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Watex2019 hosting 260 companies in Tehran

TEHRAN — Some 260 foreign and domestic companies are participating in the 15th Iran International Water and Wastewater Exhibition (Watex 2019) which kicked off on Monday at the Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds, IRNA reported. Alongside 247 Iranian companies, 13 exhibitors from Italy, Turkey, Germany, Hungary, China, and Taiwan are showcasing their latest products and services during the four-day event.

Recent achievements in different fields

of water and wastewater industry including pipes and fittings, filtration and desalination equipment, valves, automation and instrumentation systems, measuring systems and laboratory equipment for water and wastewater, as well as industrial equipment are being showcased in this year's event. Watex is Iran's biggest annual industrial and commercial event in water and wastewater industry which hosts a large number of domestic and foreign companies every year.

Saudis must know they cannot buy security: Zarif

TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has said that Saudis must know that they cannot buy security from the United States. "I don't think that militarism will bring security to the Persian Gulf region and I think it will exacerbate tension. Saudi Arabia must understand that it cannot buy security from the United States," ISNA

quoted him as saying in an interview with Al Mayadeen. In an interview with CNN aired on September 24, Zarif said, "I do not believe that military capability alone can prevent disaster. That's been what we have been trying to tell the Saudis. That they cannot buy security purchasing more war weapons." **→2**

Yemen Houthis free 350 detainees, reviving hopes for talks

TEHRAN — The head of Yemen's National Committee for Prisoners Affairs (NCPA) says the Houthi movement will release 350 prisoners, including three Saudi nationals, in its latest goodwill gesture. Through the release, the Ansarullah movement of the Houthis and their allies in the Yemeni army seek to underline their commitment to peace negotiations held in Sweden last December.

The talks with Yemen's former Saudi-backed government resulted in an agreement which calls for a ceasefire in Hudaydah, a prisoner exchange and a statement of understanding on the southern city of Ta'izz. "Our initiative proves our credibility in implementing the Sweden agreement and we call on the other party to take a comparable step," Yemen's al-Masirah TV quoted NCPA head Abdulqader al-Mortada as saying Monday. **→13**



ARTICLE

Ebrahim Fallahi
Tehran Times journalist

A look into Iran's PGPIC after sanctions hit the holding

As Iran's largest petrochemical group which extends to 39 subsidiaries and foreign-based sales agents, Persian Gulf Petrochemical Industries Company (PGPIC) has been considered one of the most profitable entities in the country's economic body.

back in June, the United States hit PGPIC with economic sanctions due to what they claimed to be ties with the country's Revolutionary Guards (IRGC), however the move in fact was aimed to choke off financing to the country's largest and most profitable petrochemical group.

The PGPIC group holds 40 percent of Iran's total petrochemical production capacity and is responsible for nearly 50 percent of the country's petrochemical exports.

After the imposition of the U.S. sanctions, many thought the impact of the sanctions to be very significant on the performance of the holding and consequently on the country's economy, however contrary to expectations, PGPIC is continuing to thrive, and according to the holding's Managing Director Jafar Rabiei its production and exports haven't been affected greatly by the U.S. sanctions.

To take a more detailed look at PGPIC's current condition, Tehran Times conducted an interview with Pejman Alidousti, which is a public relations officer and economic assessment consultant at PGPIC.

What follows is a summary of Alidousti's comments on the current situation of the company and the impact of U.S. sanctions.

■ The U.S. sanctions on PGPIC

The main issue which we should consider is that we were sanctioned even before the U.S. officially declared sanctions on PGPIC in June.

For doing any business activity, there are four basic factors which must be present, first you need to produce and supply your products or services; you also need to have costumers which are willing to be provided with your products. There is then the issue of logistics and transportation which is the linkage between the previous factors and finally the financial factor which is one of the most important players in any business transaction. **→5**

Trump's close-call diplomacy with Rouhani

By Robin Wright

On the evening of Tuesday, September 24th, the President of France, Emmanuel Macron, went to see his Iranian counterpart, Hassan Rouhani, at the Millennium Hilton Hotel, across the street from the UN headquarters, in New York. The hotel is one of only three places that the Iranian leader could go in the city, because of U.S. sanctions. Macron intended to set up a three-way telephone conversation with Rouhani and President Trump.

A team of technicians arrived to set up a secure line, in a meeting room on Rouhani's floor, for the call at 9:30 P.M. The telephone conversation was supposed to cap twenty-four hours of frenetic diplomacy—including personal appeals to Rouhani by the British, Japanese, and Pakistani Prime Ministers and the German Chancellor—after months of quiet French diplomacy.

Earlier in the day, Macron, alongside the British Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, had urged Rouhani to talk with Trump. Their exchange was

caught on video. "If he leaves the country without meeting President Trump, honestly, this is a lost opportunity," Macron directed an interpreter to tell Rouhani, amid a scrum of diplomats and photographers. "Because he will not come back in a few months and President Trump will not go to Tehran." Rouhani threw his head back and laughed. "So they have to meet now!" Macron insisted. Johnson chimed in, as cameras flashed, "You need to be on the side of the swimming pool—and jump at the same time." **→3**

Iran look for first ever FIVB World Cup podium

TEHRAN — Iran, who have never won a medal at the International Volleyball Federation (FIVB) Men's World Cup, will start the campaign on Tuesday with a match against the tournament's most decorated team Russia.

Team Meli have traveled to Japan with their main players, however the team can participate at the competition with young players.

The 13 World Cup tournaments have been won by six different national teams. Russia have won six times (four as Soviet Union). The other World Cup winners are Brazil and United States, with

two titles each; and Cuba, Italy and Germany (as East Germany), with one title each.

"We want to continue our winning way, that's why we are here. Iran have recently won the Asian Championship and we are ready to show our good performance in the competition," opposite spiker Amir Ghafour said.

"We have difficult task in the competition because the teams have come here with their best players. Also, playing 11 matches in 15 days is very difficult, as well as time difference between Iran and Japan. Anyway, we are here to do our best," he added.

Palestinians in Gaza mark 19 years since al-Aqsa Intifada

TEHRAN — Palestinians in the Gaza Strip marked the 19th anniversary of the second Intifada.

Back in September 2000, the then-Israeli opposition leader Ariel Sharon made a provocative visit to Haram al-Sharif or Temple Mount in Jerusalem al-Quds along with hundreds of Israeli forces, in a move widely denounced by Palestinians.

The visit triggered a popular uprising against Israel where several thousands of Palestinians were killed and many more were injured before the up-

rising ended in February 2005 following a truce.

On Sunday, Palestinian political figured took part in a seminar to remember the intifada. Palestinians believe the intifada is still ongoing as they are not hesitant about sacrificing their lives defending Palestine. They say resistance is the only means for Palestinians to protect Jerusalem al-Quds from Israeli violations.

Palestinians say they are determined to defend Jerusalem al-Quds by all means and at all costs.

In Gaza, people stage weekly rallies to demand their right of return to their homeland.

Israeli forces have killed hundreds of protesters during the weekly rallies so far and injured many more.

According to Press TV, people here say Israel's violations and its use of excessive force against peaceful protesters won't stop them from speaking out against Israeli crimes. They say intifada is still alive in their hearts and minds and they will continue to defend their rights.

International police equipment exhibition underway in Tehran

TEHRAN — The 18th International Police, Security and Safety Equipment Exhibition (IPAS 2019) kicked off in the capital city of Tehran on Monday, IRIB news agency reported.

The exhibition is held annually in Iran to showcase the latest technologies, accessories and equipment of the police, safety and security sectors, as well as promoting usage of safety equipment and reducing financial loss or death toll caused by accidents. **→12**



ISNA / Erfan Khoshkhoo

Six-day sacred defense exhibition in Qom ends in all its glory

By Huda Z

QOM — One thing I absolutely love about Iran is how the Iranians remember their history and retell it over and over again.

If you're thinking this is some kind of war going on, you're wrong. This is an exhibition that was held this week near the popular Jamkaran Mosque.

The show started at 21:00 hours with a heartfelt speech by Mahdi Yadgari, one of the generals who had fought gallantly protecting the Iranian borders in the 1980 war.

"The flag of the martyrs is up high," General Yadgari said.

"Imam [Khomeini] hadn't lied to us. Whatever Imam had predicted, happened. That Saddam went for Kuwait. That Saddam went up the gallows. And now, whatever Agha [Ali Khamenei] had predicted, is happening. He says that we will pray in the Bayt al-Muqaddas," he continued, standing on a raised platform just before the show began.

"Where is Saddam now? Tell me, where is he? ... Saddam and the 18 nations, who had imposed fighting upon us," said Yadgari as the crowd listened tearfully.

Once he finished his speech, it was time for the re-enactment to begin.

"Javad, Javad, Reza!" blasted from the speakers followed by analog voice, as if someone was talking over a handheld transceiver. "Javad, Reza!" the man said again, to which another replied with the same words before the instructions for the operation were issued.

As the spotlight lit up the soldiers stealthily making their way towards the operation area, a bomb detonated right in the middle of the ground, to which, the crowd responded with a huge unanimous gasp. After that, a series of bombs were detonated, punctuated by shots that were fired from either of the two sides of the field.

The operation show continued for twenty minutes, giving the civilians a taste of what it is like to be in a war zone. It ended with people standing up for the national anthem of Iran as it's tune played in the background with the soldiers raising the flag of Iran and waving back at those who waved at them from the crowd.

The show was conducted under the supervision of the army and the IRGC, whom the crowds of people went to thank afterwards. It was astonishing to know that all the bombs and ammunition used was real. **→13**

Arbaeen march symbolizes unity between Iran and Iraq, Ayatollah Jannati says

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Ayatollah Ahmad Jannati, chief of Iran's Assembly of Experts, said on Monday that the Arbaeen march is symbol of unity between the Iranian and Iraqi people and also shows power of Islam.

"The people's participation in the Arbaeen march prevents divisive policies by the enemies," he added.

Interior Minister Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli, who had visited Iraq, said on Sunday that it is predicted that more than three million Iranians to visit Karbala, which hosts the Shrine of Imam Hussein (AS), to mark Arbaeen.

Arbaeen marks an end to a 40-day mourning period following the martyrdom anniversary of Imam Hussein (AS) and his loyal companions at the Battle of Karbala on Muharram 10 in the year 61 AH (680 CE).

This year, Arbaeen falls on Saturday, October 19.

Millions of pilgrims from Iran, Iraq, Pakistan and some other countries head to Karbala by foot. It is considered the greatest march in the world.

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said on September 18 that "the Arbaeen march is an extraordinary phenomenon not only in our era but also throughout history."

He added, "We cannot find such a gathering and movement that takes place every year more enthusiastically than the previous years."

Mohammed bin Salman says he prefers diplomacy with Iran

MBS: War with Iran would collapse global economy

By staff and agency

Saudi Arabia's crown prince warned in an interview aired on Sunday that a military confrontation with Iran would collapse the global economy, adding that he would prefer a political and peaceful solution to a military one, Al-Jazeera reported.

Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman told the U.S.-based CBS program 60 Minutes that crude prices could spike to "unimaginably high numbers" in case of an armed conflict.

"The region represents about 30 percent of the world's energy supplies, about 20 percent of global trade passages, about four percent of the world GDP (gross domestic product)," the crown prince, also known as MBS, said.

"Imagine all of these three things stop. This means a total collapse of the global economy, and not just Saudi Arabia or the Middle East countries."

Analysts say Saudi Arabia is using Iran as a scapegoat for its repeated failures in the region, especially its ill-fated war against Yemenis. MBS urged the world to take "strong and firm action to deter Iran" and prevent the situation from escalating further.

MBS also said that he agreed with U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's conclusion that the September 14 attacks on the kingdom's oil facilities were an act of war by Iran.

The United States, European powers and Saudi Arabia have also blamed the attacks on Iran.

Tehran has strongly denied any involvement, demanding proof, while Yemen's armed group, the Houthis, has claimed responsibility.

In view of the incidents happening in the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman, the Iranian president has proposed the "Hormuz Peace Endeavor", also called HOPE, to allay security concerns in the region with the involvement of all littoral states.

The Iranian Foreign Ministry announced on Monday that eight countries have been invited to join the initiative.

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani warned world leaders on Wednesday at the UN General Assembly that "the Persian Gulf region is on the edge of collapse, as a single blunder can fuel a big fire."

■ Diplomatic solution

In the same interview, MBS, however, said that he preferred a peaceful resolution because it "is much better than the military one."

He said that U.S. President Donald Trump should meet with Iranian President Hassan Rouhani to craft a new deal on Tehran's nuclear program and influence across the Middle East.

In a possible sign of diplomacy, Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi announced that he would visit Tehran soon, in an effort to reduce tension in the region, according to Iraqi media.

"Abdul Mahdi, who has arrived from Saudi Arabia wants to invite Saudi Crown Prince bin Salman and the Iranian President Hassan Rouhani to Baghdad for a meeting," he was quoted as saying.

Earlier, Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan said that he was also making an effort to mediate between Tehran and Riyadh. He held talks with Saudi Arabia's leaders in Riyadh, as well as with Rouhani at the United Nations.

In the 60 Minutes program, the crown prince also denied ordering the killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi inside Saudi Arabia's consulate in Istanbul on October 2, 2018.

"Absolutely not," when asked if he ordered the murder. But he said he took full responsibility, "since it was committed by individuals working for the Saudi government."

Baghdad will consider backing 'Hormuz Peace Endeavor': Iraqi diplomat

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — An Iraqi diplomat has told ILNA that despite U.S. pressure Baghdad will support Iran's initiative for security in the Persian Gulf called the "Hormuz Peace Endeavor".

Sadwn al-Saeedi said that the initiative is intended to establish security in the region.

At his speech at the United Nations in New York last Wednesday, Iranian President Rouhani officially declared the plan for security in the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz. The initiative, also called "HOPE", seeks cooperation among the regional countries for maintaining security in the strategic waterway.

The Iraqi diplomat added that Iran's plan is intended to secure the Strait of Hormuz and the flow of oil through regional countries which is controlled by the UN, but the U.S. wants the region's security to be controlled only by itself and its allies.

Asked about Iraq's stance on the Iranian initiative, he said Baghdad is ready to engage with regional countries on the basis of the plan, and welcomes it the despite pressure by Washington.

Omani Foreign Minister Yusuf bin Alawi bin Abdullah has said that Muscat will consider supporting the initiative.

In a tweet on Thursday, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif also invited all regional states to join Iran's initiative for securing the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz.

Zarif said the initiative entails "dialogue, confidence-building, freedom of navigation, energy security, non-aggression, and non-intervention".

Iran to announce details of Hormuz Peace Endeavor soon

Eight countries invited to join the initiative

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Foreign

Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said on Monday that Iran will soon announce details of President Hassan Rouhani's "Hormuz Peace Endeavor".

"Details of the plan will be announced soon in written format especially to the eight countries that we invited to join in the coalition. This plan seeks to create peace and security in the region," he said during a press conference.

During his speech at the 74th UN General Assembly on Wednesday, President Rouhani said, "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."

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Zarif said the initiative entails "dialogue, confidence-building, freedom of navigation, energy security, non-aggression, and non-intervention".

■ **'Iran welcomes Japan's initiative to buy oil'**

Mousavi also said that Tehran welcomes Japan's initiative to buy oil from Iran through



creating a credit line.

"This plan can be carried out, however, we hope its implementation would not be contingent upon meeting with someone (Trump). Japan is not a signatory to the JCPOA [the 2015 nuclear deal], however, the country is an old friend of Iran and has proposed this plan. Iran welcomes this initiative if it is implemented," he said.

Donald Trump withdrew the U.S. from the UN-endorsed JCPOA in May 2018 and imposed the toughest ever sanctions against Iran in line with his administration's "maximum pressure" policy against Tehran.

The remaining parties, particularly the

European sides, have so far failed to honor their commitments since the U.S. returned sanctions and imposed new ones.

■ **'Europe has intertwined its commitments to U.S. demands'**

Mousavi also said that Europe has intertwined implementation of its commitments to the U.S. demands.

Talking in a press conference in New York on Thursday at the conclusion of his visit to the annual UN General Assembly, Rouhani said the European countries have either been unable or shown no will to save the nuclear deal.

He said Iran cannot be the only country

Trump will change policy by noticing Iranians' determination, government predicts

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iranian

government spokesman Ali Rabiei said on Monday that the U.S. exit from "self-inflicted dead-end" requires something more than "enthusiasm".

U.S. President Donald Trump withdrew Washington from the 2015 nuclear deal in May 2018 and restored the previous sanctions against Iran and ordered new ones. Trump has described his government's sanctions against Iran as an "economic war".

To strangle the Iranian economy, Trump has acknowledged that his administration has slapped the "harshest sanctions" against Iran that its kind has never been seen in history.

Rabiei predicted that Trump will definitely become aware of realities in Iran.

"We are sure that the president of the United States will soon find the courage to do what he did not dare to do in New York when he sees the people's resistance and determination."

Abbas Araqchi, a top nuclear negotiator and deputy foreign minister, has said Trump's "maximum pressure" campaign against Iran has produced "maximum resistance".

Esmail Baghaei Hamaneh, Tehran's ambassador and permanent representative to the UN office in Geneva, has called the

consequences of U.S. unilateral sanctions against Iran "crime against humanity".

During a speech at the 42th session of the UN Human Rights Council on Sunday, he urged the United Nations to take actions in stopping the sanctions.

Top Iranian officials, including President Rouhani and Foreign Minister Zarif, have called U.S. sanctions against Iranian people "economic terrorism".

Trump has announced that it is ratcheting up economic pressure on Iran to bring officials in Tehran to the negotiating table.

Rabiei said, "As we have said repeatedly, sanctions against Iran are a form of terrorism and no government wants to negotiate with terrorists who are involved in terrorist attack."

In an interview with CNN aired on September 24, Zarif said that sanctions are war.

"Sanctions are war. Because in a war, usually military targets are chosen. In sanctions, civilians are the targets. So, it's war. It's more than war," the chief diplomat said.

■ **'Coalition for Hope is not against any country'**

The government spokesman also said President Rouhani's "Coalition for Hope" is an alternative to anti-Iran U.S. Persian Gulf

coalition and it is not against any country.

He said Iran's "Coalition for Hope" or the "Hormuz Peace Endeavor" has three fundamental differences with the U.S. coalition.

"Contrary to the United States' plan, this initiative sees security in the Persian Gulf internal and not contingent upon extra-regional powers. Iran's initiative does not leave any country outside of the coalition, because a security structure which remove one or a number of countries cannot create security. Coalition for Hope's initiative is not against any country and its objective is achieving peace," he explained.

He said his country is prepared to hold talks about the coalition.

■ **'Saudi Arabia has sent messages to Rouhani'**

The government spokesman also said Saudi Arabia has sent messages to Iran's president through the leaders of other countries.

"Messages from the Saudis were presented to Hassan Rouhani from the leaders of some countries," Rabiei said, according to the semi-official ILNA news agency. "If Saudi Arabia is really pursuing a change of behavior, Iran welcomes that," he added.

Rabiei did not give any information on

that pays the price for keeping the JCPOA alive.

■ **'Europe cannot use snapback mechanism against Iran'**

Mousavi also said that from legal point of view, Europe cannot use snapback mechanism to renew United Nations sanctions against Iran.

"This mechanism is dead and from legal point of view, it is not possible for Europe to apply snapback mechanism," he said.

■ **'Saudis' accusations are unfounded'**

Mousavi said that Yemenis' attacks on Saudi Arabia are a "legitimate defense" and Saudis' accusations against Iran are unfounded.

"What Yemen is doing is legitimate defense which we support. It's been for four and a half years that they are under pressure and such responses are natural. Those who level accusations know that what they say is unfounded and are nothing but shame. The only way out of this crisis is to accept ceasefire and start dialogue," he explained.

Commenting on Pakistan's plan to mediate between Iran and Saud Arabia, he said Iran welcomes any action in line with reducing tension.

Elsewhere, he pointed to a visit to Iraq by Hossein Jaber Ansari, a senior advisor to the Iranian foreign minister for political affairs, saying that the trip was taken for coordination related to the Arbaeen march.



what the messages contained.

Reportedly, the Iraqi prime minister plans to visit Tehran after his trip to Riyadh for talks with Saudi officials.

Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman said in an interview broadcast on Sunday that he preferred a political solution to settle disputes with Iran.

Saudi Arabia blames Iran for an attack on two Saudi oil facilities on Sept. 14, a charge Tehran denies.

Iran is a fierce critic of the Saudi war against Yemen and has repeatedly called for an immediate halt to the aggression against the Arab state, which according to the United Nations has caused the worst humanitarian crisis in recent history.

FM dismisses rumors of Iran giving 25-year advantages to China

TEHRAN (FNA) — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif rejected the claims made by a UK-based magazine that Tehran has given in 25-year one-sided advantages to Beijing in exchange for China's \$400 billion investment in the country.

Zarif said no 25-year strategic deal has been signed with China, rejecting the claims that Iran has granted special rights to the East Asian country under such agreement.

"The comprehensive agreement with China has remained at the level of a proposal, and no agreement has been signed to that effect," Zarif added.

Referring to the claims of granting special rights to China under the claimed deal, Zarif said, "This is fundamentally wrong."

The UK-based magazine Petroleum Economist had raised such speculation saying that Iran and China had updated a 25-year deal signed first in 2016 that foresaw \$400 billion of Chinese investment in the resource-rich Middle Eastern nation.

The refuted update came during a visit at the end of August by Zarif to Beijing where his Chinese counterpart State Councilor Wang Yi called the two countries as "comprehensive strategic partners".



"China will also be able to buy any and all oil, gas and petrochemical products at a minimum guaranteed discount of 12pc to the six-month rolling mean price of comparable benchmark products, plus another 6pc to 8pc of that metric for risk-adjusted compensation," it added.

On August 26, Zarif said in a tweet that he had arrived in Beijing where he would offer Tehran's proposal for a 25-year roadmap of relations between the two countries.

"Here, I will present a 25-year roadmap to materialize

our Comprehensive Strategic Partnership," Zarif wrote in a post on his Twitter page.

The top diplomat added that Tehran is willing to "actively contribute to Belt and Road Initiative", a multi-billion-dollar infrastructure plan put forward by Chinese president Xi Jinping.

A day before that, the Global Times, the English edition of Chinese state-owned newspaper People Daily, published a piece by Zarif where he said, "China has become an indispensable economic partner of Iran and the two countries are strategic partners on many fronts."

"But in order to overcome the emerging challenges which have impeded the ability of many nations to achieve sustainable development, it is imperative for both China and Iran to strengthen their ties more than the past," the top diplomat highlighted in his memo for the Chinese paper.

