lawrence Levy of England.

Abadan holds on to stay undefeated as Fubon Braves miss desperation attempt

Naft Abadan outlasted a furious late-game rally by the Fubon Braves to hang on and win, 68-66. Abadan remains undefeated in the Group Phase and the victory inches them closer them to a trip towards the Semi-finals.

In the final 5 minutes, Naft Abadan led by as much as 13 points but scored only 1 point up until the final buzzer, allowing the Braves to make a final push to set up a dramatic game-winning attempt by Lin Chih-Chieh.

Hamed Haddadi came alive after a quiet first game, finishing with 18 points, 18 rebounds, and 4 assists to go with a great defensive effort of 3 blocks and 3 steals. Despite his gaudy numbers, facing against another 7-shooter in the Braves' Sim Bhullar did give him some trouble.

"We didn't really play well because they gave Hamed a lot of midrange shots," teammate Samad Nikkhah Bahrami said after the game. "Usually he makes those shots,



but he was out of shape, he couldn't make those shots. That's why [the Braves] came pretty close."

"He had like 25 shots, he never gets 25 shots."

Bahrami himself put in 17 points, 4 rebounds, 6 assists, and 2 steals in another superb outing.

The Braves countered by picking up their outside shooting and transition game in after falling behind, but the lead they fell into at the start was too big to overcome. Lin Chih-Chieh, who missed the game-winning attempt, scored 14 points and shot 4-11 from downtown.

Previous game leading scorer Bhullar grabbed 18 rebounds, but was limited to only 4 points on 6 attempts.

Abadan has a chance for their third straight win tomorrow against hosts Hitech Bangkok city at 18:00 (GMT +7) tomorrow right after the 15:30 (GMT +7) game between the Fubon Braves and Muharraq.

(Source: FIBA)

Stars of tomorrow set for Thailand 2020 draw

The draw for the eagerly anticipated AFC U23 Championship Thailand 2020 will take place on Thursday in Bangkok as the Continent's top 16 teams discover their opponents for the tournament scheduled from January 8-26. There is extra significance for this edition of the AFC U23 Championship as the top three teams will join Japan in qualifying for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics in July.

Teams will be divided into four groups and have been seeded according to their final ranking from the last edition in China PR - with position A1 reserved for Thailand who will be the first South-east Asian nation to host the prestigious tournament.

Defending champions Uzbekistan, who secured the title with a last gasp winner in extra-time against Vietnam, will take their place alongside the 2018 runners-up in Pot 1. The two finalists will be joined by Qatar, who have recently appointed AFC Asian Cup UAE 2019 winning coach, Felix Sanchez to lead them in a bid to claim their first-ever title.

Iraq and Japan, two former champions who clinched the title in 2014 and 2016 respectively, are in Pot 2 with 2016 runners-up and 2012 London Olympics bronze medalist, Korea Republic as well as regional rivals, DPR Korea.

The 2018 hosts, China PR, 2014 third place finishers Jordan are in Pot 3 to-

gether with Australia and Saudi Arabia, who will be hoping their promising stars from their AFC U-19 Championship 2018 winning side will be ready to improve on their best-ever performance when they finished runners-up to Iraq six years ago.

Meanwhile, Islamic Republic of Iran and United Arab Emirates return to the tournament after missing out on the last edition in the final pot with debutants Bahrain and 2014 quarter-finalist Syria completing the line-up.

If Japan, who qualify as hosts of the Tokyo Olympic Games, are one of the leading three nations then the fourth-placed team will qualify.

(Source: the-afc)



Mohammad Mousavi reaches agreement with Indykpol AZS Olsztyn

TASNIM — Iran international middle blocker Mohammad Mousavi has reached an agreement with Polish volleyball team Indykpol AZS Olsztyn.

The 32-year-old player will be absent at the 2019 FIVB Volleyball Men's World Cup which will be held in Japan in October.

Mousavi has told Iran coach Igor Kolakovic he needs more time off since he is exhausted.