"Inspired by the Belt and Road Initiative, and to build strategic mutual trust, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the People's Republic of China have jointly worked on a guideline for future cooperation, which is a manifestation of the fact that the two countries' cooperation is now entering a new phase," he added, touching upon Beijing's ambitious initiative.

Saudis must know they cannot buy security: Zarif

Iran and leaders of the 5+1 group depends on removal of sanctions.

The 5+1 group includes the five permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany.

"Our condition was that there would be no bilateral talks between [Iranian President Hassan] Rouhani and [U.S. President Donald] Trump and the meeting should be within the framework of 5+1 group on the condition of removal of sanctions. However, Trump did not even say that the sanctions will be removed after the meeting. He said first

the meeting should beheld and then there was the possibility of removing sanctions," Zarif explained in reference to efforts by the French president to arrange a meeting between Rouhani and Trump on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly meeting in New York.

Zarif told reporters on Saturday that removal of sanctions was Iran's condition for Rouhani's talks with leaders of the 5+1 group.

"Our condition for Mr. Rouhani's talks with heads of state of the 5+1 group, and not just between Mr. Rouhani and Mr. Trump, was removal of sanctions," he said.

Zarif added, "We have always announced that if the United States wants to hold talks with the Islamic Republic, it should return to its commitments and stop sanctions."

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

In an interview with Fox News aired on Tuesday, Rouhani said if the U.S. administration is really seeking dialogue with Iran "it must create the needed conditions."

‘Iran has created necessary conditions for destruction of Zionist regime’

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Major General Hossein Salami, head of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), has said Iran has created the necessary conditions for destruction of the illegitimate Zionist regime.

“This regime should be wiped off the world’s geography and this is not an ideal or dream anymore,” Salami said on Monday, according to Mehr.

In remarks almost three years ago, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said the Zionist regime would cease to exist in the next 25 years if the Palestinians persist in their “collective” struggle.

“As we said before, the Zionist regime will cease to exist if there is a collective and united fight by the Palestinian and the Muslims against the Zionists,” Ayatollah Khamenei said in December 2016.

Also in April 2018, Chief of the Iranian Army Abdolrahim Mousavi said destroying the Zionist regime is one of the major tasks of the IRGC, calling for a concerted effort towards that aim.

Elsewhere in his Monday remarks, General Salami said Iran’s enemies are suffering from



an “irreversible decline” and confess that they are suffering from a “political dementia”.

Today, the enemy is retreating from the

region and its economic sanctions against the Iranian nation are turning inefficient and ineffective, he said, pointing to the U.S.

sanctions on Tehran.

The IRGC chief also pointed to the downing of an intruding American drone by his forces a few months ago, saying, “The downing of the super-advanced American drone as well as claiming responsibility for it were acts beyond political bravery.”

Back in June, the aerospace unit of the IRGC shot down an unmanned U.S. surveillance drone after it breached Iran’s airspace. The IRGC brought the drone down by firing a surface-to-air missile at it.

Amir Ali Hajizadeh, commander of the aerospace unit of the IRGC, said the drone had received warnings for four times before being shot down.

Following the incident, General Salami said the downing of the American drone sent a “clear message” to Washington.

“The message is that while Tehran is not seeking war it is completely ready to fight if necessary,” he said.

“The downing of the American drone conveyed a clear message and it was the fact that the defenders of Iran’s borders will give a crushing and finishing response to intrusions by any foreign entity,” he added.

General: Iran’s power much greater than what’s been revealed

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — A top commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) has said Iran’s power is much greater than what has been revealed so far, warning that the Islamic Republic is fully prepared for all possible situations in the region.

“The concealed aspects of the Islamic Republic’s power is much beyond what has been revealed so far ... and we have prepared ourselves for all probable situations and we will use all our capabilities to defeat the enemy,” Gholam Ali Rashid, the commander of the IRGC’s Khatam al-Anbiya Headquarters, said on Monday, Mehr reported.

“The fate of the region will be determined in the process of our current conflicts with the enemy ... and the victory is ours,” added Rashid.

Tensions between Tehran and Washington have risen since last year, when President Donald Trump abruptly withdrew the United States from the 2015 nuclear deal and attempted to put “maximum pressure” on the Islamic Republic

Iranian officials argue that Trump’s “maximum pressure” has produced “maximum resistance” from Iran, and that Tehran will continue to resist.

Tensions in the Persian Gulf further heightened following a September 14 attack on Saudi Arabia’s oil fields, which the Saudis and their Western allies, especially the U.S., blamed on Iran.

Iran has rejected the claim and called it a “great deceit” in line with “great pressure” campaign on the Islamic Republic.

The Islamic Republic has also warned Washington that any military action against Iran will lead to an “all-out war”.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said over a week ago that “even the Saudis themselves don’t believe the fiction of Iranian involvement” in the attacks on the Aramco oil facilities.

He also said that a military strike against Iran by the U.S. or Saudi Arabia would result in “an all-out war”.

“I make a very serious statement about defending our country. I am making a very serious statement that we don’t



want to engage in a military confrontation. But we won’t blink to defend our territory,” he told CNN.

Zarif said that Iran hoped to avoid conflict, adding that the country was willing to talk to Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

Trump’s close-call diplomacy with Rouhani

1 → For decades, timing—the sequencing of diplomacy, and which side takes the plunge first—has derailed attempts to ease hostilities between Washington and Tehran. In 2013, President Obama dove first, during Rouhani’s first visit as President to the UN General Assembly. He reached out to Rouhani in a telephone call. The two men never met in person, but the call led, after two years of tortuous diplomacy, to the 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and the world’s six major powers. It was widely considered the most significant agreement in the world in more than a quarter century, even as all sides acknowledged its shortcomings. Trump abandoned it in May 2018.

Rouhani, who has staked his presidency on ending Iran’s tensions with the outside world over its nuclear program, is now a lame duck. The fate of his last major diplomatic gamble will almost surely impact Iran’s parliamentary elections next year and its presidential election in 2021. In Iran’s deeply polarized politics, the nuclear deal has been as unpopular among some conservative politicians—for concessions made by Iran—as it has been with Trump’s advisers—for concessions made by the United States.

Macron’s mission in New York was to secure a verbal agreement from Trump and Rouhani on a four-point plan to jump-start diplomacy—and to avoid another Middle East war. Tensions have escalated since Trump reimposed sanctions this past November which were designed to cut off Iran’s oil exports. This summer, Iran and the U.S. shot down each other’s drones; Trump called off U.S. military retaliation in the operation’s final minutes. Iran also threatened to cut off oil from other Persian Gulf countries if its main source of revenue were blocked. This month, Washington blamed Tehran for an attack on Saudi Arabia’s oil facilities that temporarily severed five per cent of global oil supplies.

Macron hoped that the telephone conversation would lay the groundwork for the first meeting between an American president and an Iranian president since Tehran’s 1979 revolution. Macron’s four-point plan covers Trump’s demand for an expansion of the central terms and issues in the 2015 nuclear deal.

Iran would pledge new talks on permanent restrictions on its nuclear program. The plan also addresses Iran’s demand that the United States lift the sanctions that were reimposed last year. And Tehran would be able to resume oil exports, which have plummeted from 3.2 million barrels per day in 2016 to below half a million barrels this summer. More broadly, the plan also incorporates regional flash points; Iran would help end the five-year war in Yemen and make pledges on security and freedom of navigation throughout the Persian Gulf.

Trump has repeatedly signaled an interest in meeting Iranian leaders. During the previous two UN General Assembly meetings, in 2017 and 2018, he has conveyed secret messages, through the French, asking to meet Rouhani. In July, Senator Rand Paul, the Kentucky Republican and Trump golf partner, hand-carried an invitation to Iran’s Foreign Minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif, to visit the White House—that very week. In late August, during the G-7 summit in Biarritz, Trump asked Macron to set up a meeting with Zarif, who was holding talks nearby with French officials. At the UN last week, Trump expressed his interest to reporters. “They’re here, we’re here, but we have not agreed to that yet,” he said. “But they would like to negotiate. And it would certainly make sense.”

The Iranians, however, don’t trust Trump. Four days before Trump arrived in New York, the administration added another layer of sanctions, this time on Iran’s central bank. “We’ve never done it at this level,” Trump boasted to reporters, in the Oval Office. “It’s too bad what’s happening with Iran. It’s going to hell. They are broke, and they could solve the problem very easily.”

This year, the Trump Administration has imposed at least sixteen new rounds of sanctions on Iran, beyond those reimposed last

year. Some are unprecedented—including those against the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, everyone in his office, the entire Revolutionary Guard Corps, and Zarif. The United States has also at least twice launched secret cyberattacks against Iran.

After every Trump overture, Rouhani and Zarif have responded that the United States must first publicly promise to lift sanctions. Rouhani said last month that he was not interested in the type of flashy summit that Trump had with the North Korean leader, Kim Jong Un. “If someone intends to make it as just a photo op with Rouhani, that is not possible,” Rouhani said, in a televised address. The Iranians also preferred that any encounter include the other signatories of the 2015 pact—Britain, China, France, Germany, and Russia.

Trump’s speech to the UN last week didn’t foster trust, either. “No responsible government should subsidize Iran’s bloodlust,” he declared. “As long as Iran’s menacing behavior continues, sanctions will not be lifted—they will be tightened. Iran’s leaders will have turned a proud nation into just another cautionary tale of what happens when a ruling class abandons its people and embarks on a crusade for personal power and riches.” The same day, Rudy Giuliani, the president’s personal lawyer, was the keynote speaker at an event organized by the Iranian opposition. “I am for regime change,” he told protesters gathered near the UN headquarters. “Down with the tyrants in Iran. Down with the ... and all the crooks.”

By the end of Tuesday, Rouhani was in no mood to believe that Trump would take the first step and promise to lift sanctions. When Macron showed up, Rouhani had already retreated to his bedroom. “This was just a game to get us to a meeting without any assurances that Trump would deliver,” Zarif later told me.

The call to Trump’s line came through at nine-thirty, according to sources familiar with events that evening. Macron took the call. But Rouhani never emerged from his room.

Iranian oil minister slams Saudi hyperbole over attacks on Aramco

TEHRAN (Press TV) — Iran’s Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh says Saudi Arabia deliberately exaggerated about attacks on its oil facilities to advance certain political objectives.

Zanganeh said on Monday that Iran had nothing to gain from the September 14 attacks on oil processing plants east of Saudi Arabia, for which the Yemeni Houthis movement has claimed responsibility.

“I made the case from the beginning that Saudi Arabia exaggerated for political purposes,” said Zanganeh, adding, “The real story was not like this.”

Some authorities in Saudi Arabia, the world’s leading

crude exporter, have blamed Iran for the attacks which initially cut the kingdom’s oil production in half.

Those authorities claim that Iran could benefit from the disruptions caused by the attacks through restoring its own sale of oil which has been hampered since American sanctions on the country were toughened in May.

Zanganeh rejected the claims while insisting that the attacks on Abqaiq and Khurais plants had no impact at all on Iran’s daily oil exports.

The comments, covered in the official IRNA agency, came a day after the long-serving Iranian minister issued a warning to officials responsible for safety at Iran’s oil

installations, saying they should take strict measures to prevent potential acts of sabotage affecting processing plants and refineries.

Zanganeh said in a Sunday message that targeting Iran’s oil facilities through “physical and cyberattacks” is part of a strategy by the enemies to maximize pressure on the country at the time of economic sanctions.

Recent reports in major media outlets in the U.S. have confirmed that Washington is considering cyberattacks on Iran’s oil facilities.

Iran has reported similar attempts in the past targeting its nuclear power plants.

The call to Trump’s line came through at nine-thirty, according to sources familiar with events that evening. Macron took the call. But Rouhani never emerged from his room. “As we have been doing for several months, we worked in New York to get Iran to make new commitments and for the U.S., in exchange, to ease sanctions,” a French diplomat told me. “We made technical arrangements in the event that a telephone call could take place. That call did not take place.” The next day, Trump banned Iranian officials and their families from the United States.

Diplomacy may not be dead, however. French officials told me that Macron would continue pushing his plan. On Wednesday, Rouhani addressed Trump directly in his speech to the UN. “Stop the sanctions so as to open the way for the start of negotiations,” he said. “If you require more, you should also give more.” He added, “A memorial photo is the last step of negotiation, not the first one.”

On Thursday, Rouhani told a press conference that Tehran is prepared to negotiate beyond the terms of the 2015 agreement, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA. “What we believe in is that the JCPOA is not a maximum form of agreement. It is what was possible at its time,” he said. “Now, if we wish to take a step above and beyond the JCPOA, that is possible. But the proper foundation would lie upon the full and exact implementation of the JCPOA first”—meaning lifting sanctions.

Rouhani flew home later that day. Yet again, the United States and Iran had opposite impressions of what went wrong. At the Tehran airport, Rouhani told reporters that he had been assured by the British, French, and German leaders that Trump was ready to negotiate—and to promise to lift sanctions, to start the process. After Rouhani’s comments were reported, Trump denied it. “Iran wanted me to lift the sanctions imposed on them in order to meet,” Trump tweeted. “I said, of course, NO!”

** Robin Wright has been a contributing writer to The New Yorker since 1988. She is the author of “Rock the Casbah: Rage and Rebellion Across the Islamic World.”*

(Source: The New Yorker)

Downing of U.S. drone revealed Washington’s empty power: Raisi

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Judiciary Chief Ebrahim Raisi said on Monday that the IRGC forces’ downing of an intruding American drone showed to the world how empty the U.S.’s power is.

“No one would have believed that [our] Guards’ brothers could shoot down the American drone, which was equipped with the most advanced features,” said Raisi, addressing an IRGC conference in Tehran, IRNA reported.



On June 20, the IRGC Aerospace downed an American RQ-4 Global Hawk drone over the Strait of Hormuz after it violated Iranian airspace. Despite the U.S. claims that the drone had been flying over international waters, Iran put on show the retrieved parts of the drone in its own territorial waters where it was shot down.

The intruding drone was shot by Iran’s homegrown air defense missile system “Khordad-3rd”.

“After the downing of the American drone, the country’s atmosphere become an atmosphere of resistance and perseverance in the face of the bullies and not an atmosphere of dialogue [with the U.S.],” Raisi remarked.

U.S. President Donald Trump pulled out of the nuclear deal, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), in May 2018. He has since imposed more than 1,000 individual sanctions on Tehran, which culminated with an oil embargo this May. Zarif himself is also sanctioned.

The U.S. has also called for talks with Iran while refusing to lift the sanctions to boost the prospects of negotiations.

In remarks two weeks ago, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Khamenei slammed the U.S. bid for talks as a trick, stressing that Iranian and U.S. officials will not hold negotiations, either in New York or anywhere else.

However, the Leader said, “If the U.S. repents, and returns to the nuclear treaty it has breached, then it will be able to join the gathering of the parties to the deal (JCPOA) who hold meetings and talk with Iran, otherwise no negotiations will take place between the officials of the Islamic Republic and the Americans at any level, not in New York and not anywhere else.”

Eight more countries ready to join INSTEX: Mogherini aide

TEHRAN (MNA) — Eight more countries have decided to join the INSTEX mechanism for trade with Iran, an aide to the European Union High Representative Federica has said.

INSTEX is a special-purpose vehicle established in January 2019 by France, Germany and the United Kingdom to facilitate non-dollar trade with Iran in a bid to bypass U.S. sanctions.



So far, INSTEX has not become operational despite intense efforts on all sides.

On September 23, CEO of Iran’s Special Trade and Finance Instrument (STFI), Iranian counterpart to INSTEX, announced that a European bank has been tasked to carry out financial transactions of INSTEX, while the second bank is to be selected, soon.

“Due to the U.S.-led sanctions on Iranian oil, INSTEX cannot be funded by oil revenues, therefore, Iran seeks to finance the European financial mechanism through forex revenues including those from exports of non-oil goods,” Ali Asghar Noori said.

“The other negotiation option with European parties is funding INSTEX via selling oil to non-European customers such as some Asian countries,” he added.

During his recent visit to Iran, Michael Erhard Bock, chairman of INSTEX, made some positive remark about the probability of allocation of the French \$15 billion credit to Iran in near future.

Presently, seven Iranian banks are the shareholder of STFI.

The new INSTEX president said on September 18 that a number of European banks and firms have expressed readiness to engage in European proposed financial channel, which is aimed at helping Iran circumvent the U.S. sanctions.

“We have seen some requests from European companies such as one French firm that wishes to sell cattle to Iran,” Bock said in a meeting with the representatives of the Iranian private sector in Tehran.

He added that some small Italian, German and French banks are also ready to take part in the mechanism to clear the barter trade.

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	324705.9
IFX	4299.88

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	45,926 rials
GBP	51,621 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$60.37/b
WTI	\$55.30/b
OPEC Basket	\$62.35/b
Gold	\$1,487.05/oz
Silver	\$817.27/oz
Platinum	\$916.30/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

Trade war a ‘profound’ game-changer for emerging markets

By Robert Guy

Aberdeen Standard Investments’ Devan Kaloo believes the equity market is yet to appreciate the profound longer-term changes that will reshape the global economy and emerging markets in the wake of the U.S.-China trade war.

ASI’s global head of equities said tensions between the world’s two largest economies would rejig supply chains, and that the protectionist impulse unleashed by the trade impasse would heighten pressure within emerging markets with large domestic consumption economies to produce more goods internally.

“It’s a very interesting time to be investing in emerging markets and globally. I don’t think most people recognize just how profound the change is and the implication it has for emerging markets,” said Kaloo.

“Increasingly supply chains will reallocate out of China, you’ve seen a number of companies shift production into Vietnam and south-east Asia and Mexico. That has long-term implications that can be good for other emerging markets, but not necessarily China.”

Kaloo said he was still a “little cautious” regarding the economic environment given the ongoing tensions between the U.S. and China. The ability to strike a deal that could help bolster growth could be difficult given China’s mistrust in dealing with U.S. President Donald Trump.

“From a Chinese perspective, how do they strike a deal with someone who they don’t believe can be negotiated with in good faith? The politics is getting in the way of striking a deal,” he said.

Kaloo said the outlook for emerging markets had been bolstered by the U.S. Federal Reserve’s decision to cut interest rates.

Emerging markets

Emerging markets struggled in 2018 as U.S. rates were raised, given most emerging markets run current account deficits and need to tap global markets to fund themselves. Higher US rates also raise the cost of capital for emerging market companies.

“Our view is that continued pressure on U.S. interest rates will probably mean from an emerging market perspective that growth rates will be able to be sustained, therefore EM [emerging markets] currencies should be ok.”

He said emerging market governments were taking steps to bolster growth and implement reforms.

He cited China’s cutting of the amount of capital banks have to hold aside, Brazil’s pension reforms (which would improve its fiscal position), India’s steps to address bad loans in its banking system, and attempts by Indonesia and Thailand to entice companies to shift from China and set up domestically.

ASI is overweight China, India, Brazil and Indonesia. “India needed change and it needed some far-reaching economic reforms,” said Kaloo.

“Reforms that I say have been important are the tax system, they got that through which successive Indian governments have been trying to do for at least 20 years. It was vitally needed as it created all types of inefficiencies in the economy.”

On Indonesia, Kaloo said it has a reformist government that is keen to push ahead with economic progression.

“It’s a country that’s churning out decent growth and we think it can go to a higher level.”

ASI is underweight South Korea and Taiwan.

In terms of stock selection, the fund manager is bullish on China’s internet giant Tencent.

“Tencent represents e-commerce, which are the new consumer staples,” Kaloo said.

“They’re tied into domestic growth, they have strong barriers to entry, they have strong cashflow and returns on capital.

“Our expectation is that the gaming will come through stronger now that we’ve got past the moral issues about whether the right sort of games are being played or released.

“That’s clearer now, the market understands that, which means they can roll out more games.”

Management plans to model Meituan into a “super app” akin to Tencent’s WeChat but with a slant towards a more affluent demographic.

Another top holding is Banco Bradesco, one of the largest banks in Brazil. The financial services group is well positioned for a rebound in economic growth.

The “opportunity for credit growth acceleration puts the bank in a good position”

Kaloo said the company, which has a strong retail and commercial bank, also offered long-term upside through its insurance business.

(Source: afr.com)

Exports from Chabahar Port up 100% in H1

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Exports of commodities from Iran’s southeastern port of Chabahar has risen 100 percent during the first half of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-Septemeber 22) compared to the first half of the past year, according to the head of Ports and Maritime Department of Sistan-Baluchestan Province (where the port lies).

Behrouz Aqaei also said that transit of Afghan commodities via Chabahar Port has doubled during the first six months of this year, Mehr news agency reported.

In terms of transport and shipping situation in this port after the U.S.’s reimposition of sanctions against Iran, the official said, “U.S. has exempted Chabahar Port from sanctions. U.S. sanctions waiver in this port has decreased insurance cost of

vessels to a great extent in a way that most shipping lines are interested in shipping their goods via this port.”

Cement, minerals and construction stones are main export products in this southern province which are exported to various countries through this port, he added.

Located at southeastern Iran, on the Gulf of Oman, Chabahar is the home for Iran’s only oceanic port.

Due to its strategic geographical positioning, Chabahar port holds a great significance for Iran both politically and economically.

After years of negotiation, Iran has awarded the development project of this port to India, and the South Asian country committed \$500 million to build two new berths in this port.

TEDPIX gains 6,488 points in a day

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE) rose 6,488 points to 324,738 on Sunday, IRNA reported.

Some 6,227 billion securities worth 25.419 trillion rials (about \$605.2 million) were traded through 537,000 deals at TSE.

While lagging the parallel markets of foreign currency, gold coin, and real estate behind, Iran’s stock market hit a new record during the first half of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-September 22), as TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), closed at an all-time high of 302,103 points. It is while the index had stood at 178,000 points at the end of the previous calendar year.

Experiencing a growth of 74 percent during the first six months of the present year, TSE witnessed its best performance since the Iranian calendar year of 1382 (March 2003-March 2004).

Also as reported, IFB has experienced a noticeable positive performance during the first half, as IFX gained 78 percent during the mentioned period of time.

It seems that these markets will preserve



their positive performances also during the second half of the year, as TEDPIX gained 9,367 points (the highest rise so far) in the first day of the second half and the value of trades at TSE and IFB reached 32 trillion rials (about \$761.9 million).

It shows that some huge liquidity is moving toward the stock market. The power of this liquidity will probably bring new records for this market in the second half.

Also given that no growth is being seen at the markets of foreign currency and gold coin, and housing market is expected to witness drop in prices during the second half, another positive performance is anticipated for the stock market.

Chinese stocks sag as trade fight trumps stronger economic data

By Laura He

Markets in China dipped Monday despite encouraging manufacturing data and a couple of positive IPOs. Analysts said the Chinese economy is not out of the woods yet, and investors are still concerned about escalating U.S.-China trade tensions.

Official and private surveys of China’s manufacturing activity rose more than expected in September, data showed Monday.

The Caixin Purchasing Managers Index, a privately-conducted survey, expanded at the quickest pace in 19 months, reaching 51.4 in September. It was up from 50.4 in August and beating an estimated 50.2 in a Reuters poll of analysts.

The government’s official PMI for September also beat analyst estimates, increasing to 49.8 from the 49.5 it registered in August. However, that’s still below the 50-point level that indicates growth over the previous month.

But shares of several Chinese companies dropped after the United States launched investigations into some and hit others with sanctions. U.S. authorities are also reportedly considering delisting Chinese companies from American stock markets.

China’s Shanghai Composite Index (SHCOMP) dropped 0.9%. But Hong Kong’s Hang Seng Index (HSI) reversed opening losses and traded higher. The index closed up 0.5%, helped by a blockbuster IPO.

Budweiser APAC, the Asia unit of the world’s largest brewer AB InBev (BUD), jumped more than 4% on its first trading day in Hong Kong.

First day of trading

China’s new Nasdaq-style Star Market in Shanghai was also cheering after smartphone maker Transsion surged more than 60% on its first day of trading.



Despite the cheer for China’s manufacturing sector from Monday’s data, analysts warn that the Chinese economy is still under a lot of pressure.

The figures on Monday likely represent a “false dawn,” Julian Evans-Pritchard, senior China economist for Capital Economics, wrote in a research note on Monday.

“This is unlikely to mark the start of a turnaround,” Evans-Pritchard said, highlighting signs of slowing construction and real estate activity.

He expected the People’s Bank of China will have to launch more decisive monetary easing to support the faltering economy later this year.

Ting Lu, an economist for Japanese brokerage firm Nomura, agreed the rebound is unsustainable.

An “escalation of U.S.-China trade tensions remains likely, while the slowing of global growth has been another drag on China’s exports,” he said.

German labor market and shopping resilient despite manufacturing slump

German unemployment fell unexpectedly in September and retail sales rose in August, data showed on Monday, helping to allay concerns that a manufacturing slump is taking its toll on a consumption-driven growth cycle in Europe’s largest economy.

According to reuters.com, Germany’s export-reliant goods producers are suffering from a slowing world economy and business uncertainty caused by U.S. President Donald Trump’s “America First” trade policies and Britain’s planned exit from the European Union.

Solid household consumption, booming construction and increased state spending so far have helped to cushion those external shocks as consumers benefit from high employment, rising real wages, moderate inflation and low borrowing costs.

Data from the Federal Labor Office showed the number of people out of work fell by 10,000 to 2.276 million in seasonally adjusted terms. That compared with the Reuters consensus forecast for a rise of 5,000.

The office revised down the joblessness figures for August to a rise of 2,000 from a previously reported increase of 4,000.

The jobless rate in September held steady at 5.0% - slightly above the record-low of 4.9% reached earlier this year.

Labor Office head Detlef Scheele said the economic downturn was partly reflected in the joblessness data. “But all in all, the labor market is still in a robust shape,” he added.

Employment remains high but is losing momentum while the demand of companies for new employees continues to slow down at an elevated level, Scheele said.



However, after the U.S. reimposed sanctions on Iran in November, the future of many Iranian projects including Chabahar port were shadowed by the consequences of the sanctions.

But following several rounds of negotiations and discussions with New Delhi, the U.S. administration finally exempted the Chabahar project from the sanctions.

Iran, Italy discuss launching direct shipping route

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iran and Italy are mulling over the possibilities of launching a direct shipping route between Chabahar port in southeastern Iran, and Venice in northern Italy, Press TV reported citing the Ports and Maritime Organization of Iran (PMO).

As reported, a visiting delegation representing a major Italian transportation group had met officials from PMO on Sunday to discuss plans for the shipping route.

The Venice Maritime Cluster, a major transportation group based in Italy, is behind plans for setting up the sea route connecting Chabahar to the major Italian port.

Secretary General of the group Paolo Malaguti told Iranian authorities on Sunday that there was a high potential in Chabahar and its adjacent special economic zone, saying both Iran and Italy would benefit from establishing the shipping route connecting the port to Venice.

He said Iran and other countries in

the region could use the shipping route to export their products to countries across Europe as a railway that connects Padua, near Venice, to other parts of the continent would provide huge facilities for trade groups operating on the route.

Malaguti said Italy and other European countries were also aiming to use the route for increased exports via Iran to Central Asia countries.

Head of PMO Mohammad Rastad also said the Iranian government would support plans for the route as it seeks to frequent Chabahar as a key trade hub in the Oman Sea.

Rastad said load and unload capacity in Chabahar, a port where India is also making considerable investment, would reach 50 million tons a year from the current 8.5 million tons.

According to the official, a railway project connecting the port to Zahedan, near the Iranian-Afghan border, would significantly boost trade between the Indian Ocean and countries in the Central Asia region.

China’s economic slowdown has been compounded by its months-long trade war with the United States. Senior officials from the two countries are expected to meet in Washington later this month for trade talks.

Dragging down Chinese stocks

Though both sides have made concessions in recent weeks, tensions remain high. And the United States’ latest moves are dragging down Chinese stocks.

Several Chinese technology companies fell heavily Monday after the U.S. International Trade Commission, an anti-trust body, decided to launch investigations against them for alleged patent infringement on chip products.

TCL Electronics tumbled 2.7% in Hong Kong. Its parent TCL Corp also dropped 1.9% on the Shenzhen market. Qingdao Hisense Electric, a major Chinese appliance and electronics maker, lost 3.3% in Shanghai.

Lenovo (LNVGF) fell 0.8% in Hong Kong. Its parent company, Legend Holdings, also dropped 1.5%.

Cosco Shipping Energy Transportation, a unit of Chinese conglomerate Cosco Group, plummeted nearly 22% in Hong Kong, after it confirmed Sunday that one of its subsidiaries was sanctioned by the U.S. Treasury Department.

It was one of several Chinese companies the U.S. imposed sanctions on for their alleged involvement in transporting oil from Iran.

The White House is also reportedly considering delisting Chinese companies from the U.S. exchanges and banning U.S. investments in China, according to multiple news outlets.

American officials sought to downplay the reports, with Bloomberg quoting a U.S. Treasury spokesperson as saying there are no plans to block Chinese companies from U.S. stock exchanges “at this time.” But that didn’t stop markets from worrying.

(Source: edition.cnn.com)



to 1.1% from 1.4% in the previous month in Bavaria and dropped to 1.0% from 1.4% in Saxony.

The state inflation readings, which are not harmonized to compare with other euro zone countries, feed into nationwide figures due later on Monday at 1200 GMT.

PEDEC signs deal with domestic firms for manufacturing electro pumps

ENERGY **TEHRAN** — Iran's Petroleum Engineering and Development Company (PEDEC) signed deals with three Iranian companies on Monday for manufacturing and maintaining electro pumps for an oil pipeline project in southern Iran.

As reported by Shana, the contracts were signed between PEDEC and Iran Industrial Pumps Company, Pumpiran and PetCo in a ceremony attended by the Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh.

According to the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC), the contracts are aimed at building 50 pumps for Goreh-Jask pipeline project and maintaining them for a five-year period.

The total value of the contracts is estimated at roughly 48 million Euros.

Construction of the Goreh-Jask pipeline and the crude oil export terminal at Jask Port are among NIOC's priority plans which are being implemented by tapping the maximum capacity of domestic contractors and manufacturers.

The project includes construction of approximately 1,000 kilometers of 42-inch



PEDEC Managing Director Touraj Dehqani (R) and Managing Director of PETCO Baqer Tajrishi signing contract documents in Tehran on Monday

pipelines, five pumping stations, measuring and monitoring equipment, construction of storage tanks and export jetties.

By implementation of the project, one million barrels of crude oil per day from the Goreh oil terminal in the southwestern province of Bushehr is supplied to the Jask region off the coast of Oman Sea, and Jask will become strategically important as the country's second-largest crude oil export terminal.

Iran's National Petrochemical Company (NPC) kicked off the construction of a petro-refinery complex in Jask Island in January 2019.

According to NPC Project Director Alimohammad Bosaqzadeh, the complex is aimed to supply part of the country's energy needs and also to increase non-oil exports from the region.

Being closer to South Asian countries has made this strategic region significant for Iran's future export plans.

Located 1,690 kilometers (1,050 mi) south of Tehran, Jask is a port town situated on the Gulf of Oman.

A look into Iran's PGPIC after sanctions hit the holding

➔ So, when the country's banking system was sanctioned even before the imposition of sanctions on PGPIC, it was in fact an imposition also on all other entities in the country which needed international financial exchanges.

That means we have been dealing with sanctions far before they were officially declared.

Therefore, in facing a situation like this [mentioning the U.S. sanctions], there are two approaches, one is to sit on your hands and wait for the sanctions to be removed and the other is to try to find ways to withstand the pressure which is imposed by the sanctions.

■ The impacts and solutions

I can confidently say that since the beginning of the sanctions, we have been constantly seeking new ways and consequently finding new solutions for the problems inflicted by the sanctions. And I can assure you that the cycle of business in the PGPIC has not been stopped, and we are still producing, selling, and transporting our products and being paid for them.

We are currently exporting over \$3 billion worth of commodities only to China every year, and there are other customers which haven't abandoned Iran as a profitable source for supplying their petrochemical needs.

Since last year, PGPIC has climbed three places to the 35th position in ICIS Top 100 Chemical Companies for 2019, despite the U.S. sanctions.

To say that sanctions are not impacting our industry doesn't mean that they are completely ineffective, no, the sanctions have their consequences but we also have our solutions which relieve the impact of these consequences or even completely eliminate them.

■ Market reactions to sanction

Obviously at first when a new sanction is declared, a shock is inflicted to the domestic and foreign markets and the markets

and businesses will obviously be affected by the skepticism which is followed. However, this is a short-term impact and after a period, say for instance two months, the markets will go back to their normal routines.

So, following the announcement of a new round of sanctions, after the initial shock is passed, two main trends could be expected from the economic perspective.

The reaction of the market to the post-sanction situation can be explained using two economical notions namely "Rational Expectations" and "Adaptive Expectations" which can be clearly applied in the current situation of U.S. sanctioning Iranian entities.

In Rational Expectations, foreign customers of PGPIC could be expected to adhere with the sanctions and not do business with Iran anymore. The "Adaptive Expectations" theory on the other hand, believes that after an entity is placed in a difficult situation, customers will easily adapt to the situation driven by the opportunity for negotiation and striking better deals.

Sometimes a harsh situation [the sanctions] can drive business partners to be more motivated to take advantage of the situation and therefore they will become solution-finders or even solution-makers themselves, as it is the case for PGPIC.

Out trade partners, like China and India with which 85 percent of our trade is taking place, are now providing solutions for keeping their trade ties with us.

I should note that, what was said doesn't mean that we are disregarding our interests only to keep our customers. To put it in a nut shell, sanctions are playing the role of a motivator for some of our trade partners to seek negotiation and better deals and considering the situation we will do what is best for us, too.

■ Future vision

We should not forget that petrochemical products are among



the world's top industrial requirements and Iran is one of the major suppliers of such products in the region and even in the world, so it would be hard for our customers in the region to replace us with other sources.

Therefore, I do not think that this framework would be interrupted in the future and Iran will remain a major provider of petrochemicals on a global scale.

In this regard, since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20), we have been following new plans for expansion of our destination markets.

Iraq, Syria and other countries in the region are some of our new markets which we are focusing on. There are also markets in the CIS region, Asia and Europe which I can't mention their names because of security issues.

We are becoming stronger in the sanctions era and hopefully in a near future, when the sanctions are removed, we will grow even bigger and stronger and that is our vision for the future.

Oil falls as China's economic outlook remains weak



Oil slipped on Monday as China's economic outlook remained weak even as manufacturing data improved, with an ongoing trade war with the United States weighing on demand growth for the world's largest crude importer.

Brent crude LCOc1 futures were down 52 cents or 0.84% at \$61.39 a barrel by 0846 GMT. U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude CLc1 futures were 35 cents or 0.63%

lower at \$55.56 a barrel.

China's official Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) rose to 49.8 in September, slightly better than expected and advancing from 49.5 in August.

However, it remained below the 50-point mark that separates expansion from contraction on a monthly basis, data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) showed.

The PMI data "remained in contractionary territory for the fifth month in a row, indicating that economic fundamentals were still weak," Citi analysts said in a note.

The "(Chinese) government will certainly step up fiscal and monetary efforts to boost domestic demand, which we believe can help stabilize, probably not accelerate, economic growth."

Top oil exporter Saudi Arabia has restored capacity to 11.3 million barrels per day after an attack on its processing facilities this month, sources told Reuters last week, although Saudi Aramco has yet to confirm it is fully back online.

While Saudi Arabia is maintaining exports by using crude from inventories and spare production capacity, how much of its output has actually been restored remains unclear.

Money managers cut their net long U.S. crude futures and options positions in the week to Sept. 24, the U.S. Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC) said on Friday.

"Clearly, speculators have taken comfort from Saudi comments and the speed at which they plan to bring supply back to the market," ING bank said in a note.

Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman warned in an interview broadcast on Sunday that oil prices could spike to "unimaginably high numbers."

Bin Salman's remarks "help to alleviate immediate concerns around escalations in the Middle East", BNP Paribas oil strategist Harry Tchilinguirian told the Reuters Global Oil Forum, allowing the market to switch focus back to the economy and the risks posed by the ongoing U.S.-China trade dispute.

My word: Wind energy and solar energy — we need them both

By Peter Lehman

Two recent editorials, Greg King's earlier this summer in the North Coast Journal and Ken Miller's on Sept. 27 in the Times-Standard, argue that solar energy is preferable over wind energy. Both writers claim that we don't need the Terra-Gen wind project proposed for Monument Ridge near Scotia, that solar energy could serve our renewable energy needs. That's a big misconception.

Don't get me wrong. Solar energy is wonderful and important; it's been my life's work to teach people about solar energy and get it deployed. But solar doesn't come close to providing the renewable energy we need for our county.

Here's the energy arithmetic. The Terra-Gen project is projected to produce 407,000 megawatt-hours per year of electricity, almost half the county's total electricity use.

For comparison, the two large solar projects that the Schatz Energy Research Center and local partners have brought to Humboldt County — the photovoltaic array installed at the Blue Lake Rancheria and the array that is slated to be installed at the county airport — cover nine acres and total three megawatts and they have been subsidized by \$10M from the California Energy Commission. They will produce about 3,700 megawatt-hours per year, less than 1% of the energy that the wind project will produce. We would need over 100 times as much



solar to equal the output of Terra-Gen's project. That's neither reasonable nor affordable.

■ Solar and wind power

How about rooftop solar? Let's do some dreaming. There are about 63,000 homes in the county. If we put three kilowatts of PV panels (around nine panels) on every roof (and who would pay for this is a good question) and every roof were sunny and not shaded (which isn't true), we would generate about 230,000 megawatt-hours per year. Even in this hypothetical and impossible scenario, we'd generate only around 57% of

the energy of Terra-Gen. Solar just cannot replace wind power in Humboldt County.

Both Mr. King and Mr. Miller also write about the impacts that the Terra-Gen project will produce. They're right; there will be impacts. There are always impacts when we generate electricity and we live in an increasingly electricity-intensive society. We have to compare the impacts to those of generating power in other ways, like damming rivers or burning fossil fuels.

And we in Humboldt County have to own up to our responsibilities. We need to generate the power we use and not dump our impacts in someone else's backyard. We're fortunate to have a powerful local wind resource and, in my opinion, a carefully planned wind farm to utilize it.

But there's a much larger issue here. Climate change is occurring much faster than anyone imagined.

Our planet is on fire and we can't be arguing over which fire hose to use. The solution needs to be all of the above — solar energy, wind energy, net zero energy homes, energy efficient lights and appliances, electric cars and buses, and everything else we can think of.

We must save our world for our children and future generations. This local wind project will green our energy supply and make us much more energy secure. It's a small step in the right direction and it's one that we should be proud to take.

(Source: times-standard.com)

The curious fall in renewable energy generation

By Haley Zaremba

Renewable energy generation fell 20% in August despite a notable expansion in capacity. This was the biggest monthly fall in at least three years, according to an analysis by SBICAP Securities Ltd.

As stated by livemint.com, beginning June, renewable energy generation, typically, undergoes a seasonal slowdown for a couple of months largely due to change in weather conditions and wind speeds.

The significant fall in renewable energy generation in August was attributed to low wind energy generation.

According to India Ratings and Research Pvt Ltd, wind energy generation declined 27% in August. Given the high share of installed wind generation capacity in the country, the impact on overall energy generation is understandable.

However, wind generation fell despite an expansion in installed capacity. As of June, the combined installed capacity of wind and solar energy was 15% higher year-on-year.

Apart from variation in wind speeds, part of the fall in renewable energy generation in August was also attributed to curtailment in power off-take by several states in southern part of the country.

These states -- Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu — have a high share of installed renewable energy capacity compared with rest of the country. States generally realign their purchases to demand softness in monsoon months, often leading to reduction in utilization levels of thermal power plants. Thermal power generation dropped 3.5% in August.

The impact is more pronounced on renewables. The challenge is accentuated by the variable nature of renewable energy generation, as production varies throughout the day, combined with softening of demand from certain states. "They are not able to do proper integration of renewables," says a renewable energy developer referring to curtailments in power off-takes by certain states.

Another industry observer agrees, attributing the sharp fall in renewable energy generation to back-downs in power off-takes by certain states. Even so with the monsoon season drawing to a close, the above mentioned persons expect generation to improve hereon. "We have passed that period (June–August) when demand is low and generation also falls," says the developer.

Still the fall in energy generation highlights the need for better planning at states. More so, given India's ambition to achieve 1.75 lakh megawatt of installed renewable energy capacity by 2022. Power off-take curtailments and project execution challenges sap investor sentiment.

As pointed out earlier, renewable energy projects have been under financial stress. Payment delays and threat of tariff renegotiations have led to downgrades in credit ratings and pushed up finance costs, hurting returns and competitiveness of the sector.

Power Ledger brings blockchain energy model to region

Australian energy tech startup Power Ledger is keen to expand business in Southeast Asia, as the region is expected to become the fourth-largest energy consumer in the world by 2030.

According to bangkokpost.com, in early September, Thailand hosted the 37th ASEAN Ministers on Energy Meeting and Associated Meetings, with Power Ledger participating in the renewable energy conference.

Maria Atkinson, an adviser to Power Ledger, outlined the company's business presence worldwide, with projects in Thailand, Japan, Europe, Australia and the U.S.

"We have partnered with well-known energy companies to improve the efficiency and transparency of energy markets globally," she said. "By 2030, renewable energy resources will be more important than ever."

Ms Atkinson said Southeast Asia's demand for energy is set to grow by two-thirds over 20 years. A combination of dwindling domestic resources and environmental concerns is driving many governments and markets to explore alternative energy options.

She cited an International Energy Agency estimate that a \$2.7-trillion investment is needed to meet the region's growing needs for energy supply, transmission and efficiency.

■ A greener solution

Renewable energy can provide a more cost-efficient and greener solution, Ms Atkinson said.

Power Ledger runs blockchain-backed peer-to-peer energy trading that can support uptake of renewable energy in the future. It has partnerships with BCPG, a Thai renewable energy company, and Thai Digital Energy Development (TDED), a joint venture of BCPG and PEA Encom International.

The "presence of Power Ledger in Thailand has already created opportunities for other modern businesses and industries that aim to pursue clean energy production and distribution as part of their dedication to sustainability," Ms Atkinson said. "Power Ledger provides a low-carbon model for countries in the region that are considering renewable energy."

The company plans to explore partnership opportunities with other companies in the region, she said.

In Thailand, Power Ledger has teamed up with BCPG for modern decentralised energy trading in Thailand. Both companies provide renewable power through blockchain technology.

"BCPG initially reached out to Power Ledger as part of their search for innovative energy solutions, particularly blockchain-enabled methods of energy trading," Ms Atkinson said. "From there, a new peer-to-peer energy trading platform was launched at T77 precinct, which comprises a shopping centre, international school, serviced apartments and a dental hospital."

Located on Sukhumvit Soi 77, the T77 project was developed by Sansiri.

"As part of a trial, Power Ledger's technology will track, trade and settle the electricity generated from solar panels to facilitate peer-to-peer energy trade at T77," Ms Atkinson said.

Renewable microgrid developments allow for the efficient installation and operation of power generation close to consumers, she said.

The power trading platform applies a simple and low-cost procedure, joining two characters with on-site generating capacity.

The "power can be low-cost, low-carbon and resilient to the impacts of severe weather conditions," Ms Atkinson said. The "The government is backing BCPG's efforts as a clean energy provider. The Thai regulatory climate has continued to improve since the start of Power Ledger's trial."

Moreover, Power Ledger is working with TDED, which was established to promote the adoption of energy technology.

Ms Atkinson said Power Ledger has spoken with BCPG and Thai ministers about energy sandbox trials to test innovative digital technologies and the company's experience in the digital energy space.

In July, TDED announced a partnership with BCPG on the T77 project with Power Ledger.

By Saeed Sobhani

TEHRAN — The President of the United States of America is in a very difficult situation. Although some US media outlets are trying to portray John Bolton's expulsion from the White House as a clever response from Donald Trump, we must not forget that the American president is also responsible for what happened to his country's foreign policy in the last two years! Even Trump has primary responsibility for this. Here's some analysis on John Bolton's ouster:

Trump Frees Himself from Bolton – But Robert O'Brien Will be Just as Bad

Philip Giraldi Wote in UNZ Review that After months of rumors, John Bolton was finally fired from the White House but the post mortem on why it took so long to remove him continues, with the punditry and media trying to understand exactly what happened and why. Perhaps the most complete explanation for what occurred came from President Donald Trump himself shortly after the fact. He said, in some impromptu comments, that his national security advisor had israelisrael "...made some very big mistakes when he talked about the Libyan model for Kim Jong Un. That was not a good statement to make. You just take a look at what happened with Gadhafi. That was not a good statement to make. And it set us back."