Mousavi will travel to Poland instead of accompanying the national team in the World Cup

Indykpol AZS Olsztyn, based in Olsztyn, plays in the Polish Volleyball League (Polska Liga Siatkówki, PLS).

It is one of the most successful clubs in Poland.

Al-Sailiya striker Ansarifard scores against Al Sadd

PLDC — Iranian forward of Al-Sailiya scored against Al Sadd in Qatar Stars League Tuesday night.

Al-Sailiya lost the match 3-1 at the Al Janoub Stadium. Baghdad Bounedjah opened the scoring for the visiting team just eight minutes into the match.

Akram Afif extended the lead in the 80th minute from the penalty spot and Ali Assadalla made it 3-0 three minutes later.

Ansarifard pulled a goal back in the 84th minute and was on target once again in the 89th minute but his goal was ruled out for offside by VAR.

Al Sadd moved top of the QSL table with 12 points from four matches and Al-Sailiya remained ninth with four points.

UEFA urge European clubs to boycott countries banning women from stadiums

UEFA has called on European teams to refuse to play matches in countries where women are banned from entering stadiums, the organization's president, Aleksander Ceferin, said on Tuesday.

"The Executive Committee will recommend all 55 national associations and all European clubs, not to play matches in countries where women have restricted access to stadiums," Ceferin said in Ljubljana following a meeting of European football's governing body.

The announcement comes following calls by FIFA to demand that women in Iran be allowed free unlimited access to stadiums in the country.

Italian football authorities were criticized last year after organizing their domestic Super Cup between Juventus and AC Milan in Saudi Arabia, where women have also been banned from attending sporting events.

"As much as we know, two countries in the world don't allow women and girls to watch football," Ceferin said.

"We cannot punish anyone if they play against it, it is out of our jurisdiction, it is FIFA's jurisdiction, but that doesn't mean that we should be quiet and say we can't do anything."

The UEFA chief added that representatives of the European Club Association attended Tuesday's meeting and were in agreement with the call.

"Our advice to 55 associations and all the clubs will be not to play there or with the teams from these countries where the basic rights of women are not respected," he went on. (Source: AFP)

Warriors sign Chriss to one-year deal

The Golden State Warriors have signed free-agent forward Marquese Chriss to a one-year deal, according to a report Tuesday by Chris Haynes of Yahoo Sports.

Subsequent reports add that the deal is not guaranteed. Chriss, picked eighth overall in the 2016 draft by the Phoenix Suns, split the 2018-19 season with the Houston Rockets and Cleveland Cavaliers. He averaged 4.2 points and 3.3 rebounds in 43 games. Overall, Chriss' has averaged in 7.6 points and 4.5 rebounds in 197 games over three seasons.

In his first season with the Suns, Chriss was named to the NBA All-Rookie Second Team after averaging 9.2 points per game.

(Source: Reuters)

Comedians apologize for Osaka 'bleach' remark

A Japanese comedy duo have apologized after they reportedly said Australian Open champion Naomi Osaka "needed some bleach" during a live event.

Japanese Osaka, 21, won her first Pan Pacific Open title in her hometown Osaka on Sunday - her first trophy since January's Melbourne win.

The duo, known as 'A Masso', also reportedly said "she is too sunburned".

Their management company, Watanabe Entertainment, says they have been severely warned following the remarks.

Both women apologized for making "inappropriate, hurtful remarks", though they did not name two-time Grand Slam winner Osaka, who is Haitian-Japanese.

"We sincerely apologize for making the specific person feel uncomfortable, as well as for everyone else connected to the event," comedian Ai Murakami said.

"We also sincerely apologize for causing trouble. Though we should have thought about it, we made remarks that hurt many people, something we will never do again."

In January, Japanese noodle company Nissin was accused of "whitewashing" the mixed-race Osaka in a manga drawing.