Trump has a point in that Bolton was clearly suggesting that North Korea get rid of its nuclear weapons in exchange for economic benefits, but it was the wrong example to pick as Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi gave up his weapons and was then ousted and brutally killed in a rebel uprising that was supported by Washington. The Bolton analogy, which may have been deliberate attempt to sabotage any rapprochement, made impossible any agreement between Kim and Trump as Kim received the message loud and clear that he might suffer the same fate. More recently, Bolton might have been behind media leaks that scuttled Trump's plan to meet with Taliban representatives and that also, acting on behalf of Israel, undercut a presidential suggestion that he might meet with Iranian President Hassan Rouhani. Trump summed up his disagreements with Bolton by saying that the National Security Advisor "wasn't getting along" with other administration officials, adding that "Frankly he wanted to do things — not necessarily tougher than me. John's known as a tough guy. He's so tough he got us into Iraq. That's tough. But he's somebody that I actually had a very good relationship with, but he wasn't getting along with people in the administration who I consider very important. And you know John wasn't in line with what we were doing. And actually in some cases he thought it was too tough, what we were doing. Mr. Tough Guy."

Trump's final comment on Bolton was that "I'm sure he'll do whatever he can do to spin it his way," a throw-away line that could well set the stage for what comes next. Bolton has many supporters among hardliners in the GOP and the media and will no doubt be inclined to respond to the president in kind, but once the back and forth starts many other factors and relationships will come into play.

After the firing, it was widely believed that Donald Trump might have actually gotten rid of Bolton for all the right reasons, namely that as president he is disinclined to start any new wars and seeks negotiated solutions to existing conflicts, both of which concepts were no doubt regarded as anathema by the National Security Advisor. Unfortunately, that argument runs into problems where rhetoric and deeds disconnect if one considers actual actions undertaken by the president, to include the man that Trump has now named as Bolton's replacement, Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs Robert O'Brien.

O'Brien might well have been ranked among the worst possible choices among the names floated in the media for the National Security Advisor position, mostly because he is almost completely lacking in actual experience related to the job. To be sure, he looks more presentable than the wild-eyed and walrus mustachioed Bolton, but Trump has repeatedly been overly deferential towards the bona fides of hardliners like O'Brien who boast of American Exceptionalism. The president will also likely appreciate that the sycophantic O'Brien's lack of experience will mean that he will be completely deferential to the Chief Executive's point of view at all times.

Trump's cabinet choices have been so bad that they have led to musical chairs in nearly all senior positions. The president is to blame for having appointed Bolton, a man he disliked, though admittedly under orders from Israeli-American casino billionaire Sheldon Adelson, and he also did not have to elevate Mike Pompeo first as CIA Director and then as Secretary of State. There is no one around who outdoes Pompeo when it comes to avoiding diplomacy and negotiations while also threatening dire consequences for America's "enemies." O'Brien's hardline credentials are largely indistinguishable from those of Pompeo and Bolton and it is widely believed that his appointment was due to advocacy by the Secretary of State, who is reportedly assembling his national security team.

And it should be observed that Trump's claimed avoidance of war credentials are pretty thin. Far from fulfilling campaign promises to end the wars he inherited, Donald Trump has continued and even escalated those conflicts. He has withdrawn from agreements with Russia and Iran that enhanced US national security. Drone strikes under Trump have increased dramatically and have exceeded the number occurring during both of Obama's terms, while new rules of engagement have led to a major increase in civilian casualties from US bombing directed against ISIS and the Taliban. Most recently in Afghanistan, 30 farm workers were killed in a drone strike. Trump is also doubling down on his support for the Saudi

The U.S president cannot escape his responsibility

Trump game with John Bolton's coffin!



genocide against Yemen.

And the president has demonstrated that he is willing to attack countries that do not threaten the US and with which Washington is not at war. He has twice illegally bombed Syria based on phony intelligence and even when he decided at the last minute not to use force, as he did earlier this year with Iran, there was no serious evidence that he was truly seeking dialogue. He is waging "maximum pressure" economic warfare against both Iran and Venezuela, in both of which countries he has called for regime change. He has threatened Russia over Crimea and Ukraine and is in a trade war with China. Transparent regime change policies coupled with willy-nilly imposing of sanctions are destructive, hostile steps that kill people in the targeted countries and make enemies where none previously existed.

America's new National Security Advisor Robert O'Brien recently featured in a taxpayer funded trip to Stockholm to obtain the release of rapper ASAP Rocky, who had been arrested after getting involved in a fist fight. O'Brien had orders to threaten unspecified retaliation against the Swedish government if it did not accede to White House demands. That exercise in international bullying means that O'Brien is quintessentially Trump's kind of guy. He has written a book entitled While America Slept: Restoring American Leadership to a World in Crisis, calling on the United States to end any "appeasement and retreat," and has described the nuclear agreement with Iran, in predictable neocon fashion, as a repeat of 1938, Hitler and Munich. He was Mitt Romney's foreign policy adviser and is a Mormon, which means he basically lines up alongside the Christian Zionists when it comes to Israel.

The Israel Lobby has predictably welcomed O'Brien. Sandra Parker or Christians United for Israel (CUFI), enthused how "CUFI enjoys a close working relationship with many officials throughout the Trump Administration, and we look forward to working with Ambassador O'Brien on strengthening the US-Israel relationship, confronting the Iranian menace, and curtailing the threat posed by organizations such as Hamas and Hezbollah."

Mort Klein President of the Zionist Organization of America observed how "Mr. O'Brien is a great friend of Israel, and is now the top-ranking Mormon in the pro-Israel Trump administration. He is also best friends with ardent Zionist US Ambassador to Germany [Richard] Grenell ... And you can't be a great friend of evangelical Christian Grenell unless you support Israel."

So, does the firing of John Bolton and replacement by Robert O'Brien mean that there will be a change of direction in US foreign policy? The answer has to be no. Trump might well be maneuvering to avoid a new war as he will be in full 2020 campaign mode and wants to avoid falling into a quagmire, but the basic belligerency of the administration and its strong tilt towards supporting feckless allies like Israel and Saudi Arabia is certain to continue.

Bolton exit won't dent US diplomacy

Also Globaltimes reported that US President Donald Trump tweeted on September 10 that he fired national security advisor John Bolton, saying "his services are no longer needed at the White House" and "I asked John for resignation." But minutes later, Bolton in his own tweet said he "offered to resign" on the night of September 9, and that Trump told him, "Let's talk about it tomorrow." In any case, the career of the "war maniac" in the White House has temporarily come to an end.

This was not the first time Bolton had to give up his position in the government, but the most dramatic one. Bolton's departure was not a surprise. Many people predicted the failure of the Bolton-Trump partnership from the outset. Trump and Bolton's different explanations for the departure show they were not as close as previously believed. There are many explanations for Bolton's

exit. Trump said on Twitter that he "disagreed strongly" with many of Bolton's suggestions and "as did others in the Administration."

Trump's cabinet is being rejigged more frequently than before. One of the primary reasons for officials' dismissal was that they did not live up to Trump's expectations. Trump appointed Bolton not because the bellicose diplomat showed loyalty to him. Actually, there was not much overlap previously between the two. Trump wanted to use Bolton to lead the charge in the domains of diplomacy and security. However, he soon sensed Bolton's unruly war instinct.

With regard to the North Korea nuclear issue, Bolton has become a hurdle to substantive dialogues between Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un. His provocative rhetoric and moves have irritated Pyongyang, affecting Trump's plan to make a historical breakthrough in North Korean nuclear issue. From Trump's perspective, US Special Representative for North Korea Stephen Biegun and US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo tend to be more reliable consultants. Therefore, Bolton had been excluded from the core decision-making circle of North Korea policy for a long time.

In terms of the Iranian nuclear issue, both Trump and Bolton advocated a tough stance, but they have nothing else in common. Trump hopes for a better Iranian nuclear deal and tends to force Tehran to yield by slapping sanctions; while Bolton wants a regime change by force. Such differences between Trump and Bolton have also been seen on the Venezuelan issue. Trump is a good trader. He is obviously not willing to fight an expensive war that is not worth the cost. This is why he called off a military strike on Iran at the last minute. But Bolton, who is bigoted and paranoid, was not thinking like Trump, and instead, doggedly tried to change Trump's mind. That sealed his fate.

Discord between Bolton and other members of the Trump cabinet has accelerated his exit. Pompeo has been at odds with Bolton over national security policymaking for a long time, and disagreement between Bolton and Biegun has grown increasingly. The indifference of Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin to Bolton's ouster also indicates the foreign policy hawk's isolation. In fact, Bolton had never aligned with anyone since he entered the White House. As such, when he was facing a crisis of confidence, nobody was on his side.

So what does Bolton's departure mean? Many observers believe that the hawk's exit is a good thing for American diplomacy. However, Bolton has never been a game changer and Trump is the decision-maker. In an editorial, The Guardian said that Bolton's departure is "good riddance, but the problem is his boss."

The main architect and standard-bearer of US diplomacy is Trump. The president, with his "America first" doctrine, withdrew from multilateral systems, undermined global governance, weakened alliances and bullied other countries. His foreign policy, in a sharp departure from the past, has dampened US international reputation and status. This is beyond Bolton's reach. Long before Trump took office, he opted for "America first" oriented foreign policies and has never changed since then. Bolton hardly had achievements since he served as the national security adviser and exerted limited influence on Trump. It's fair to say he didn't bring any substantive change to the Trump government, nor will he leave a diplomatic legacy.

For Trump, Bolton was only a tool used to test the outside acceptance of some extreme ideas. Bolton had long harbored radical and extreme diplomatic and security views and his ideological intransigence is well-known. Without Trump's consent he was unable to survive 520 days in the White House. Bolton is the one being used in his relationship with Trump. If it wasn't Bolton, there will be a different figure of his kind. The White House advisor Peter Navarro is a Bolton

in the field of economic affairs to some extent. Bolton has left and few would miss him. The Trump government is going to welcome a fourth national security advisor. Will he or she bring any change to US diplomacy? The answer is probably no.

Don't expect that to change much about Trump's foreign policy.

As Washingtonpost reported, On Wednesday, President Trump tweeted that he would appoint Robert C. O'Brien, who currently serves as the State Department's hostage negotiator, to be the new National Security Advisor after the abrupt departure of John Bolton. Last week, Paul Musgrave provided this analysis of what would--and would not--change after Bolton's departure. In several tweets midday Tuesday, President Trump announced that he had requested the resignation of his national security adviser, John Bolton. The hawkish Bolton had clashed with the president on a number of issues, most recently over the president's plan to bring Taliban representatives to Camp David for a peace summit. Though Bolton's departure may have been dramatic, the Trump administration's record and studies of White House foreign policymaking suggest that it might not matter very much. The administration's foreign policy process is likely to remain undisciplined, uncoordinated and volatile.

News reports suggest that Bolton repeatedly and strenuously opposed the president's tilt toward negotiations with North Korea and Iran in addition to his objections to the president's Camp David plan. With Bolton gone, some analysts see an opening for more dovish approaches, including diplomacy. MIT security studies professor Vipin Narang tweeted, "Odds of a potentially meaningful deal and process with North Korea just tripled."

To be sure, in an ordinary administration, the policy preferences of the national security adviser would matter a great deal. National security advisers serve as the president's coordinator — or enforcer — of policies throughout the bureaucracy. Removing a hawkish staff member might be seen as a signal that the president has adopted a different policy line.

Yet the Trump administration has not followed that playbook. The president dismissed his previous national security adviser, Lt. Gen. H.R. McMaster, in large part because they disagreed substantively. McMaster wanted to focus on competing with China and Russia and strengthening traditional alliances, while the president prioritized issues such as restricting immigration, pursuing aggressively zero-sum trade policies even toward traditional trade partners, and striking a deal with North Korea over its nuclear program. But Trump then replaced McMaster with the far more hawkish Bolton, with whom the president was familiar in part from Bolton's regular appearances on Fox News.

John Bolton's appointment revealed this much bigger problem. And it's still with us.

This history suggests that personnel changes in the Trump White House may have less to do with the president's desired policy direction and more with the president's personal familiarity and comfort with potential advisers — which may be why personally close advisers such as Stephen Miller and Jared Kushner have outlasted McMaster and former secretary of state Rex Tillerson. Moreover, news reports suggest that Trump has been sidelining Bolton for weeks if not months by this point, suggesting it is unlikely that this portends any serious policy change.

Even with Bolton gone, there's more instability ahead.

Bolton's tenure and departure shows clearly that, three years into its term, the Trump administration has not yet developed a foreign policy process. It is unclear whether this instability comes from an inability to reconcile conflicting viewpoints or whether the president actively prefers a less structured approach.

The president has said that relying on "acting" officials in nominally Senate-approved positions "gives me more flexibility." He may similarly believe that eschewing traditional, slow policy processes lets him make policy without enduring laborious vetting by underlings.

But the president probably underestimates the importance of stability and staff in accomplishing his policy objectives. Declaring a policy objective, whether in a formal presidential address or a tweet, is only the first step in implementing it. Usually, such declarations result from a process of gathering information, coordinating staff work and developing and vetting options from which the president can choose.

Ideally, a national security adviser runs that process. The path is rarely smooth. Former White House official Peter W. Rodman described in "Presidential Command," a study of presidents and their foreign policy staffs, how even the most congenial administrations involve conflicting agendas and interpretations, as well as obstinacy and outright opposition. All of that can thwart a president's will.

But the Trump administration is far from that ideal. To give just one example, think of reports that an adviser stole paperwork from Trump's desk to stop him from withdrawing the United States from trade agreements. No process seems to be in place. Bolton's firing is a symptom, not a cure.

The Trump administration's volatile foreign policy process was clear before Bolton's arrival and will probably persist after Bolton's departure.

For example, as political scientist Mira Rapp-Hooper wrote here at TMC after the first U.S.-North Korea summit in June 2018, the administration did not put in the staff work to generate the kind of agreement that could have been a useful building block for restraining North Korea's nuclear arsenal. Bolton contributed to that disorder — but his departure doesn't mean Trump will suddenly become enamored of careful process.

As TMC editor and political scientist Elizabeth Saunders wrote in "International Organization," the degree of a president's foreign policy experience matters, and "a seasoned team cannot substitute for an experienced leader." An inexperienced president "may enable or underwrite risky behavior by advisers." Given that Trump is the only U.S. president in history with no prior political or military experience, her theory thus predicts that the Trump administration should be a jumble of initiatives by a team of officials each jockeying for their favored policies subject only to the occasional, blunt and transient intervention of the president.

That sort of confusion is exactly what we observe, from the resignation of Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis over Trump's decision to withdraw troops from Syria — one he later reversed — to the sudden cancellation of U.S. airstrikes against Iran in retaliation for downing a U.S. drone.

These sorts of rushed and confusing decisions reflect a policymaking process in which neither the president nor his team coordinate their actions in a structured way. Ironically, the national security adviser is supposed to provide exactly that management. In a normal administration, Bolton would have either been told to swallow his pride and act as an honest broker — or more likely, never would have been appointed to the role.

Bolton's Departure Signals Trump's Foreign-Policy Pivot!

But TheAtlantic reported that The president is turning away from conflict and toward diplomacy—and that will shape his choice of the next national security adviser.

John Bolton's sudden departure from the Trump administration was inevitable. It had nothing to do with his fabled mustache or even his very real personality clash with the president. It was a matter of principle. Trump wants to write a new chapter, closing the one marked "Militarism and Maximum Pressure" and opening one called "Dealmaking and the Pursuit of the Nobel Peace Prize." He wants a summit with Iran's leaders and deals with the Taliban, Kim Jong Un, and Vladimir Putin on arms control. He does not care about most of the details, as long as he gets the credit.

Few of his officials are particularly enthusiastic about this pivot, but led by Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, they accept it and will seek to shape it. Bolton did not accept it—with the exception of Russia, where he was playing a constructive role in advancing Trump's goals—and played the role of a saboteur. This tension has been clear for several months, but with Bolton keen to hang on and Trump famously averse to personal confrontation, it dragged on over the summer. With a Trump summit with Iranian President Hassan Rouhani now imminent, it could not drag on much longer. And earlier this week, it came to an end.

I talked with several current or former Trump-administration officials for this piece, all of whom spoke under condition of anonymity to freely discuss Trump's foreign policy after Bolton. These officials had different views of Bolton. Some saw him as brilliant and a surprisingly good diplomat who fell down on issues such as Iran, Cuba, and Venezuela, where he took a particularly hard line. Others were less forgiving, and argued that Bolton had failed to work well with other senior officials to advance Trump's strategy.

But all agreed that the Trump pivot is real. We are entering into a new phase. Trump has always had two images of himself on national-security issues—as a militarist and as a dealmaker. As he nears the election, he hopes to move from the former to the latter, spending the capital he built up as a hard-liner, and wrong-footing his Democratic opponents. Ever since he got rid of the axis of adults, he has sought to remove the institutional constraints on his decision making, allowing him maximum room to maneuver in line with his instincts and core beliefs, which date back more than three decades.

Although Trump has fired Bolton, he is not wholly rid of him. Everyone has been waiting for a centrist—Jim Mattis, H. R. McMaster, or Gary Cohn—to turn against the president, but they have stayed silent. Ironically, Bolton is now poised to walk through that door. He tweeted 12 minutes after Trump, contradicting the president's account of his departure. He answered his door to reporters and texted with them, telling one "I will have my say in due course. But I have given you the facts on the resignation. My sole concern is US national security." Earlier today, Bloomberg reported that Trump and Bolton disagreed over whether to lift sanctions on Iran to help facilitate a meeting with President Rouhani at the United Nations General Assembly.

If Bolton does speak out, it will grow harder for the so-called hawks in Congress to turn a blind eye to criticism from centrists, and to continue to support Trump unconditionally. This is particularly true given that Bolton's critique of Trump concerns Iran, an issue about which they care passionately. It is not far-fetched to imagine Trump meeting Rouhani with Bolton criticizing the summit live on cable news. Trump will likely react as is his wont—with full-scale attacks on Bolton personally, and on anyone who associates with him. The result could be a new Republican divide on foreign policy, with the challenge coming from the right. ➔7

Is Europe eyeing a ‘Reset’ with Russia?

By Scott Ritter

While U.S. pols cling to Cold War posturing, leaders like Emmanuel Macron are finally facing new multipolar realities.

The situation in Ukraine has held relations between the United States, Europe, and Russia hostage since the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014. But the unipolar world that existed then no longer holds. And how Europe chooses to manage the decline in U.S. relevance will go a long way in determining whether the European future is one of peace and prosperity or conflict and ruin. As it turns out, while American politicians continue to view Russia as a global threat vis-a-vis domestic politics, Europe seems to have gotten the memo, with at least some leaders moving in a healthier direction.

“We are no doubt living in the end of Western domination of the world,” French President Emmanuel Macron told a gathering of French diplomats shortly after the close of the G-7 summit. “We have been accustomed to a world order since the 18th century based on this hegemony,” he added, “but things have changed and fluctuated due to the mistakes of Westerners in some crises.”

What appeared to prompt the French president’s harsh assessment was a realistic re-thinking of the current state of play regarding U.S.-European relations with Russia and the consequences attached to such. While much of the U.S. media hounded President Trump when he opined on August 20—the eve of the Biarritz G-7 summit—that “it’s much more appropriate to have Russia in and it should be the G-8,” less attention was paid when Macron essentially said the same thing. On August 21, he stated that it was “important for Russia to rejoin” the G-7 after being excluded from it in 2014. (Macron’s statement did come with a caveat—that the “necessary prerequisite” for Russia’s returning to a G-8 structure was for a solution to be found on the issue of Ukraine based upon the Minsk agreements of 1993. Many observers felt this is unrealistic and that may have served to mute the impact of his bold statement.)

Most observers view Trump’s and Macron’s statements as independent events, with little or no relation to one another. And while the two leaders did discuss the issue of Russia’s rejoining the G-8 in time for next year’s summit, there was no formal consideration by the G-7 of readmitting Russia, and it looked like, by summit’s end, that the issue was moot. However, as Macron’s comments to the French diplomats made clear, he left Biarritz with Russia very much on his mind.

According to Macron, the end of Western hegemony, predicated largely on the premise of U.S. military and economic domination, will bring with it the end of “the European project of civilization”—the European



Union—unless Europe is able to adjust to this new reality and alter the trajectory of its relations accordingly.

“Pushing Russia away from Europe,” Macron said, “is a great mistake,” adding that Europe must rethink the relationship. “Since the fall of the Berlin Wall,” he continued, “we have established a relationship with Russia based on mistrust.” Russia, Macron declared, “is in Europe,” and he went on to warn that pushing Moscow away will only push it into the arms of China. Europe, Macron said, should strategically explore ways of “convergence” with Russia that don’t abandon Ukraine. If it cannot do this, “we will maintain a futile tension, and frozen conflicts will remain throughout Europe, and Europe will remain the scene of a strategic battle between the United States and Russia, so we will continue to receive the consequences of the Cold War on our soil.”

The fact that Macron made such a bold statement so soon after the Biarritz summit, and so shortly after consulting with President Trump, suggests a coordinated position and not simply a standalone one-off. Seen in this light, his words are worthy of greater consideration. Macron is fighting an uphill struggle on two fronts. First, he must find concurrence within a U.S. policy elite addicted to the notion of American-led global domination. Second, he must thread the needle between European elites who are convinced that allowing Russia’s actions in Ukraine to stand undermines European viability, and the reality that maintaining the status quo with Moscow will only bring down the vision of European unity these elites purport to defend.

The “futile tension” and “frozen conflicts” Macron warned about are very much a reality in Europe today. This reality was perhaps best manifested by the impolitic words of the commander of U.S. Air Forces in Europe,

General Jeff Harrigan, about the threat posed to Europe by Moscow’s military buildup in the Russian Baltic enclave of Kaliningrad. “If we have to go in there to take down, for instance, the Kaliningrad IADS [Integrated Air Defense System], let there be no doubt we have a plan to go after that,” General Harrigan told members of the press. “We train to do that. We think through those plans all the time, and...if that would ever come to fruition, we’d be ready to execute.”

The Russian response was predictable. The country’s prime minister, Dmitri Medvedev, called Harrigan’s comments “idiotic,” while a spokesperson for the Russian Foreign Ministry said they were viewed by Russia as “a threat” and were “absolutely irresponsible.” The Russian Ministry of Defense simply observed that “the region of Kaliningrad is reliably protected from any aggressive plans” developed in Europe by U.S. Generals passing through.

Russian objections aside, the reality is that General Harrigan’s statements were based more on bluster and posturing than reality. Simply put, the U.S. Air Force hasn’t taken down an integrated air defense system in 20 years (the last being the antiquated Serbian air defense in 1999) and is totally unprepared to fight against the kind of peer-level threat it would face in Russia. Unlike its one-way battles with Iraq, the Taliban, al-Qaeda, and ISIS, where air supremacy was guaranteed, not only would the airspace over and around Kaliningrad be heavily contested, the Russians would not be passive targets. Russia has the ability to strike back at America and its European allies with a full spectrum of capabilities that would degrade command and control, neutralize air bases, and change the reality on the ground as thousands of Russian tanks and armored vehicles advanced

with no viable U.S. or NATO ground combat response.

The issue of Kaliningrad is itself a direct extension of the conflict in Ukraine. Poland and the Baltic States have used the Russian annexation of Crimea and related intervention in Donbas to create the perception of an overarching Russian military threat to Eastern Europe in particular, and NATO as a whole, that is unmatched by reality. Simple cause-and-effect analysis shows that Russia’s military build-up in its districts that border NATO has been reactive in nature and primarily defensive in character. The fact that Russian military doctrine emphasizes a rapid transition from defense to deep counter-offensive actions is not the fault of Russia, but rather those who would provoke such actions. There are consequences for withdrawing from the anti-ballistic missile (ABM) treaty, deploying new anti-missile defense systems aligned against Russia, and allowing NATO to expand to the former Soviet Baltic Republics.

Ukraine is a ticking time bomb. So long as the U.S. and Europe embrace the unrealistic demand of Russia’s withdrawal from Crimea and corresponding surrender on the economic and political realignment of Ukraine with the West, Moscow will be compelled to maintain the status quo—which means sustainment of the militarized atmospheres that generate the sort of crises in Kaliningrad and elsewhere that are themselves artificial but could become all too real.

The status quo, moreover, plays exclusively into Russia’s hand. By the end of the year, the Nordstream-2 gas pipeline will come online, linking Russian natural gas supplies with the German and, by extension, European economies. In addition to making Europe more dependent upon Russian gas supplies, the Nordstream-2 makes older pipelines running through Ukraine redundant. Russia will most likely stop transporting gas through these pipelines, starving Ukraine of the billions of dollars in transit fees that sustain its economy. No amount of “lethal aid” provided by the U.S. can compensate for the loss of such a critical income stream. That will leave Ukraine sinking into further economic ruin, generating even more political chaos.

This is the reality that Europe has tied its future to. It is unsustainable—something Macron, at least, recognizes. Left to its own devices, the situation in Ukraine invites the very conflicts on European soil that would spell the doom of the post-World War II European experiment. Western hegemony may be over, but Europe’s place as a critical pillar of a future multipolar world does not need to perish with it. How Europe will navigate its way out of the Ukrainian morass is, as yet, unknown. But the fact that it must embark on such a journey, and soon, is undisputed.

The real costs of the war in Afghanistan

By Adam Wunische

NEWREPUBLIC — Now in its nineteenth year, the Afghanistan war just won’t end. Negotiations between the U.S. and the Taliban are now dead, according to President Donald Trump. The president, who once clamored for an end to the war, has instead overseen an increase in bombing. Last week, citing rampant corruption in the country, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo cancelled \$100 million in aid intended to fund infrastructure projects in Afghanistan, a reminder that the Afghan government stood up by U.S. forces in 2002 still struggles to provide security and stability. The U.S. is staring at the prospect of an even longer presence in Afghanistan—so long that nine former senior U.S. senior envoys to Afghanistan made a case earlier this month that the war actually isn’t that costly and that a significant long-term American troop presence, perhaps even for decades, is feasible.

“U.S. fatalities are tragic, but the number of those killed in combat make up less than 20 percent of the U.S. troops who died in non-combat training incidents last year,” those officials—who include Bush-era appointee John Negroponte and Bush-Obama veteran Ryan Crocker—wrote in their plea not to pull troops out of Afghanistan prematurely. “U.S. direct military expenditures in Afghanistan are approximately three percent of annual U.S. military spending, down by about 90 percent from the high point of the war.” These facts were apparently cause to be sanguine about continued occupation: “The lives and money being expended are serious, but the costs are ones we can sustain for negotiations to result in a sustainable peace.”

The modern American way of war has obscured many of the traditionally visible costs of waging war.

There are many ways to measure the costs of something as complicated as war. The ambassadors’ cherry-picking method—to focus solely on deaths of service members and line-item budget costs—is to ignore the considerable indirect costs of war, costs that can’t be wished away. The modern American way of war, with an all-volunteer force and financing raised via debt instead of taxes, has obscured many of the traditionally visible costs of waging war that have often led to popular resistance. Before the American populace—especially the portion asked to serve in this multi-generational war—is involuntarily committed to another 20 years, it’s worth asking what a real, honest cost-benefit analysis of the war might look like.

A baseline annual cost for the United States to continue its war in Afghanistan is approximately ten to 15 U.S. service member fatalities each year. (With 17 fatalities thus far in

2019, this year has been the deadliest year for the U.S. since 2014.) Additionally, the war costs approximately \$50 billion per year; the U.S. Department of defense estimates \$45 billion, while others place it at \$52 billion. In the context of other DoD operations and activities—as the ambassadors’ argument places them—these numbers appear low. More U.S. service members died, indeed, die in training accidents than in combat operations. The DoD budget for 2019 approaches \$700 billion, and \$50 billion might not seem like so much as a share of that. But this annual budget is separate from the Overseas Contingency Operations fund, which has been described as a war-making slush fund and has added \$1.8 trillion to military spending since 2001. And clearly neither kitty tells us much about the war’s hidden costs.

The days of war bonds and drafts are far behind us, and with them, a clear and obvious understanding of the costs of war. The Vietnam War essentially ended because of the political costs representatives faced if they authorized more spending for the war effort; when they failed to do so, the White House could no longer sustain the costs, and the complete withdrawal of combat troops began. Today, we have an Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF), passed following the 9/11 attacks, which has essentially empowered three successive presidential administrations to expand the war on terror, without much of a check from Congress. That, and the replacement of a universal draft with an all-volunteer force, makes the long-term commitment to the war almost inevitable, with no consequences for politicians to continue to fund it.

As in Vietnam, the cost of the Afghanistan war to veterans—not just in fatalities or visible injuries, but in mental wellness, social adjustment, and economic participation—is significant and growing. Veteran deaths by suicide exceeds service members killed in combat. Even as Afghanistan “winds down,” the suicide rate among younger veterans is increasing substantially. Even service members who don’t see combat at all are still exposed to chemicals from burn pits that lead to long-term disabilities.

A private contractor tossed U.S. military waste in Iraq and Afghanistan into giant pits and burned it. Now soldiers forced to breathe the toxic fumes are sick or dying—and the government is using faulty science to evade responsibility.

Not that the government tracks these costs against the war’s objectives in any meaningful way. Numerous mechanisms have been built to obscure the true monetary costs of our various ongoing wars. Uncle Sam “has never developed a convincing method of reporting on the cost of the wars, and its estimates are a confusing morass of different and conflicting data,” according to longtime security analyst

Anthony Cordesman: Simply put, the government “has failed to find any useful way to tie the cost estimates it does release to its level of military and civil activity in each conflict,” much less “found any way to measure the effectiveness of its expenditures or tie them to a credible strategy to achieve some form of victory.”

If we could more fully account for all these indirect costs, would we weigh them? Wars are supposed to be justified, and the sacrifices of the soldiers who serve in them honorable, when (and only when) they are fought for just political objectives that we reasonably believe can be achieved in a short amount of time at acceptable costs. For the U.S., the war in Afghanistan doesn’t meet these criteria.

Everything we know about insurgencies and terrorist groups predicts many more years of violence in Afghanistan. The Taliban are one of the wealthiest armed non-state groups in the world. Weak or developing democracies don’t often defeat insurgencies. Insurgencies last longer in counties with rugged terrain. Insurgencies last long if they have foreign backers or can find relative sanctuary in neighboring countries. Counterinsurgencies are more difficult in ethnically heterogeneous societies. Poor socioeconomic development and little past experience with democracy also undermines external democratization efforts.

Preexisting conditions in Afghanistan make a successful democratization effort there nearly impossible, and policy decisions have made a successful outcome even more difficult. The risk of losing political progress with a withdrawal needs to be weighed against the fact that government and coalition forces are now killing more Afghan civilians than the Taliban are. The sacrifice of U.S. service members was unlikely to lead to a successful democratization effort when there were more than 150,000 soldiers from NATO-member countries and we were spending hundreds of billions of dollars. It is even less likely now, with no clear strategy for success.

“A short jump is certainly easier than a long one, but no one wanting to get across a wide ditch would begin by jumping half-way,” wrote Carl von Clausewitz, the oft-quoted nineteenth-century military strategist. Meaning, military force should be wielded decisively and overwhelmingly to achieve a stated objective and then stop once it is achieved. Advocates of staying in Afghanistan indefinitely are, on this view, attempting to cross the Grand Canyon by jumping toward the middle and seeing what happens. Soldiers are being sacrificed for an objective that is unlikely to be achieved. That the real costs of the war can’t be fully tallied is less important: Under these conditions, even one more casualty can’t be justified.

The U.S president cannot escape his responsibility

6 → Trump, of course, will have his supporters on the subject. As one official told me: “Trump is right in his orientation. We need to focus first on China. So, ultimately, we do need to get to a different place with the Russians. The more distracted we are by North Korea, the better for Beijing. And we need to get out of Afghanistan or really reduce our role there.” But many Republican foreign-policy experts remain unconvinced. The international repercussions of this diplomatic pivot will be profound, particularly because it will be carried out with Trumpian characteristics—with little formal preparation, a focus on summits, and an eye on the politics. Martin Indyk, who served in several senior positions in the Clinton and Obama administrations, posed some interesting questions on Twitter: “What do Kim, Rouhani, Xi and the Taliban conclude about Trump’s need for deals with them? And what do Bibi and MBS do as the limb they’re on gets sawn off?” he asked, referring to the Israeli and Saudi leaders. These are the right questions to ask. Absent an external crisis, Trump’s diplomatic pivot will define world politics for the next year, and it has a dynamic of its own. In particular, it puts America’s rivals in pole position. They know that Trump needs his talks not to fail, and they hope he will make concessions to keep them afloat.

Jung Pak, my colleague at the Brookings Institution and formerly an analyst at the CIA, told me, “Kim Jong Un perceives he is in a position of strength going into 2020, and the closer we get to the election, the weaker Trump will be and the more he will want to deal. Trump is so invested in a win with North Korea that all Kim has to do is whisper quietly that he is thinking about breaking the Singapore promises to secure concessions from the United States.”

Iran may be in an even stronger position. It could allow the talks to gather pace and then weaponize its diplomacy with Trump as the election approaches. Russia is in a slightly different category, because Putin likely wants Trump to win reelection. Putin could capitalize on an arms-control agreement to smooth his reentry into the G8 and have some sanctions lifted. Meanwhile, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Saudi Arabia’s Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman will be left to stew in their own juices. They only have themselves to blame. They cheered Trump leaving the Iran nuclear deal, but erred in believing they could control the fallout. Trump did what they wanted at the beginning, but he was always unlikely to use force, making diplomacy a more likely outcome.

Trump’s most immediate challenge is picking Bolton’s replacement. More than a dozen names are floating around Washington. If he is true to past form, Trump will revel in the drama and have a parade of candidates interview with him. However, he ultimately has a choice to make—does he go with a personal advocate who will fight for him, or does he go with a seasoned professional?

He may be tempted to go with an advocate like Richard Grenell, the U.S. ambassador to Germany. Grenell is often regarded as a Bolton ally because he served as his spokesman when Bolton was ambassador to the United Nations. But Bolton and Grenell have not been on particularly good terms for the past 18 months. Grenell has been gunning for Bolton’s job from the beginning, frequently using his connections to Trump’s family, particularly Donald Jr., to advance his case. Those ties were in evidence in a tweet by the president’s son in March, when he called for the U.S. ambassador to Ukraine to be fired. He wrote: “We need more @richardgrenell’s and less of these jokers as ambassadors.” Grenell is in Washington this week, having arrived extra early for the UN General Assembly, and will have dinner with Trump on Saturday night—several observers I spoke with believe he is actively angling for the job. Donald Jr.’s support and Grenell’s own tensions with Bolton may work in his favor, but he has other problems.

Trump has no time for bureaucracy or process, but he is tired of the interagency among his staff. He does not care much for the interagency process, but he does understand that if he is to succeed in his pivot, he needs his team to meet a minimum level of cooperation. Grenell would make the combative Anthony Scaramucci look like Mahatma Gandhi. He clashed repeatedly with other administration officials and with other U.S. ambassadors in Europe. Many National Security Council staffers have made clear they would leave if he was appointed. And Grenell has a strained relationship with Pompeo, including a very public disagreement about whether he could fly the rainbow flag over the U.S. embassy in Germany on Pride Day. Under Grenell, an implosion of what’s left of the National Security Council process seems likely. Ultimately, it is hard to imagine Trump staking the success of his pivot on Grenell.

If he passes on Grenell but still wants an advocate, he could opt for retired Colonel Douglas Macgregor, who regularly appears on Tucker Carlson’s show on Fox News. Macgregor always strikes a Trumpian tone and has endorsed the president’s views on Syria and Russia. Trump has consulted with Macgregor on national-security matters, including when he canceled the planned missile strikes on Iran in June. However, Macgregor poses one of the same problems as Grenell—he may not actually be able to deliver the diplomatic pivot and he would be seen as a disastrous appointee by the Republican foreign-policy establishment.

If Trump decides to go for a serious professional who follows his lead and works well with Pompeo, he has several options. The top two may be Steve Biegun, the president’s special envoy for North Korea, and Rob Blair, who serves as Mick Mulvaney’s national security adviser. Both are well regarded by their colleagues, but have less of a relationship with Trump. Robert O’Brien, who currently serves as the U.S. special envoy for hostage affairs, is said to have the backing of Republican House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy and several other influential figures. Brian Hook, the U.S. envoy for Iran, has also been mentioned, and is close to Pompeo. He is well regarded by Republicans, although some worry that his focus on Iran and the Middle East may detract from Asia and Europe. He could also enter the frame if Pompeo were to follow the lead of Henry Kissinger, and take on the dual role of secretary of state and national security adviser. Pompeo will be wary of this option. He has the Goldilocks level of access to Trump at the moment—enough to always matter, but not so much that he gets under Trump’s skin. But if he fears the wrong person being tapped for the job, he may try to take it on himself, delegating much of the day-to-day responsibility to a deputy like Hook.

Regardless of whom he chooses, Trump is in control. He is calling the shots. Those who survive, like Pompeo, do so because they accept this. Newcomers like Mark Esper are learning the same lesson—he recently raided funds assigned for the U.S. military to counter Russia in Europe to pay for the wall on the southern border. The next national security adviser will have to make similar compromises with his own principles. Many people will undoubtedly breathe a sigh of relief that Trump is embracing diplomacy, but with Trump, things are never that simple or straightforward. His focus on the political benefits of negotiation and his egomaniacal desire to be seen as a dealmaker extraordinaire could undo his project, bringing about the very crises he hopes to avoid.

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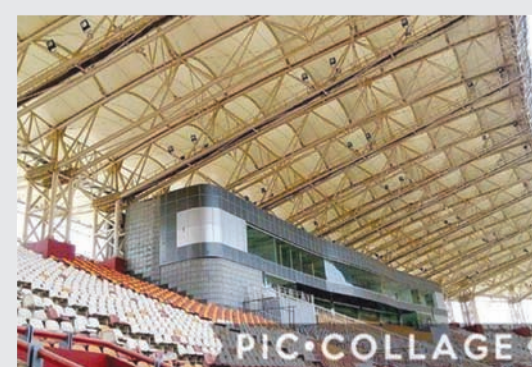
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Life on Mars could be found within two years but world is ‘not prepared’

NASA is close to finding life on Mars but the world is not ready for the “revolutionary” implications of the discovery, the space agency’s chief scientist has said.

Dr. Jim Green has warned that two rovers from NASA and the European Space Agency (ESA) could find evidence of life within months of arriving on Mars in March 2021.

The ExoMars Rover, which has been dubbed “Rosalind” in memory of British chemist Rosalind Franklin, will search for extra-terrestrial life by drilling 6.5 feet down into Mars’ core to take samples.

Those samples will then be crushed up and examined for organic matter in a mobile laboratory.

Dr. Green compared the potential discovery to when the astronomer Nicolaus Copernicus stated that the Earth revolves around the Sun in the 16th century.

“It will start a whole new line of thinking. I don’t think we’re prepared for the results,” he told The Sunday Telegraph. “I’ve been worried about that because I think we’re close to finding it and making some announcements.”

NASA’s rover Mars 2020 will drill into rock formations on the planet before sending



test-tubes of rock samples back to Earth – the first time material from Mars will have been brought onto this planet.

Dr. Green added that the discovery of life on Mars will give scientists a new set of questions to explore.

“What happens next is a whole new set of scientific questions. Is that life like us? How

are we related?” he said. “Can life move from planet-to-planet or do we have a spark and just the right environment and that spark generates life – like us or do not like us – based on the chemical environment that it is in?”

Recent research has shown that planets which were previously thought to be uninhabitable may have once had suitable con-

ditions for life.

Earlier this year, scientists discovered that there may be a vast and active system of water running underneath the surface of Mars.

A study released this month also claimed that Venus may have been habitable for 2 to 3 billion years before its atmosphere became incredibly dense and hot about 700 million years ago.

Recent research suggests that civilizations could exist on other planets, according to Dr. Green.

“There is no reason to think that there isn’t civilizations elsewhere, because we are finding exoplanets [planets outside the solar system] all over the place,” he said.

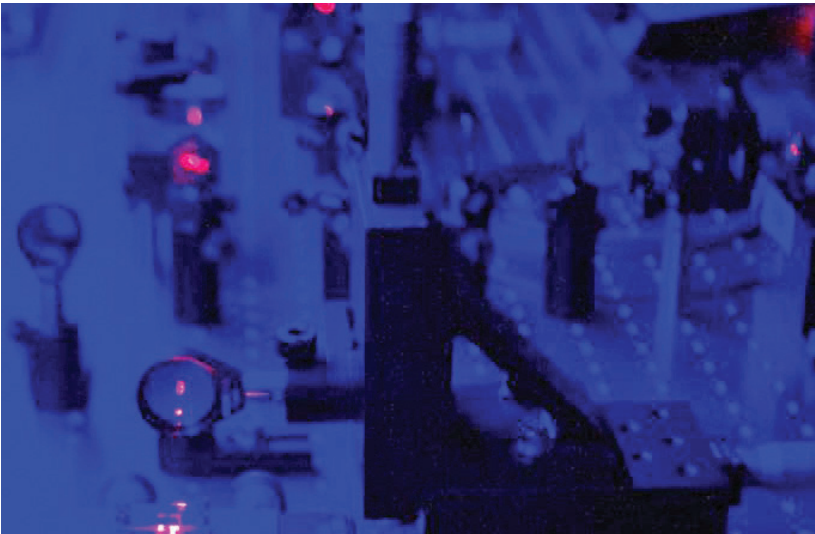
His comments came less than 24 hours before technology entrepreneur Elon Musk unveiled a SpaceX spacecraft designed to carry crew and cargo to Mars or other planets in the solar system before returning to Earth.

Mr. Musk said the company’s Starship was essential for the viability of space travel by introducing a spacecraft that can be reused.

The ship is expected to take off for the first time in about two months and reach 65,000 feet before it lands back on Earth.

(Source: The Independent)

New quantum technology enables light manipulation at greater scales



By Brooks Hays

To develop the next generation of quantum technologies, scientists need to find new ways to manipulate light.

In a new paper, published Friday in the journal NPJ Quantum Information, an international group of scientists claim to have done precisely that.

According to lead author Omar Magaña-Loaiza, an assistant professor in the department of physics and astronomy at the Louisiana State University, the breakthrough could inspire quantum technologies with applications in imaging, computation, communication and cryptography.

The new method for controlling light could also aid the field of metrology, the science of measurement.

“If we’re able to control photon fluctuations and associated noise,” Magaña-Loaiza said in a news release. “Then, we can make more precise measurements. This technology is new and will change our field.”

Scientists have made significant progress in their ability to manipulate

the quantum properties of single photons and pairs of photons. Light’s most important quantum property is the property of entanglement. When photons are entangled, their quantum properties -- their energy or spin-states -- remain correlated, even if they’re separated by large distances.

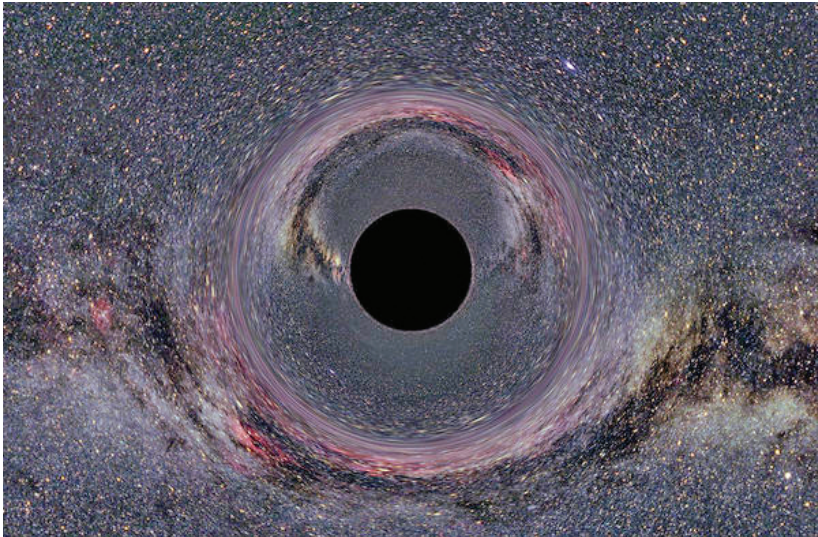
Because scientists know two entangled particles form a single quantum entity, and that the measurement of one implies the measurement of the other. Even if the other particle remains unobserved, scientists say that one entangled photon “heralds” the other.

The latest research suggests whole groups of photons can be heralded. Magaña-Loaiza and his colleagues developed a strategy for producing so-called multiphoton states.

In the lab, scientists subtracted photons from wavepackets, a group of photons, to engender similar quantum properties among multiphoton states.

“We can reshape the form of the wavepacket and artificially increase the number of photons in it,” Magaña-Loaiza said.

‘Planet Nine’ may actually be a black hole



For nearly 5 years, growing numbers of scientists have blamed the weird orbits of distant solar system objects on the gravitational effects of an as-yet-undiscovered “Planet Nine” that lies in the icy realm far beyond Neptune. But a pair of physicists is now floating an intriguing idea that could offer a new way to search for the object: What if that supposed planet is actually a small black hole?

Previous studies have suggested Planet Nine, which some astronomers refer to as “Planet X,” has a mass between five and 15 times that of Earth and lies between 45 billion and 150 billion kilometers from the sun. At such a distance, an object would receive very little light from the sun, making it hard to see with telescopes.

To detect objects of that mass, whether planets or black holes, astronomers can look for weird blobs of light formed when light “bends” around the object’s gravitational field on its journey through the galaxy (simulated image above). Those anomalies would come and go as objects move in front of a distant star and continue in their orbit.