Former world number one Osaka was born in Japan before moving to the United States when she was young. (Source: BBC)

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A thought is a clear mirror. A counsel is a warning.
Learning civility is enough to disapprove for others
what you disapprove for yourself. *Imam Ali (AS)*

“Drunken on Love” getting advice from Rumi expert Mohammad-Ali Movahhed

A R T **TEHRAN** — Mohammad-Ali Movahhed, a top Iranian expert on Molalna Jalal ad-Din Rumi, is working as an advisor to “Drunken on Love”, a joint film project between Iran and Turkey about the Persian poet and mystic, which was banned by two Shia clerics on Tuesday.



Director Hassan Fat'hi (L) and Rumi expert Mohammad-Ali Movahhed meet in an undated photo.

Director Hassan Fat'hi, who is also co-writing the screenplay with Farhad Tohidi, has held several sessions with Movahhed in Istanbul and Tehran to discuss the story of the project in detail, the Persian service of ILNA reported on Wednesday.

The 97-year-old Movahhed was honored for his lifetime achievements by the Iranian National Commission for UNESCO at the University of Tehran in December 2018.

A new corrected copy of Rumi's masterpiece Masnavi-ye Manavi by Movahhed was unveiled at the Academy of Persian Language and Literature in Tehran in December 2017.

“Drunken on Love”, which will be about Rumi's life story and his devotion to his mentor, Shams-i Tabrizi, will be filmed on location in the Turkish town of Konya, home to the mausoleum of Rumi.

In statements published on Tuesday, Shia clerics Ayatollah Nasser Makarem Shirazi and Ayatollah Hossein Nuri Hamedani banned the project over its Sufism content.

“Due to the fact that this film helps to promote the deviated sect of Sufism, making the film is impermissible based on sharia and must be stopped,” Ayatollah Makarem Shirazi said.

Ayatollah Nuri Hamedani said, “Based on a remark from Imam Sadeq (AS), the sect of Sufism is our enemy and its promotion in any form is not allowed and it is haram.”

Iran’s “Termites” honored at Portuguese festival

A R T **TEHRAN** — Iranian director Masud Hatami's debut movie “Termites” was crowned best film at the Figueira da Foz International Film Festival (FICFF) in Portugal, the organizers announced last week.

The film also brought Hatami the best director award, while Iranian short “Isolated” by Mohammad Ahmadinia received an honorable mention.



A scene from “Termites” by Iranian director Masud Hatami.

“Termites” is about Tara, a young woman who has lost her mother and brother in the sea near their home in northern Iran when she was a child. She has never returned there since then, and now, after seven years of marriage, she has to go and sell the house.

On the way north with her husband, she talks about her dreams of having a family and children, which causes serious discussions between them.

“Piu de la vita” by Raffaella Rivi from Italy won the best documentary award and “Dejavu” by Atefeh Khademolreza from Canada and “Still Life” by Bruno Fraga Braz from Portugal shared the award for best short film.

“Am I a Wolf?” wins Grand Prix at Parisian animation festival

A R T **TEHRAN** — Iranian director Amir-Hushang Moein's award-winning short movie “Am I a Wolf?” has been honored with the Grand Prix at the 12th Paris International Animation Film Festival (PIAFF).

Winners were awarded during the closing day of the festival on September 23 in the French capital, Iran's Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (IIDCYA), which is the producer of the movie, announced on Wednesday.

The movie tells the story of children who perform the familiar story of the wolf and the yearlings in school as a puppet show. The nanny goat grieving for its yearlings and the angry wolf in its solitude face each other.

“Am I a Wolf?” has been screened at several international events and won awards from some of them. It was honored with a New Face Award at the 22nd Japan Media Arts Festival in May. The film also received the Children's Dreams award at the 7th Insomnia International Animation Film Festival in Kaluga, Russia in July.

In addition, the 6th Tripoli Film Festival in Lebanon picked “Am I a Wolf?” as best animated film in June.



“Am I a Wolf?” by Iranian director Amir-Hushang Moein.