But if the object is a planet-mass

black hole, the physicists say, it would likely be surrounded by a halo of dark matter that could stretch up to 1 billion kilometers on every side. And interactions between dark matter particles in that halo—especially collisions between dark matter and dark antimatter—could release a flash of gamma rays that would betray the object’s presence, the researchers propose in a forthcoming paper posted on the preprint server arXiv.

The physicists will soon start to comb through publicly available data from the Earth-orbiting Fermi Gamma-ray Space Telescope, which has covered the sky in all directions since 2008. They’ll be looking in particular for groups of sporadic gamma ray flashes that would move slowly across the sky, as Planet Nine would be expected to do as seen from Earth. Although the physicists’ proposal is speculative, their search may yield all sorts of information about dark matter and the sources of gamma ray flashes—whether they lie within our solar system or far across the universe.

(Source: sciencemag.org)

Study on mice reveals how sleep helps us forget unnecessary memories

By Guiliana Mazzoni

What a nuisance is a faulty memory. How many times have you forgotten where you parked the car? A few years ago, probably as a sign that my retirement was overdue, I spent literally half a day trying to find my car at a major New York airport. Fortunately, I am not alone. When people find out I am an expert on memory, the first thing they ask me is normally whether I can help them be less forgetful.

Indeed, excessive forgetting is a major problem, but “normal” forgetting is actually necessary. After all, it is more crucial to remember what is important right now than to remember everything. There’s no point in remembering the phone number of the house you lived in 10 years ago – that may in fact block your memory for your current phone number.

But exactly how the brain forgets unnecessary memories has long been unclear. Now a beautiful and rather exhaustive series of studies, just published in Science magazine, offers a clue.

Research does indeed show that, in order to remember what is important, we need to forget what isn’t important. This can happen at two levels in the brain, a “cleaning” of irrelevant information as we retain and consolidate our memories, and a “blocking” of irrelevant information when we try to retrieve a memory. The positive effect on memory of blocking irrelevant information has been known since the 1950s.

The new study, which was carried out in mice, seems to finally reveal the secret mechanisms of forgetting during retention of memory. The authors claim that forgetting is due to the activation of specific “melatonin-



concentrating hormone (MCH) neurons” located in the brain’s hypothalamus, which is involved in releasing hormones. We know that melatonin affects sleep – and MCH neurons are indeed involved in the shift between the two main sleep cycles: NREM to REM (REM sleep commonly associated with dreaming).

The authors demonstrate that forgetting happens only during retention (not when we encode or retrieve memories), and that sleep is the period of the day when MCH neurons clean the memory of all the irrelevant clutter. They obtained the results by injecting chemicals into the brain of mice in order to inhibit these very neurons. Amazingly, the mice performed better on two specific memory tasks as a result – recognizing new objects and a fear conditioning test (this involves making association between stimuli and their adverse consequences).

What’s more, when the researchers completely removed these neurons from the brain, the mice’s memory also improved, over the long term. On the other hand, a boosted activity of these neurons instead hindered the mice’s memory performance. The researchers therefore argue that the neuronal process may one day be used to treat memory problems.

This finding, if true and confirmed by other studies, represents a major breakthrough in understanding a fundamental memory mechanism. The methodology is rigorous and results convincing. There are some caveats though. How can we be absolutely sure that these neurons are involved in cleaning out irrelevant information in particular, rather than just impairing memory performance?

It seems that MCH neurons, when activated, just impair memory – and not necessarily with a good effect. This is important: the results do not say much about the positive role of forgetting during retention. In addition, whose memory are we talking about here? Mice memory – and necessarily so, given the highly invasive nature of most of the reported experiments. While animal models are indispensable for memory studies, it is too early to extend these findings to human memory.

For example, in humans the role of sleep in memory is still unclear. Also, forgetting occurs during retrieval of memories too and that is not explained by this new research.

Nevertheless, the new study does show for the first time that MCH neurons are strongly involved in making memory worse. That said, while we are on an exciting track thanks to this research, it is highly unlikely that we can improve human memory for a parked car by simply inhibiting a few neurons.

Astronomers have found another 21 stars dimming as erratically as Tabby’s Star

When KIC 8462852 - affectionately known as Tabby’s Star - arrived on the scene in 2015, it made one heck of a bang. We’d never seen a star like it before. It kept growing dimmer, erratically, in a manner that defied explanation.

It still does - but it’s looking like KIC 8462852 isn’t quite unique. A new sky survey has scooped up a bunch of stars that exhibit similar dimming behavior: 15 stars that seem quite similar to KIC 8462852, and a further six that seem even more extreme.



The unusual behavior of KIC 8462852 was first published by Louisiana State University astronomer Tabetha Boyajian and colleagues in 2015.

Dimming stars are nothing new to astronomy - in fact, it’s one of the main ways we detect exoplanets, when they pass between us and the star, dimming the star’s light fractionally - by less than 1 percent, usually.

But, although KIC 8462852 itself seems to be a pretty normal yellow-white dwarf, its dimming behavior is weird. Real weird.

Those planetary dips are usually on a regular timescale, and will dim the star by the same amount every transit. The dimming of KIC 8462852 is completely random and unpredictable - and the depth of light blocked varies. It’s dipped as little 1 percent, and as much as 22 percent, and a range of depths in between. These dimming periods have varying durations, too. Whatever’s causing this dimming, it’s definitely not a planet.

In addition, some wavelengths of light are blocked more than others, which, astronomers say, rules out a large, solid opaque object (such as, say, an alien megastructure - an early suggestion that has since been ruled out).

But finding more stars that behave the same way could provide additional clues; for instance, if they’re all the same type of star, or if they’re all in the same sort of environment, that could tell us something. Likewise if they’re all different.

So astronomer and physicist Edward Schmidt of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln went looking.

He combed data collected between April 1999 and March 2000 by the Northern Sky Variable Survey to find candidate stars with irregular variability, ruling out all stars with explicable dimming - those consistent with eclipsing binaries, for example. This produced 21 stars.

For these 21 stars, he downloaded light curve data from the All-Sky Automated Survey for Supernovae (ASAS-SN). This was compared against KIC 8462852’s light curve. And there were some interesting similarities.

“In my candidates I can see no periodicity and the depths of the dips vary considerably. So those [behaviors] are like KIC 8462852,” Schmidt told ScienceAlert.

This randomness is an important distinction, because KIC 8462852 isn’t the only weirdly dimming star out there. EPIC 204376071 was seen dimming to a depth of 80 percent in one single, solid opaque event earlier this year - like an anomalously large, ringed planet had passed in front of it. EPIC 249706694 has erratically timed dips in light, but those dips are all similar in depth.

Schmidt’s stars are a lot closer to KIC 8462852.

He divided them into two types. The “slow dimmers”, of which 15 were identified, were the most like KIC 8462852 in terms of the timing. But there were also six “rapid dimmers”, which had similar dips, but much more frequently.

What this difference means is yet unknown, but it does indicate that the dimming behavior exhibits a range of characteristics that the phenomenon that causes it has a range into which KIC 8462852 could fall.

And it’s not just the behavior that’s similar.

“The argument for these stars exhibiting the same phenomenon as KIC 8462852 is their location in the same area of the temperature-luminosity diagram,” Schmidt said - that is, they are the same type of star. “This makes it seem likely they are the same.”

But, he added, there is still work to be done. For instance, he has not yet looked into whether the dips of the 21 new stars block specific wavelengths. That’s one thing.

Another is that, based on archival data, KIC 8462852 was determined to be slowly fading - between 1890 and 1989, it faded by 0.193 magnitude.

Both of these things will need to be investigated further in order to determine whether or not these newly identified 21 stars are Tabby-alikes - but, even if they are, we still have to figure out what is causing the dimming.

“I think it is most likely that the dips are caused by transiting objects but that doesn’t necessarily explain the long term dimming. The transiting objects are likely dust based on the color changes during dips,” Schmidt told ScienceAlert.

“I think we are still a ways from explaining everything.”

(Source: sciencealert.com)

Elon Musk unveils Starship designed to take crew on round-trips to Mars

Elon Musk has unveiled a SpaceX spacecraft designed to carry crew and cargo to the moon, Mars or anywhere else in the solar system and land back on Earth perpendicularly.

In a live-streamed speech from SpaceX’s launch facility near the southern tip of Texas, Musk said on Saturday that the space venture’s Starship is expected to take off for the first time in about one or two months and reach 19,800 meters (65,000ft) before returning to Earth and landing.

He said it was essential for the viability of space travel to be able to reuse spacecraft, adding it was important to take steps to extend consciousness beyond our planet.

Musk spoke from a stage in front of the large spacecraft, which has a reflective metal exterior, on the day of the 11th anniversary of a SpaceX rocket reaching orbit for the first time. (Source: The Guardian)

21 tourism projects underway in Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari province

TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** — A total of 21 tourism-related projects are currently underway in Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari with the aim of bolstering the travel and hospitality sector across the less-developed province.

“For the time being, 21 projects in the arena of tourism are being carried out in Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari,” provincial tourism chief Merhrdad Javadi said on Sunday, CHTN reported.

Talking on job generation in relation with tourism, the official said that 67 jobs were created during the first six months of the current Iranian calendar year 1398 (started March 21), adding “189 tourism-related jobs were created across the province in 1397.”

“Moreover, 305,730 travelers visited Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari in the first six months of the year, 2,730 of whom were foreign nationals,” he said.

The official put the number of visitors at 907,500 during 1397, saying that some 900,000 of them were domestic holidaymakers and 7,500 were international travelers.

Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari lies in the southwestern part of the country. Its capital is Shahrekord. The province has various unique traditions and rituals relative to the ‘tribal’ lifestyles. Special forms of music, dance, and clothing are noteworthy. It has a considerable potential to become a vibrant tourist attraction because of its changing natural landscape.

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

Currently about 40 tons to felt are yearly being made in Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari through traditional and modern manners, which could be increased to 50 tons, according to official data. Experts believe that Shahr-e Kord has potential to be a world city for felt products.

Earliest life found in ancient Aussie rocks

Australian scientists have unearthed traces of the oldest life form ever found in 3.5 billion-year-old rocks in Western Australia.

In a major advance in the field, the University of New South Wales team says its discovery of microbial remains hidden in the famous Dresser Formation stromatolites offers clues for how life on Earth started, and where to look for signs of life on Mars.

Ever since they were discovered in the East Pilbara region in the 1980s, scientists have believed the stromatolites were created in areas of hydrothermal activity from layers of living organisms such as cyanobacteria, a single-cell microbe.

However, that theory has been unproven for nearly four decades, because time and weathering of the rocks has altered their mineralogy and prevented the identification of organic matter – until now.

To get a clearer picture of how these ancient rocks came into being, lead researcher Raphael Baumgartner and colleagues needed to study parts of the stromatolites that had not been affected by weathering.

They obtained samples extracted by diamond drilling from deep within the stromatolites, below the exposed area.

The team analyzed the samples with cutting-edge micro-analytical tools and techniques including high-powered electron microscopy, spectroscopy, ion mapping and isotope analysis. The works, in other words.

Late one night they found what they were looking for: organic matter. It was there in the pyrite – a mineral also known as “fool’s gold” – from which the stromatolites are composed.

(Source: cosmosmagazine.com)



ROUND THE GLOBE

Fort and Shalimar Gardens in Lahore

The inscribed property includes two distinct royal complexes, the Lahore Fort and the Shalimar Gardens, both located in the City of Lahore, at a distance of 7 km. from each other.

The two complexes – one characterized by monumental structures and the other by extensive water gardens – are outstanding examples of Mughal artistic expression at its height, as it evolved during the 16th and 17th centuries.



The Mughal civilization, a fusion of Islamic, Persian, Hindu and Mongol sources (from whence the name Mughal derives) dominated the Indian subcontinent for several centuries and strongly influenced its subsequent development.

The Lahore Fort, situated in the north-west corner of the Walled City of Lahore, occupies a site which has been occupied for several millennia. Assuming its present configuration during the 11th century, the Fort was destroyed and rebuilt several times by the early Mughals during the 13th to the 15th centuries.

The Shalimar Gardens, constructed by Shah Jahan in 1641-2 is a Mughal garden, layering Persian influences over medieval Islamic garden traditions, and bearing witness to the apogee of Mughal artistic expression.

The Mughal garden is characterized by enclosing walls, a rectilinear layout of paths and features, and large expanses of flowing water. The Shalimar Gardens cover 16 hectares, and is arranged in three terraces descending from the south to the north.

(Source: UNESCO)

Iran is an amazing and wonderful country for tourists, envoy says

TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iran is an amazing and wonderful country for tourists and [Some] ninety percent of Spanish cultural tourists are willing to visit the country at least for once, Madrid’s ambassador to Tehran has said.

“Iran is home to the most genuinely hospitable people who greet foreign tourists with open arms,” Eduardo Lopez Busquets said.

Spanish tourists like to visit Iran which is a country rich in culture and civilization, he said in an exclusive interview with ILNA news agency published on Saturday.

Many Spanish tourists, around 10,000, travel to Iran annually, most of them are between the ages of 50 and 60 years, he noted.

“Most Spanish people who travel to Iran are cultural tourists. Once in Iran, they also become familiar with Iran’s capacities in ecotourism.”

He said more than 90 percent of Spanish cultural tourists are interested in traveling to Iran. “I can say that all of these people like to travel to Iran at least once.”

“Most of these tourists are attracted to



Madrid’s ambassador to Tehran Eduardo Lopez Busquets in an undated photo

Tourism holds considerable potential to build a better, more equal future, UNWTO chief says

TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** — Tourism holds considerable potential to build a better, more equal future in the global scene as no single economic, social or human activity prospers in isolation, UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili has said.

“Tourism can help us build a better future for everyone. Around the world, the tourism sector is leading source of employment, supporting many millions of jobs and driving economies forward, both at the local and the national level,” Pololikashvili said in an official message to mark World Tourism Day.

“Not one single economic, social or human activity prospers in isolation. For this reason, governments and stakeholders from the public and private sectors are increasingly working together to manage tourism in a responsible and sustainable manner and to ensure its enormous potential is properly realized.”

Pololikashvili also attached great importance to sector as a catalyst for equality and inclusivity.

“At the same time, it is a catalyst for equality and inclusivity. In many places, tourism employment gives women, young people and those living in rural communities the chance to support themselves and their families and to integrate more fully into wider society.”

The true potential of tourism, both as a creator of jobs



A file photo shows UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili (L) meeting with Iran’s tourism chief Ali-Asghar Mounesan (R) in Tehran.

and as a driver of equality and sustainable development, is only just being realized, he said.

“Providing decent work opportunities and contributing to developing professional skills are at the heart of this. Well managed, the continued growth of our sector will encompass

countless opportunities and allow tourism to live up to its global social responsibility to leave no one behind.”

The World Tourism Day is annually commemorated on September 27 with worldwide celebrations under the auspices of the UN World Tourism Organization. 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.

Elsewhere in his message, the secretary-general stressed the need for effective collaboration between tourism-related personnel and partners in the technology sector and in academia.

“Just as new technology is changing the way we travel, so too is it changing the way we work. Tourism is leading the way in providing workers with the skills and knowledge they need for the jobs of tomorrow. Embracing this creative spirit, including through effective collaboration with partners in the technology sector and in academia, will drive the creation of more and better jobs.”

Pololikashvili concluded that “transformative power of tourism” could usher in a better, equal future.

“As we celebrate World Tourism Day, let us recognize the transformative power of tourism. Together, we can realize tourism’s potential to build a better, more equal future.”

Taste unique dairy product an Iranian tribe makes for millennia



By Seyed Hossein HosseiniSeddig

MASHHAD — In the second half of the last month of spring this year we decided to leave Mashhad on a double-decker train at 1: 35 a.m. to Semnan city, the capital of Semnan province, and we arrived at a hotel around 9 a.m. Let me remind you that before every trip I get used to studying and taking notes on different aspects of historical and

natural attractions, customs, weather and foods of the region.

So, after a short break and having an address, we went to a restaurant to eat some Semnan local food and then visit the historical sites of Semnan city such as the Jame Mosque and its famous minaret, the Imam Mosque (King or Sultanate), the Bazaar and Takaya (kind of Mosque) and its caravanserais, the gate of the citadel, the old triple settlements such as Koushmaghan, Zaveghan and Kadiyar; the Badgir mansion, and the tomb of Pir Najm-al Din Semnani.

And we also visited two towns of Sangesar (Mahdishahr) and Shahmirzad fifteen and twenty kilometers north of Semnan, respectively, which are quite different from Semnan desert city in terms of air conditions, and we visited historical attractions such as Hojabr Palace, Darband Cave located in Sangesar, as well as the Khane gol traditional hotel and one of the largest walnut gardens in the world and Shahmirzad’s gardens alley.

Although Semnani dialect is from Persian (Pahlavi) dialect but it is very difficult for us Iranians to understand it and we could not able to understand their language at all, but I found it fascinating. Besides linguistic wonder, a dairy product named “Aroushe” in Sangesar was interesting to me. I had never heard its name and not tasted it, and it seems that there is no similar product anywhere in Iran and the world.

Aroushe is one of the unique dairy products of Sangesar nomads and it dates to more than 3,000 years ago. It is rich in calcium. It is made from fresh sheep’s milk or goat’s cheese. The nomads and shepherds believe that cattle graze in the highlands and pastures full of aromatic flowers and medicinal plants are better and suited their milk for making of Aroushe and makes it more delicious.

The method of preparation is almost the same in different regions of Semnan province and Sangesar tribes and is as follows:

Put fresh milk on heat to warm up and add rennet cheese to the milk then the cheese is made. The cheese is poured into a thin cloth to draw its water and then poured the cheese of without water into a large copper pot and placed on mud stoves. The shepherd takes some soil and mixes it with a little water and coats the mud gently around the pot so that the flames do not get out of the pot and the oven, which also helps keep the shepherds safe during work and it is also a non-flame of fire.

Then the person in charge of the oven’s lighting and refueling ignites a very small fire, and the other person raises the sleeve and grabs the cheese inside the pot. Of course, usually men grab or crush the cheese, or women who have more power. This process of cheese grating takes a maximum of 20 minutes, when one must turn the hard cheese by grabbing it and slowly turning it into a dough.



At this time, the two shepherds stand on either side of the pot, stirring constantly with a large wooden spoon, until the cheese is golden. Depending on the amount of material used, the duration of the preparation varies from 3 to 5 hours. Due to the warm nature of Aroushe, it is mostly consumed with or without sugar and honey in the fall and winter seasons and does not require a refrigerator to store it.

5 perks travel agents offer beyond booking your trip

Most people assume travel agents do little more than charge you money for booking trips, something most people are comfortable doing online. However, they can do a lot more beyond planning your vacations.

“Of course we specialize in building travel itineraries, but good advisers can help you in all sorts of ways that most people don’t realize,” said Rob Karp, chief executive and founder of MilesAhead, a luxury travel concierge service. Here are a few things that may make an agent worth the additional cost.

■ Help for bumped trips and other snafus

A travel agent may be able to help resolve the snags that can happen on any trip, just by picking up the phone and calling them. Mr. Karp said that experienced agents, for one, can assist with rebooking flights in the event of cancellations or lengthy delays.

They can usually do this even if they haven’t booked your flights to begin with. They can also help find last minute accommodations in case you’re stuck somewhere and can track your lost luggage for you. “Essentially, we can take the travel headache off your hands and make it ours,” Mr. Karp said.

■ A whole-trip concierge, at your service

Yes, advisers can book your accommodations and arrange airport transfers, but they can also manage every aspect of your trip including handpicking guides who match your interests, making restaurant reservations, securing theater tickets and booking skip-the-line entrance tickets to museums. “Basically, you adviser can be a substitute for a hotel concierge,” Mr. Karp said. Some advisers charge a fee for this service that ranges from \$50 to a few hundred dollars, depending on the complexity of your requests, but, unlike a hotel concierge, they don’t expect a gratuity for their services.

■ Let them get to know you, and they’ll personalize your trip

The better your travel agent knows you, the more he or she will be able to customize your trips to your tastes. If you’re a vegan traveling in Italy, for example, an agent may be able to arrange a vegan pizza making class, or at least offer dining options where you’ll feel welcome and have tons to choose from.

Having a sense of who you are can also mean surprises on your getaways. Mr. Karp’s agency, for one, often arranges

personalized welcome amenities for its clients: “One of our travelers is a big college basketball fan, so we had custom sneakers with his alma mater’s logo designed and left them waiting for him in his room,” he said.

■ They can even handle long-term travel planning

If you have any destinations you really want to visit, an agent can help prioritize where you should travel and when, and help you get off the couch and visit those bucket list locales. Some trips may make more sense at certain times in your life: if you’re keen on gorilla trekking in Rwanda, for example, and want your children to go with you, it’s best to wait to until they are 16, the minimum age allowed. Similarly, if you have a set travel budget for the year, your agent can help determine how best to use that budget to get the most for your money.

■ They can help even when you’re not on vacation

Your agent can come in handy even when you’re not traveling. Mr. Karp said. For a loyal client, he or she can make last-minute restaurant reservations, get tickets to sold-out concerts or even book a boardroom for business meetings.

(Source: The New York Times)

Four simple steps the U.S. media could take to prevent a trump war with Iran

By Mehdi Hasan

Here we go again. Sixteen years after the U.S. media helped the Bush administration spread myths and lies about the threat posed by Iraq to the United States and its allies, the Trump administration is spreading similar myths and lies about the threat posed by Iran.

The 64,000-rial question, therefore, is whether or not journalists have learned any lessons whatsoever from the Iraqi WMD debacle of 2003.

Well, consider these recent headlines: "US deploying more Patriot missiles to Middle East, amid Iranian threats" (CNN) "Pentagon Builds Deterrent Force Against Possible Iranian Attack" (New York Times) "U.S. Says Iran Likely Behind Ship Attacks" (Wall Street Journal)

"Iranian threats led to White House's deployment announcement, U.S. officials say" (Washington Post)

The evidence for these hawkish headlines? For this stream of alarmist media reports about "threats" and "attacks" from Iran? Yes, you guessed it: statements provided to reporters by U.S. officials hiding behind a cloak of anonymity. In some cases, just one official. Take the Wall Street Journal's scoop:

An initial U.S. assessment indicated Iran likely was behind the attack on two Saudi Arabian oil tankers and two other vessels damaged over the weekend near the Strait of Hormuz, a U.S. official said, a finding that, if confirmed, would further inflame military tensions in the Persian Gulf.