Chekhov’s “Bear” on stage in English at Tehran theater

A R T **TEHRAN** — Iranian director Mohammad Pakdel-Javan staged celebrated Russian author Anton Chekhov's play “The Bear: A Joke in One Act” in English at Divare Chaharom Theater in Tehran on Monday.

The one-act comedic play is about Mrs. Elena Popova who is mourning her dead husband Nicholas. She is consoled by her servant Luka who want her to move on in life.

One day Gregory Smirnov, a moneylender who is seeking to recover his loan from Elena's husband enters her home. He claims that he needs his money back and that he himself had borrowed money from a bank. But Elena says that she does not have the money and asks him to come back in a few days. However, Smirnov insists that he needs the money urgently.

This leads them to an argument with name-calling, insults and finally a duel.

Pakdel-Javan, Roshanak Rezai and Ayat Nattaj are the main members of the cast for the play, which will remain on stage until October 22.



A poster for Anton Chekhov's play “The Bear: A Joke in One Act” on stage by director Mohammad Pakdel-Javan at Divare Chaharom Theater in Tehran.

Kafka’s “Metamorphosis” adapted for Tehran stage

A R T **TEHRAN** — A troupe led by director Amir-Hossein Barimani is scheduled to perform a stage adaptation of German writer Franz Kafka's novella “The Metamorphosis” at the Tehran Independent Theater in late September.

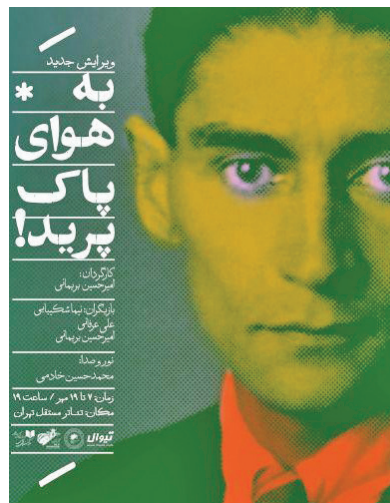
“He Jumped into the Clean Air” enters on Mr. Hossienpur who wakes up one day finding himself to be extra small.

“Mr. Hossienpur then faces many problems such as walking on the carpet since the carpet lint is up to his knee,” Barimani told the Persian service of MNA on Wednesday.

However, he is still a complete individual who must continue living and struggling to adjust himself to this new condition, he added

“The story of the play is based on Kafka's ‘The Metamorphosis’, the difference is that the person in Kafka's story turns into a huge insect,” he stated.

Barimani also noted that the play has been written by Nima Shakibai, Ali Erfani and himself, and that the three will also act in the play.



A poster for “He Jumped into the Clean Air” by director Amir-Hossein Barimani.

The play, which is part of the “Time of Experimentation” project, will begin on September 29 and end on October 11.

Asian Film Festival Barcelona picks movies from Iran

A R T **TEHRAN** — A lineup of 10 Iranian films will go on screen in various sections of the 7th Asian Film Festival Barcelona (AFFBCN), which will take place in the Spanish city from October 4 to November 10.

“Reza” by Alireza Motamedi, “The Dark Room” by Ruhollah Hejazi, “Astigmatism” by Majidreza Mostafavi and “Orange Days” by Arash Lahuti are among the films.

“Reza” tells the story of a divorced man named Reza who is trying to adapt to his new life after a divorce while he finds a new romance.

“The Dark Room” is about Haleh and Farhad, who together with their 5-year-old son, Amir, have recently moved into a new complex. Amir is lost in the desert in front of the complex, however, his parents find him soon. Later, Amir tells his father that someone has seen his body and this makes Farhad very upset and he goes looking for a suspect who has sexually abused his little boy.



A scene from “Astigmatism” by Majidreza Mostafavi.

“Astigmatism” tells the story of a man who has returned after a few years of separation from his family and wants to take back his house from his wife, son, daughter-in-law and grandson. His son, who farms leeches in the basement and hopes to get rich by doing that, tries to reconcile his father with his mother to stay at home.

“Orange Days” tells the story of Aban, the only female contractor in the cutthroat and male-dominated orange harvesting industry, who enters a competition to win a large contract.

The lineup also includes “Orduckly” by Behruz Gharibpur, “Pastarioni” by Soheil Movafag, “First Autograph for Rana” by Ali Zhakan and “Footwork” by Mazdak Mirabedini.

The festival will also screen “Wild Jonquils” by Rahbar Qanbari, “Yeva”, a co-production between Iran and Armenia by Anahid Abad.

Over 100 films from 25 countries on the Asian continent will go on screen at the AFFBCN.

“Simin” receives Baikal Special Prize at Russian festival

A R T **TEHRAN** — Iranian director Morteza Atashzamzam's film “Simin” has won the Baikal Special Prize at the Baikal International Film Festival in Russia, the organizers have announced.

“Simin” received the award “for the acuteness of the problem posed in the feature film,” the jury said in a statement published during the closing ceremony of the festival on Monday.

The festival focuses on people and

the environment, and the Baikal prize is given to the film which mostly focuses on environmental issues.

The film investigates the reasons behind the drying up of Zayandehrud River, which was once flowing in the central Iranian province of Isfahan, chronicling the impacts on the lives of people, particularly on farmers.

Mohammadreza Hedayati, Laleh Eskandari, Mohammad Fili and Pari Karbalai are the main members of the cast.

The Baikal festival jury, chaired by Russian actor and film director Vladimir Grammatikov, gave the Grand Prix to the film “Honeyland” by Ljubomir Stefanov and Tamara Kotevska from North Macedonia.

“Father Baikal” by Marina Maria Melnik from Russia won the best documentary award.

A lineup of 34 films from Russia, North Macedonia, Kyrgyzstan, Iran, the Philippines, Germany, Italy, France, Belgium, Canada, Spain, Belarus, Poland, Japan and Norway were screened at the festival.



Actors Laleh Eskandari (L) and Mohammadreza Hedayati act in a scene from “Simin” by director Morteza Atashzamzam.

Placido Domingo ends Met Opera career while disputing sexual misconduct accusations

NEW YORK (Reuters) — Opera singer Placido Domingo on Tuesday dropped out of a performance at the Metropolitan Opera in New York while disputing accusations of sexual misconduct leveled by several women in the classical music world.

Domingo, one of the world's leading tenors, was due to appear in “Macbeth” on Wednesday. Both he and the Met Opera said he would not perform there again.

“The Metropolitan Opera confirms that Placido Domingo has agreed to withdraw from all future performances at the Met, effective immediately. The Met and Mr. Domingo are in agreement that he needed to step down,” the opera house said in a statement.

More than three dozen singers, dancers, musicians, voice teachers and backstage staff have said in recent

weeks that they had witnessed or experienced inappropriate behavior by Domingo toward women at different opera houses over the last three decades.

Domingo, 78, said in a statement on Tuesday that while he strongly disputes the recent accusations against him, “I believe that my appearance in this production of Macbeth would distract from the hard work of my colleagues both on stage and behind the scenes. As a result, I have asked to withdraw and I thank the leadership of the Met for graciously granting my request.”

The Spanish singer added that he considered his dress rehearsal in the title role of “Macbeth” to be “my last performance on the Met stage.”

Los Angeles Opera, where Domingo is general

director, said last month it would bring in outside counsel to investigate the accusations made in two reports by the Associated Press.

A handful of U.S. regional opera houses and orchestras had previously canceled planned appearances by Domingo but the decision by the Met marked the most serious fallout for the singer from the accusations.

Domingo was one of the “Three Tenors,” along with Jose Carreras and the late Luciano Pavarotti, who brought opera to a wider audience with concerts around the world in the 1990s.

Hundreds of women have publicly accused powerful men in business, politics, the news media, sports and entertainment of sexual harassment and abuse since October 2017, fueled by the #MeToo social movement.