Why would you trust the word of a single official on such a sensitive and contentious issue? And why, oh why, would you rely on the testimony of a member of the Trump administration, known globally, of course, for its stringent and unbending adherence to the truth?

Also: If you're going to trust a single anonymous official, in this administration of fanatical hawks and shameless dissemblers, why not trust this particular official who was quoted in the New York Times?

One American official, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss confidential internal planning, said the new intelligence of an increased Iranian threat was "small stuff" and did not merit the military planning being driven by Mr. Bolton. The official also said the ultimate goal of the yearlong economic sanctions campaign by the Trump administration was to draw Iran into an armed conflict with the United States.

Plenty of journalists say they want to learn the lessons of Iraq. But the sad reality is that many of my colleagues in the media are, wittingly or unwittingly, becoming complicit in this administration's cynical and dangerous attempt "to draw Iran into an armed conflict with the United States."

So what to do? Here are four suggestions.

1. Stop the Stenography
Simply passing along the claims of U.S. officials to readers or viewers, without checking whether they are true or not, is not even close to the definition of journalism. Reporters are not supposed to be stenographers to the people in power; they're supposed to hold power to account.

Showing blind faith in U.S. officials on



An F/A-18E Super Hornet launches from the flight deck of the USS Abraham Lincoln on May 10, 2019, in the Red Sea. The Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group has been deployed to U.S. Central Command as tensions with Iran have recently escalated.

national security issues, in particular, makes no sense whatsoever. The United States has a long history of starting, or escalating, conflicts on the basis of fraudulent threats and provocations. Remember Vietnam and the Gulf of Tonkin lies? Remember the first Gulf War and the false congressional testimony about Kuwaiti babies being thrown out of incubators by Iraqi troops? Remember how George W. Bush not only fabricated a threat from non-existent WMDs but also plotted to provoke Saddam Hussein into shooting down a U.S. plane "painted in U.N. colors"?

Then there is Iran. Last week, in a radio interview, Chuck Hagel, the former Republican senator and defense secretary under Barack Obama, accused the Trump administration of "baiting Iran in a very dangerous way."

We all know, of course, that John Bolton wants to bomb Iran. He has said so himself, on the op-ed pages of the New York Times. So why aren't reporters more skeptical of the administration's claims on Iran? Why are they so keen to slavishly and uncritically repeat them to the public, as if they came down on stone tablets from on high?

Take Barbara Starr, CNN's veteran Pentagon correspondent. Last week, she tweeted:

Just In: US officials tell me the threats from Iran included "specific and credible" intelligence that Iranian forces and proxies were targeting US forces in Syria, Iraq and at sea. There were multiple threads of intelligence about multiple locations, the officials said. #Iran

● Barbara Starr (@barbarastarrcnn) May 6, 2019

This week, however, the most senior British general in the U.S.-led coalition against ISIS told reporters that "there's been no increased threat from Iranian-backed forces in Iraq and Syria."

Ooops. "Fool me once," as President George W. Bush so famously was unable to say, "shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me."

2. Get Your Facts Straight
Iran does not have nuclear weapons. Iran

does not have a nuclear weapons program. Iran has complied with the terms of the nuclear deal.

These three statements represent the consensus view of, among others, the U.S. intelligence community, Israeli security chiefs, top U.S. generals, and, perhaps most importantly, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). If, as a journalist, you report differently, then you have a blockbuster scoop. But there'd better be something behind it beyond the musings of anonymous White House officials.

Yet the New York Times reported earlier this week that the Pentagon's plan to send 120,000 U.S. troops to the Middle East partly depends on whether Iran decides to "accelerate work on nuclear weapons."

How can the Iranians "accelerate work" on weapons that do not exist?

3. Context, Context, Context

We are constantly shown images on our TV screens of Iranians burning U.S. flags or chanting "Death to America." But wouldn't it be useful if journalists also provided much-needed context to this long-running conflict between the United States and Islamic Republic? Could they try to explain to their readers or viewers how there are legitimate and long-standing grievances on both sides?

After all, how many Americans are aware of the fact that the Eisenhower administration toppled the democratically elected government of Iranian Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh in a CIA coup in 1953? Or that the Carter administration offered safe haven to the repressive dictator, the Shah of Iran, after he fled from the Iranian Revolution in 1979? Or that the Reagan administration helped Saddam Hussein's Iraq use poison gas against Iranian forces in the Iran-Iraq war? Or that George H.W. Bush's administration refused to apologize to Iran after a U.S. navy warship shot down an Iranian civilian airliner, killing all 290 passengers onboard?

It isn't that hard for journalists to provide historical context in their reporting. Here's Bernie Sanders laying it out briefly and bluntly,

in February 2016, during a Democratic presidential debate with Hillary Clinton:

Nobody knows who Mossadegh was, democratically elected prime minister of Iran. He was overthrown by British and American interests because he threatened oil interests of the British. And as a result of that, the Shah of Iran came in, terrible dictator. The result of that, you had the Iranian Revolution coming in, and that is where we are today.

4. Get Better Sources

Why only quote, or rely on, administration officials? Or men and women in uniform? Or folks from hawkish D.C. think tanks?

Why can't we hear from skeptical and anti-war voices, too? From Iranian Americans perhaps?

A month before the Iraq invasion, in February 2003, Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting, or FAIR, produced a study of 393 on-camera sources who had appeared in stories about Iraq on network news. According to FAIR, a whopping three out of four (76 percent) sources were current or former government and military officials, compared to a minuscule 6 percent of sources who were skeptics about the need for a conflict with Iraq. Meanwhile, less than 1 percent — or three out 393 sources! — were "identified with organized protests or anti-war groups."

I have a suggestion for reporters and anchors looking for guests and sources on the current crisis: If they got Iraq wrong, don't ask them about Iran.

With a know-nothing yet belligerent president in the Oval Office, a national security adviser who has dreamt of war for decades, and the Saudis baying for blood, the importance of fair and accurate reporting on Iran, and the threat that it may or may not pose, cannot be overstated. Think about this: Hundreds of thousands of Iraqi civilians, as well as more than 4,400 American troops, might be alive today had U.S. media organizations — with a few honorable exceptions — done their job in 2003.

In fact, a year after the invasion, in May 2004, the editors of the New York Times issued a stark mea culpa, under the headline "The Times and Iraq," "Controversial" information about Iraq and weapons of mass destruction, they admitted, was "insufficiently qualified or allowed to stand unchallenged. Looking back, we wish we had been more aggressive in re-examining the claims as new evidence emerged — or failed to emerge."

"Editors at several levels who should have been challenging reporters and pressing for more skepticism," they continued, "were perhaps too intent on rushing scoops into the paper. ... Articles based on dire claims about Iraq tended to get prominent display, while follow-up articles that called the original ones into question were sometimes buried. In some cases, there was no follow-up at all."

Is the New York Times planning on issuing another mea culpa entitled "The Times and Iran" a year or two from now? Do U.S. reporters, anchors, and editors really want more Middle Eastern blood on their hands? If not, they need to fix their rather credulous and increasingly hawkish coverage of Iran and the Trump administration — and fix it fast.

(Source: *Theintercept.com*)

Why the media fails to cover Palestine with accuracy and empathy

By Alasdair Soussi

Often dubbed an open-air prison on account of Israel's and Egypt's ongoing air, land and sea blockade of the coastal enclave, Gaza is, according to Amnesty International and several other rights groups, on the brink of a humanitarian disaster.

In February, Antonio Guterres, the United Nations secretary-general, highlighted the crisis, saying that the near two million Palestinians of the besieged strip "remain mired in increasing poverty and unemployment, with limited access to adequate health, education, water and electricity".

But the mainstream media does not always succeed in telling Palestine's contemporary story with accuracy and empathy.

On Thursday, in the Scottish city of Glasgow, experts discussed the media's role in covering one of the most pressing and divisive issues in international politics.

Al Jazeera interviewed three of the panellists before the event, which was hosted by The Balfour Project, a campaign group created by British citizens to raise awareness over Britain's record in Palestine before and during its Mandate.

"You always come under particular pressure with [reporting on events in Israel and Palestine] because there is an intense and concerted Israeli media lobby - and there always was," said Sarah Helm, a former foreign correspondent for the UK's Independent newspaper. "And that includes a very intense Israeli political lobby working at every single level, which there always was too - and that was no secret and nor would they make a secret of it."

She was based in Jerusalem in the 1990s. Helm said that her editors would often come "under pressure from the Israeli lobby in London on what correspondents out in the field were doing in a way that was not really true... [for] other foreign stories".

"Because newspapers have been got at and persuaded and pressurised by the pro-Israel lobby, the upshot over time is that the reader hasn't got a clue what this place [Palestine] is."



A wounded Palestinian is evacuated during a protest at the Israel-Gaza border fence, east of Gaza City on February 22, 2019.

Today, similar concerns remain. Everyone is terrified of putting a foot wrong and being accused of being anti-Semitic that they aren't even ask the necessary questions.

Sarah Helm, journalist David Cronin, for example, who had freelanced for The Guardian, wrote in 2015 about his frustrations with the newspaper in Electronic Intifada, where he acts as an associate editor.

Having reported about atrocities against Palestinians committed by Israel, the paper was later "not keen to have me writing from Gaza", he said, adding that one editor advised him to steer clear of covering the conflict altogether.

Time and space constraints also mean that UK media reports neglect the contextual history of the conflict.

This includes the fact that seven out of 10 Gazans are registered as refugees, with many originating from families who were forced to flee their homes after Israel's foundation in 1948.

"It seems to me that certain absolutely fundamental facts have to be high up in any story," Helm said.

The Western media narrative has been dominated by Israel during the entire 70-year conflict, according to Ilan Baruch, the former Israeli ambassador to South Africa. "Israel was brilliantly successful in offering a narrative to the western hemisphere that was embraced with little or no objective judgement," said Baruch, who resigned from the foreign service in 2011 because he felt he could no longer represent the Israeli government's policies.

Reporting fatigue also contributes to poor media coverage. Sir Vincent Fean, a former British consul-general in Jerusalem, said that Gaza's "complex and deep-rooted" struggle has diminished the "appetite of Western media". "In addition to the fatigue, there is also the fact that other crises in the Middle East are bloodier, like Syria and Yemen," said Fean, who was the UK's top-ranking consular officer in Jerusalem from 2010 to 2014. "They take some of the oxygen away from the issue."

In 2017, Mariam Barghouti, a Palestinian-American writer based in Ramallah, wrote in a column for Al Jazeera: "The mainstream media focus is always on Palestinian reaction and not on Israeli action and it insinuates that Palestinians are on the offence when in fact they are on the defence." In suggesting a way forward, Helm said: "Editors must have the courage of their convictions" to insist historical context enables the reader, listener or viewer to understand the conflict.

"History has been allowed - and even recent history has been allowed - to disappear into a swamp," she said. "And everyone is terrified of putting a foot wrong and being accused of being anti-Semitic that they aren't even ask the [necessary] questions."

As several critics of Israeli government policy find themselves accused of anti-Jewish racism, Baruch, the former Israeli ambassador to South Africa, said the debate needed to move past conflating these two notions.

"Even criticising Zionism as the inspirational movement that created Israel is not anti-Semitism," he said. "[The anti-Semitism charge] is just a ploy to pull down criticism of Israel."

(Source: *Aljazeera.com*)

Leading figures condemn 'flawed' media coverage of Labour's anti-Semitism row

The mainstream media's lack of impartiality in its reporting of the row over alleged anti-Semitism within the Labour Party has been criticised as "flawed" by a group of leading academics and public figures. A letter in the Guardian pointing this out was signed by Noam Chomsky, Yanis Varoufakis, Ken Loach, Brian Eno, Des Freedman, Justin Schlosberg and 21 others.

Citing a recent report by the Media Reform Coalition — "an independent coalition of groups and individuals committed to maximising the public interest in communications" — the signatories said that they have long had "serious concerns about the lack of due impartiality and accuracy in the reporting of allegations of anti-Semitism against Jeremy Corbyn and the Labour Party."

The MRC report was based on 250 articles and broadcast news segments which found "95 clear cut examples of misleading or inaccurate reporting on mainstream television and online news platforms." There exists, it said, a "persistent subversion" of conventional news values.

In relation to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of anti-Semitism that was at the heart of the dispute, the letter noted that the research found evidence of "overwhelming source imbalance."

Furthermore, "key contextual facts about the IHRA definition — for example that it has only been formally adopted by eight countries (and only six of the IHRA member states) — were consistently excluded."

During the row, news agencies like the BBC presented the IHRA definition as the gold standard definition of anti-Semitism which the international community has endorsed in full. This narrative has been pushed by the media, as well as the Conservative Party, to berate Corbyn, even though the reality of his anti-racist position is the complete opposite.

The overwhelming majority of countries have not adopted the IHRA definition, and even the Conservatives have not included the controversial definition in their rule book. Indeed, the Conservative code of conduct, Channel 4 News discovered, does not at any point mention "anti-Semitism" or spell out a definition of anti-Semitism, IHRA-approved or otherwise.

The published letter went on to say that flawed coverage was not adjudged on occasional lapses in judgment, but "systematic reporting failures" that served to weaken the Labour leadership and to bolster its opponents within and outside of the party. The signatories stressed that it is entirely appropriate and necessary for major news

felt it would be wrong to share the Ukrainian summary or transcript of the call. "Prior to the presidency I was never a diplomat, but I think I have had many such conversations in my life and will have many more," Zelenskiy said.

"There are certain nuances and things which I think it would be incorrect, even, to publish," he said.

Asked whether Kiev would open an inves-



outlets to report on the horrors of anti-Semitism, but wrong to present it as an issue specific to the Labour Party.

"Significant parts of the UK media have failed their audiences by producing flawed reports that have contributed to an undeserved witch-hunt against the Labour leader and misdirected public attention away from anti-Semitism elsewhere," they added, "including on the far right, which is ascendant in much of Europe."

(Source: *Middleeasteye.net*)

Ukraine's president: Kiev unlikely to publish Trump call transcript

INTERNATIONAL DESK **TEHRAN** — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said Monday that Kiev was unlikely to publish its version of a transcript of a July 25 phone call with U.S. President Donald Trump, at the heart of an impeachment inquiry in Washington.

The White House published its summary of the call last week. It showed U.S. President Donald Trump, a Republican, asking Zelenskiy

to investigate one of his main rivals in the 2020 election, former U.S. Vice President Joe Biden, and his son Hunter, who sat on the board of a Ukrainian gas company.

U.S. Democrats say the call proves Trump improperly sought a foreign leader's help to smear a political opponent; Trump calls the accusations a witch hunt.

Speaking to journalists at an event at a military site near Kiev Monday, Zelenskiy said he

felt it would be wrong to share the Ukrainian summary or transcript of the call.

"Prior to the presidency I was never a diplomat, but I think I have had many such conversations in my life and will have many more," Zelenskiy said.

"There are certain nuances and things which I think it would be incorrect, even, to publish," he said.

Asked whether Kiev would open an inves-

tigation into the claims against Joe Biden and his son Hunter, per Trump's request, Zelenskiy said Kiev would not act solely on the orders of other countries.

"We can't be commanded to do anything. We are an independent country," Zelenskiy said.

"We are open, we are ready to investigate (but) it has nothing to do with me. Our independent law enforcement agencies are ready to investigate any case in which the law was broken."

3,273 inmates of unintentional crimes released in 6 months

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — Iranian benefactors help free 3,273 prisoners who were convicted of unintentional crimes over the first six months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-September 22), IRNA news agency reported on Monday.



According to the Blood Money Organization, provinces of Tehran, Isfahan and Gilan were the top provinces for releasing the highest number of prisoners.

Currently, 8,100 inmates of involuntary crimes are behind bars in the country, 3 percent of whom are women.

Blood Money Organization's director Asadollah Joolaei said in August that as many as 1,887 prisoners jailed for unintentional financial crimes were released over the spring.

Last year, charity fundraising events helped free more than 10 thousand prisoners and contributions totaled nearly 5.7 trillion rials (nearly \$135 million).

Iranian parliament, Majlis, has approved 2 trillion rials (nearly \$47 million) to be earmarked for releasing prisoners of unintentional crimes with the priority given to female prisoners, Mehr reported in January.

Within the framework of the budget bill for the current year, the money which has seen 100 percent increase year-on-year, will be allocated to freeing prisoners mostly jailed for unintentional financial crimes.

International police equipment exhibition underway in Tehran

1 → In addition to domestic participants, foreign manufacturers and traders active in safety and security industries from Germany, Italy, France, England, Australia, the Netherlands, Spain, China, India, Cyprus, Pakistan, Lebanon, Jordan, Sudan, Canada, Poland, Japan, Denmark, Austria, Iraq, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Turkey, and Sweden are participating in the exhibition.



Educational workshops and scientific conferences are held on the sidelines of the event along with trading negotiations room in which domestic and foreign manufacturers have the opportunity to share ideas or open up fields of cooperation.

At the opening ceremony of the exhibition Police Chief Brigadier General Hossein Ashtari said that today, safety and peace in society cannot be achieved without the use of advanced equipment and technologies.

Technological development has a direct impact on the community's security; so using technological advances is a must, he added.

He went on to state that new technologies help to institutionalize legal behavior, social discipline while changing lifestyle and consumption patterns.

The event provides an opportunity for inventors and researchers to easily present their achievements, he concluded.

The exhibition, measuring 15,600 square meters, comprises 320 booths, with 312 companies as well as 21 representatives from countries around the world.

Some 62 domestic inventions from the provinces of East Azarbaijan, West Azarbaijan, Fars, Mazandaran, Ardebil, Tehran, Gilan, Markazi and Kordestan are present at the exhibition.

The IPAS exhibition runs until October 3.

WORDS IN THE NEWS

The Northern Alliance takes Kabul

(November 14, 2001)
The Northern Alliance has entered Kabul. The international community has a mixed reaction about this development. This report from Abbas Nadir in Islamabad. Many in Pakistan see the entry into Kabul of Northern Alliance forces as a **betrayal** by the United States. They are quick to point to the **initial reaction** by the Pentagon that expressed **unreserved glee** at the development. Only three days ago, they say, President Bush appeared to be **endorsing** General Musharraf's call for the Northern Alliance to stay out of Kabul until a **broad-based administration** was **in place**. A Pakistan Foreign Ministry spokesman warned that if the Northern Alliance is allowed to form a Government in Kabul, the **civil war** in Afghanistan would continue, **dashing all hopes** of peace.

Words
betrayal: 'an act of betrayal' is when someone who you thought was a friend does something to harm you
initial reaction: first response
unreserved glee: unrestricted joy or happiness
endorsing: supporting
broad-based administration: a government made up of many different political groups
in place: set up
civil war: opposing armies of the same nationality fighting against each other
dashing all hopes: ruining any possibility (of peace)

(Source: BBC)

Ecosystem management best way to protect forests: expert

ENVIRONMENT **TEHRAN** — Ecosystem management is the best way to protect forests, land, water and biological resources, Ahmad Nouhegar, University of Tehran faculty member, has said.

Ecosystem management is a process that aims to conserve major ecological services and restore natural resources while meeting the socioeconomic, political, and cultural needs of current and future generations.

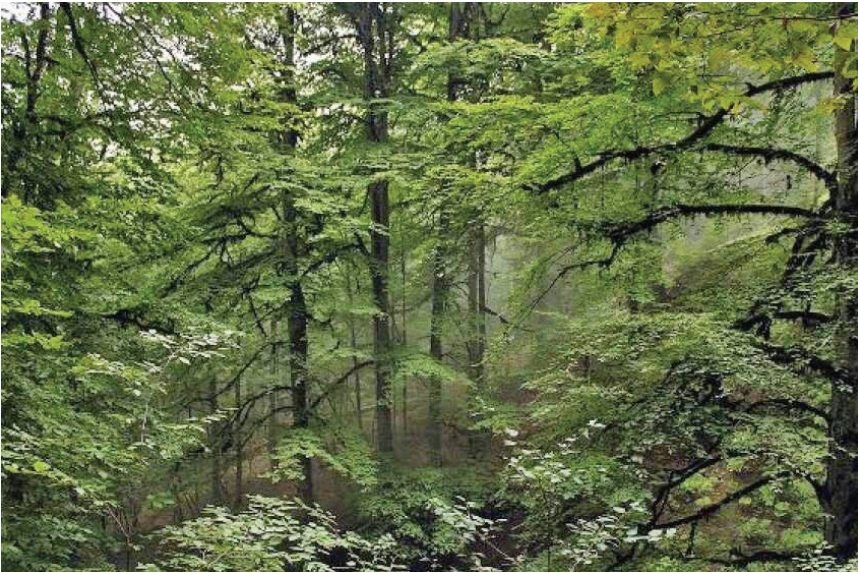
The principal objective of ecosystem management is the efficient maintenance and ethical use of natural resources, which is a multifaceted and holistic approach that requires a significant change in how the natural and human environments are identified.

Several approaches to effective ecosystem management engage conservation efforts at both local and landscape levels and involves adaptive management, natural resource management, strategic management, command and control management.

"This type of management is the way to sustainability and fair use of nature," Nouhegar noted, ISNA news agency reported on Monday.

"In ecosystem management, people and their lives are the most important factors in decision making," he said, adding that using ecosystem management to preserve the ecosystem leads to increased quality of life. "This is what makes it different from the traditional perspective."

The destruction of only a forest bush can have devastating effects, so the disappearance of vegetation or wildlife can result in human



disappearance which cannot be renewed. To do so, creative plans and functions are needed to protect the forests, he explained.

He went on to say that the Hyrcanian forests have been finally designated as a World Heritage site by UNESCO, it however requires further efforts to preserve the valuable heritage for future generations.

"This protection requires a new stronger tool and database. People are the main beneficiaries and need to be trained with a new forest conservation method because education and proper behavior can lead

to forest development and conservation," Nouhegar stressed.

Referring to the wildfires haunting the precious forests like Arasbaran, he emphasized that "We inevitably have to technological advances to protect forests and natural resources against natural or man-caused accidents such as fires."

Massive wildfire swept through protected areas of northwestern Arasbaran forests on August 20, which was burning the forest for over a week.

"There is no need neither for walls to

protect the forest nor for building a fence. The only protection way is to use applied research."

Referring to the destruction of more than 2 million hectares of forests over the last half of the century, he said that water and soil are the main capital for a country, one of the best ways to protect them is respecting the forest and nature.

Reza Bayani, an official with Forests, Range and Watershed Management Organization, said in April that approximately 12,000 hectares of forests across Iran is wiped out annually.

Referring to illegal logging as the leading cause of forest degradation, Bayani noted that timber smuggling steadily proceeding in the forests poses a serious threat to the country's ecology for a minor population benefits.

Yousefali Ebrahimpour, commander of the protection unit of natural resources and watershed management department of West Azarbaijan province, said in February that over 450 tons of smuggled log has been seized in the forests in the province, which were being smuggled to the northern provinces of the country.

According to climateandweather.net, forests store up to 100 times more carbon than agricultural fields of the same area, it is estimated that more than 1.5 billion tons of carbon dioxide are released to the atmosphere due to deforestation, mainly the cutting and burning of forests, every year.

Over 30 million acres of forests and woodlands are lost every year due to deforestation.

Stem cell donation centers to be set up nationwide

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — Stem cell donation centers will be established in all provinces across the country, Health Minister Saeed Namaki has said.

"Both stem cell transplant and medication are expensive, but with the support of insurance, we tried to reduce the prices for transplant recipients," he added.

He made the remarks in Tehran on Sunday on the occasion of World Marrow Donor Day, which is celebrated on the third Saturday of September worldwide.

The event was held on September 21 this year in 50 countries from around the world.

"Although we have difficulties supplying low-cost but profitable treatment such as vaccination, costly treatments have not been abandoned," Namaki said.

Referring to the high costs of transplantation in the world, he noted that Iran's progress in this field is considerable to the extent that even European recipients come to Iran for liver transplant.

Stem cells are not only used to treat leukemia (blood cancer) but to treat other severe illnesses, the minister said.

He also stated that establishment of a stem cell bank can be an important step, adding, as it would play a significant role in the health system even in the field of research.

Namaki further called on people and NGOs to help strengthen the stem cell bank and praised all the donors, artists and the media for their contributions in this regard.

■ How stem cells can cure illnesses?

Stem cells are the "parent" cells from which all other blood cells develop. These are mainly red blood cells, platelets and white blood cells. Bone marrow, the factory that produces stem cells, is a soft tissue inside bones like the breastbone or hip bone.

Stem cells are found in the brain, blood vessels, skeletal muscles, skin, the liver and bone marrow, peripheral (circulating) blood and the umbilical cord blood of newborn babies.

Usually very severe illnesses like leukemia, other cancers and hereditary diseases are treated by marrow transplant.

■ Stem cell donation process

The transplanted stem cells should resemble the

patient's stem cells as closely as possible. Because cell characteristics are inherited, it starts by looking for a compatible donor, whose genetic markers are a close enough match to those of the patient, within the family, usually among the brothers and sisters.

These tissue markers are found on all the body's cells, including stem cells. If the donor's and recipient's markers are not sufficiently alike, a transplant cannot be performed because it would not work.

The chance of finding a compatible donor in the family is about 25 percent, or 1 in 4. However, the odds of finding a compatible donor are much lower than in the family: 1 in 450 to 1 in 750,000.

Because there is very little chance of finding a compatible donor outside the patient's family, a list of an enormous number of people whose human leukocyte antigen (HLA) characteristics have been analyzed and who could ultimately agree to donate stem cells for a patient is required which will be achieved by stem cell donation centers.

Persian leopard's global range



sian leopard occurs in the central highland regions of Afghanistan, such as the Hindu Kush and the Wakhan Corridor, but at very low numbers.

4) Azerbaijan: approximately 15 Persian leopards occur in the Hyrcan National Park in the Talysh Mountains and the Zangezur National Park in the Nakhchivan/Azerbaijan-Southern Armenia sector.

5) Iraq: there may be as many as 10 Persian leopards in the mountainous

areas of northeastern Iraq's Kurdistan region along the border with Iran and Turkey.

6) The Russian Federation: totally, no more than 10 Persian leopards inhabit four places in Russian Federation: a) Assa River Valley in Ingushetia, b) Armkhi River Valley in Ossetia, c) Andiskoye Koysu and Avarskoye Koysu headwaters in Dagestan, and d) Sharoargun and Argun river valleys in Chechnya.

7) Armenia: fewer than 10 individual leopards are restricted to the Zangezur Mountains that defines the border between Armenia's southern province of Syunik and Azerbaijan's Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic.

8) Turkey: there may be fewer than 5 Persian leopards in Turkey. The leopard lives in the southeastern frontier region of Anatolia in areas close to the eastern or northeastern Turkish border.

9) Georgia: there are very few Persian leopards (i.e., fewer than 5 individuals) left in the wild in this country.

10) Pakistan: the regions located to the west of the Indus River in Swat, Dir, Indus Kohistan, and Baluchistan are believed to hold an unknown number of Persian leopards in Pakistan.

11) Tajikistan and Uzbekistan: if the leopard is present in Uzbekistan, there could be as many as 10 individuals in the Babatag Mountains and the Kugitang Mountains in the far southeastern region of Uzbekistan bordering Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → ج

11m ha of plains require aquifer, watershed management

Some 11 million hectares of the country's plains need watershed and aquifer management plans, so they must be prepared in this regard, director of watershed management at Forests, Rangelands, and Watershed Management Organization has said.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“bi-, bin-, bis-”

■ **Meaning:** two or twice

■ **For example:** *Biscuit* comes from the French meaning twice-cooked.

PHRASAL VERB

Opt in

■ **Explanation:** to decide to join a group or system

■ **For example:** Employees have the choice to opt in to the scheme.

IDIOM

Cross your mind

■ **Explanation:** If an idea or thought crosses your mind, you suddenly think of it

■ **For example:** It just crossed my mind that the shops are closed today.

یازده میلیون هکتار از دشت‌های کشور نیازمند آبخوانداری است

معاون آبخیزداری، مراتع و بیابان سازمان جنگلها و مراتع و آبخیزداری، گفت: یازده میلیون هکتار از دشت‌های کشور نیازمند اجرای طرح‌های آبخیزداری و آبخوانداری است.

Israel responsible for attacks on Popular Mobilization Units: Iraqi PM

TEHRAN — Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi has held the Israeli regime responsible for a string of attacks on the positions of the pro-government Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), following investigations into recent assaults on the voluntary forces.

“Investigations into the targeting of some Popular Mobilization Forces positions indicate that Israel carried it out,” Abdul-Mahdi said in an interview with the Doha-based Arabic-language al-Jazeera television news network on Monday.

Earlier this month, the air defenses of the Popular Mobilization Units, better known by the Arabic name Hashd al-Sha’abi, thwarted an airstrike by an “unidentified” drone on a main military base in Iraq’s north-central province of Salahuddin.

The Salahuddin Operations Command Center of the volunteer forces announced in a statement on September 11 that missile defense systems fired shots at the aircraft as it was flying over the headquarters of the 35th Brigade of the fighters.

The statement said the shots forced the aircraft to leave the area to an unknown location.

Back on September 5, the second-in-command of the Popular Mobilization Unitsm Jamal Jafar Mohammed Al Ebrahim, better known by the nom de guerre Abu Mahdi al-Mohandes, issued an administrative order, declaring the formation of the forces’ Air Force Directorate,



and appointing Salah Mahdi Hantous as its chief.

A week earlier, Ahmad al-Assadi, spokesman of the Fatah Alliance, a parliamentary bloc representing the PMU, told journalists that the Baghdad government was preparing a complaint to the United Nations against Israel over attacks on the positions of Hashd al-Sha’abi.

“Some of the government investigations have reached a conclusion that the perpetrator behind some of the attacks is absolutely,

certainly Israel,” he said, declining to provide details on the evidence.

“The government is preparing sufficient evidence and documents to complain to the [UN] Security Council. It won’t submit a complaint against an unknown entity,” Assadi said.

Iraq’s military said on August 26 that it had launched an investigation into a purported Israeli strike that killed two Hashd al-Sha’abi fighters near the town of al-Qa’im close to the country’s western border with Syria.

Sayfal-Badr, the spokesman for the Iraqi Health Ministry, said in a statement that at least one person was killed and 29 others were wounded in a powerful explosion that rocked a military base in southern Baghdad on August 12.

An ammunition warehouse reportedly exploded inside a federal police military base, named Falcon, in Owerij area near the southern district of Doura.

According to Prss TV, Al-Ahad television network reported on July 19 that a drone had dropped explosives onto a base belonging to the Popular Mobilization Units near the town of Amerli in the early hours of the day, killing at least one PMU fighter and injuring four others.

Additionally, the Iraqi al-Etejah television network reported that an American B350 reconnaissance plane had flown over the area a few days earlier.

The Israeli regime has also a record of attacking the forces fighting Daesh terrorists in Syria.

In June 2018, Hashd al-Sha’abi fighters came under attack in Syria’s border town of al-Hari, in the eastern province of Dayr al-Zawr, as they were chasing Daesh terrorists out of the area.

Both the Syrian government and Hashd al-Sha’abi declared back then that the attack near the Iraqi-Syrian border had been deliberate and could only have been carried out by either Israel or the United States.

Abdullah Abdullah claims victory in Afghanistan election

TEHRAN — Abdullah Abdullah, Afghanistan’s chief executive and President Ashraf Ghani’s top rival, has claimed victory after the first round of voting in the presidential election over the weekend, though official counting is still under way.

“We have the most votes in this election,” Abdullah said at a news conference on Monday.

“The results will be announced by the IEC [Independent Election Commission], but we have the most votes. The election is not going to go to a second round.”

Abdullah, who is seeking the presidency for the third time after losing in 2009 and 2014, said his team would “make the new government”.

Abdullah has shared power with Ghani over the past five years in a so-called unity government formed by the United States in the wake of allegations of widespread fraud and corruption in the 2014 polls.

■ Electoral body slams Abdullah

Senior IEC official Habib Rahman Nang immediately slammed Abdullah’s announcement as premature.

“No candidate has the right to declare himself the win-

ner,” he said. “According to the law, it is the IEC that decides who is the winner.”

Results are not expected until October 19. Candidates need more than 50 percent of the vote to be declared an outright winner, or else the top two will head for a second round in November.

The vote held on Saturday saw a low turnout because of the threat of attacks, a muted campaign and concerns over fraud.

Election officials have said the result would be the purest yet, with equipment such as biometric fingerprint readers and better training for poll workers ensuring the vote was fair.

However, Abdullah claimed in Monday’s remarks that “some government officials” meddled in the election process. He did not give any details on his allegation.

His remarks follow the release on social media of several videos purporting to show election workers stuffing ballots.

According to Al Jazeera, United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres earlier commended “all Afghans who exercised their democratic voice”, and “congratulates them



on their commitment to selecting their leaders through the ballot box.”

Authorities heralded Saturday’s election as a success because the Taliban was unable to pull off a large-scale attack resulting in high casualty numbers, and there were fewer technical difficulties than some had feared.

U.S. military base, Italian military convoy attacked in Somalia

TEHRAN — Separate attacks have targeted a U.S. military base in the Somali town of Baledogle and a European military convoy in the capital, Mogadishu.

A bomb attack was followed by a gun battle at a base operated by U.S. special forces on Monday, a security source told Reuters news agency.

The Somali armed group al-Shabab claimed responsibility for the attack at the Balidogle base located in the Lower Shabelle region, about 100km (60 miles) west of Mogadishu.

“Two heavy explosions occurred, the first one bigger than the other. There was also a heavy exchange of gunfire after the blasts but we don’t know about the details,” Mohamed Adan, a Somali elder close to the scene of the attack, told AFP news agency by phone.

Al Jazeera’s Malcolm Webb, reporting from neighboring Kenya, said the first attack targeted the base, housing U.S. troops and Somali soldiers, used to carry out drone attacks on the al-Shabab group.

In a separate incident, a security official

said European Union (EU) advisers training the Somali National Army were attacked using a car bomb in Mogadishu.

Italy’s defense ministry in a statement confirmed that an Italian military convoy was hit by an explosion.

No injuries have been reported so far, the defense ministry said.

“There was a car bomb targeting the EU military advisers along the industrial road. A vehicle loaded with explosive was rammed onto one of the convoy vehicles and there are casualties,” said Omar Abikar, a Somali

security officer.

Al Jazeera’s Webb added that an improvised device was used to target the Italian convoy, which has been guarding the EU team.

According to Al Jazeera, the EU has been training the Somali national army, among other activities, he said.

“The attack happened as Mogadishu was under a lockdown due to a high-level meeting at the UN headquarters. And it’s believed the convoy may have been coming to or from that meeting,” Webb said, reporting from Nanyuki.

World leaders, Putin attend funeral of France’s Jacques Chirac

TEHRAN — About 30 foreign leaders, including Russian president Vladimir Putin, gathered Monday in the French capital for the funeral of former president Jacques Chirac, who died last week aged 86.

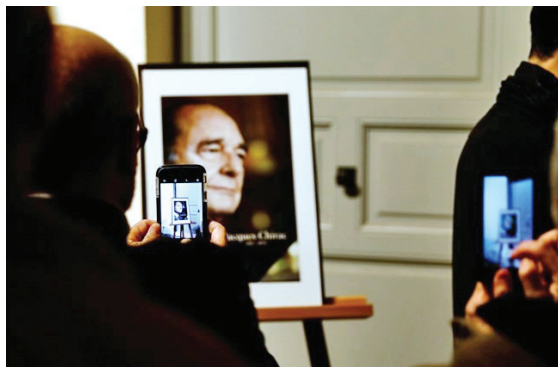
Russian President Vladimir Putin was set to be the highest-profile foreign leader at a tribute to late French head of state Jacques Chirac, as Paris seeks to improve relations with Moscow.

Putin once described Chirac as the world leader he most admired, and hailed him as a “wise and far-sighted statesman” following his death last week.

Ties between Moscow and Paris — and Europe in general — have however become increasingly strained over the years since Chirac left the Elysee in 2007.

French President Emmanuel Macron has in recent months launched a diplomatic push to reverse this trend, hosting Putin in southern France in August and renewing

high-level diplomatic contacts. The Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri left for Paris



high-level diplomatic contacts.

The Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri left for Paris

Sunday to represent Lebanon.

Chirac was feted by many French people for asserting the country’s role as a global player and for opposing the 2003 invasion of Iraq, while a conviction after he left office for misusing public funds did little to tarnish his image.

Military honours will be paid to Chirac at the Hotel des Invalides in central Paris, where he has been lying in state, before his coffin is taken in a procession to the church of Saint Sulpice.

There, the visiting heads of state and government will join French dignitaries at a funeral ceremony. Later, French President Emmanuel Macron will host the visiting leaders at a lunch at the Elysee Palace. Much of France’s current political class will attend Monday’s service, with the exception of far-right leader Marine Le Pen who pulled out after the Chirac family opposed her presence.

Six-day sacred defense exhibition in Qom ends in all its glory

➔ “Just be careful, the tank’s gun is still hot!” said the guard, as I showed my press pass requesting a photo.

Though the operation show was just one part of the exhibition, it was definitely the most vibrant. There were booths for different soldiers who had served in the

Iran-Iraq war, bookstalls, play-areas and more. The purpose of this exhibition was to highlight show the youth and the civilians, who might have never witnessed a military operation before, what it was like to be in the battlefield to defend one’s country. Named as the ‘Holy Defense Week’, these

six days are a time for the Iranians to commemorate the 8-year long war that was imposed on the nascent Islamic Republic back in 1980. Though Iran was successful in defending its borders, there were many, many casualties, with some of the martyrs’ bodies were buried under debris and not

recovered until recently.

This whole week, starting from the 31st of the Iranian month of Shahrivar, this week is full of activities, exhibitions, camps, workshops and conferences dedicated to the commemoration of ‘the Holy Defense’.

Following deadly fire, Greece plans to step up migrant deportation

TEHRAN — The Greek government has said Monday that it aims to deport 10,000 migrants by the end of next year, following a deadly fire and clashes at its biggest migrant camp which is massively overcrowded.

A woman was killed on Sunday in a blaze which broke out in the Moria camp on Lesbos island. The fire, the cause of which remains unknown, quickly escalated into clashes between asylum-seekers and

police. More than a dozen people were hurt.

Moria has mushroomed into the size of a small town of at least 12,000 people, four times its capacity, according to official figures. Violence is common but Sunday’s clashes were the most serious in many months and came as Greece deals with a resurgence in migrant and refugee flows from Turkey.

“We are really going through a national crisis,” Deputy

Citizen’s Protection Minister Lefteris Economou told reporters on Lesbos.

As well as increasing deportations, the government decided at a cabinet meeting on Monday to tighten its borders and build what it called “closed centers” for undocumented migrants and rejected asylum-seekers who are to be deported, government spokesman Stelios Petsas said.

Yemen Houthis free 350 detainees, reviving hopes for talks

➔ “The 350 prisoners ... are included in the prisoner lists of the Sweden deal,” Mortada said in a press conference.

According to the report, the prisoners will be released under the supervision of the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

Mortada noted that the Ansarullah movement launched the initiative due to the big delay in the implementation of the prisoner swap deal.

He said the forces of the Saudi-led coalition are continuously hindering the deal through rejecting all the initiatives and proposals put forward by the UN special envoy for Yemen Martin Griffiths who welcomed the Houthi move on Monday.

It is the latest goodwill gesture from the Ansarullah movement which called for a cessation of strikes earlier this month.

President of the Supreme Political Council in the Yemeni capital Mahdi al-Mashat on September 20 said the Ansarullah movement would stop targeting Saudi territories with drones and ballistic missiles, hoping Riyadh would reciprocate the gesture. Mashat on Wednesday reiterated the Yemeni forces’ willingness to end hostilities with Saudi Arabia provided that the kingdom stops its years-long aggression against the impoverished country.

He regretted the fact that the Saudis “irresponsibly” continue to pound various parts of Yemen even after the Houthis put forth their peace offer.

Saudi Arabia and a number of its allies launched a devastating campaign against Yemen in March 2015, with the goal of bringing a former regime back to power.

The US-based Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), a nonprofit conflict-research organization, estimates that the war has claimed more than 91,000 over the past four and a half years.

The war has also taken a heavy toll on the country’s infrastructure, destroying hospitals, schools, and factories. The UN says over 24 million Yemenis are in dire need of humanitarian aid, including 10 million suffering from extreme levels of hunger.

Iraq reopens al-Qa’im border crossing with Syria

TEHRAN — Syrian and Iraqi authorities have re-opened a major border crossing between the two countries, which was seized by the ISII (Daesh) terrorist group in 2014.

The border crossing, which lies on a vital highway connecting Baghdad and Damascus, opened to people and goods on Monday.

Last week, Iraqi Prime Minister Adil Abdul-Mahdi authorized the re-opening of the al-Qa’im border crossing with Syria after both countries managed to restore security to the region.

The crossing connects the town of al-Qa’im in Iraq’s Anbar Province to the Syrian city of Bukamal in Syria’s Dayr al-Zawr Province.

Al-Qa’im and Bukamal lie on a strategic supply route and the crossing between them had only been open to government or military traffic.

The opening of the border crossing comes as both Syrian and Iraqi governments have mostly purged their countries of Takfiri terrorist outfits. Daesh unleashed a campaign of death and destruction in Iraq and Syria in 2014, overrunning vast swathes in lightning attacks. Iraqi army soldiers and allied fighters then launched operations to eliminate the terror outfit and retake lost territory.

In December 2017, Iraq declared the end of the anti-Daesh campaign. The group’s remnants, though, keep staging sporadic attacks across Iraq. In November of the same year, the Syrian army purged al-Bukamal and its surrounding areas of the remnants of Daesh terrorists.

Erdogan: Khashoggi murder serious threat to world order

TEHRAN — The killing of Saudi columnist Jamal Khashoggi has posed “a serious threat to the international order”, according to Turkey’s President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

A year after Khashoggi was killed inside the Saudi consulate in Istanbul, Erdogan said the murder “was arguably the most influential and controversial incident of the 21st century”.

“That, one year on, the international community still knows very little about what happened is a serious source of concern. Whether all aspects of the Saudi journalist’s death will ever come to light will determine what kind of world our children live in,” Erdogan wrote in an opinion article published by the Washington Post on Sunday. The Turkish president suggested the killing was carried out by agents of a “shadow state” in Saudi Arabia.

“My administration ... made a clear and unmistakable distinction between the thugs who murdered Khashoggi and King Salman and his loyal subjects,” he said.

According to Al Jazeera, Erdogan said Turkey continued to see Saudi Arabia as a friend and ally, but that it did not mean Ankara would remain silent.

Bolton says N. Korea has no intention to give up nuclear weapons

TEHRAN — North Korea has no intention to give up its nuclear weapons, and Pyongyang benefits from stalling in its stand-off with Washington, U.S. President Donald Trump’s ousted national security adviser John Bolton said in a speech on Monday.

“It seems to be clear that the DPRK has not made a strategic decision to give up its nuclear weapons. In fact, I think the contrary is true,” Bolton, a hardliner towards North Korea and Iran who was fired by Trump three weeks ago, said at Washington’s Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Under current circumstances, Bolton said, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un “will never give up the nuclear weapons voluntarily.”

In firing Bolton, Trump said he “disagreed strongly with many of his suggestions”. Trump has met Kim to negotiate North Korea giving up its nuclear weapons. Bolton, a leading foreign policy hawk and Trump’s third national security adviser, had pressed the president not to let up pressure on North Korea despite diplomatic efforts.

In his speech to the Washington think tank, Bolton issued a litany of warnings about how Washington was handling the North Korea threat, from sanctions not being enforced effectively and U.S. complacency about Pyongyang’s missile testing to suspension of “war games” with South Korea. “I think right now we are in a classic standoff with North Korea,” Bolton said. “They want a piece of something that we should not be prepared to give them.”

According to Reuters, Bolton, a chief architect of Trump’s strident stance against Iran, had also argued against Trump’s suggestions of a possible meeting with the Iranian leadership and advocated a tougher approach on Russia and, more recently, Afghanistan. “Time works against those who oppose nuclear proliferation and a relaxed attitude to time is a benefit to the likes of North Korea and Iran,” he said.

Djokovic finds fitness is no match for flab in sumo workout

Novak Djokovic may be one of the fittest athletes in the world but the world number one wrestled with rare feelings of being hopelessly out of shape during a workout with retired sumo professionals on Monday.

The 32-year-old Serb, who is in Tokyo to play in the Japan Open Tennis Championships, visited a traditional dohyo or a sumo ring to watch the wrestlers during their morning practice before unsuccessfully attempting to make one of them budge.

"I felt I'm out of shape (for sumo) a little bit ... with a few more kilos, I'll be ready to compete. Probably three times as much as I have right now would be the right measurement for me to compete," Djokovic told the ATP website.

"It's quite impressive to see also how flexible they are ... I didn't think that they were that flexible considering it's a heavyweight sport.

"But I see that they are paying a lot of attention to the mobility of their joints ... which is of course what allows them to move around as agile as possible at their weight."

Djokovic, who plays Australian Alexei Popyrin in the first round on Tuesday, recalled watching yokozuna Akebono who became sumo's first foreign-born grand champion in 1993.

"It's a great experience ... one of the most popular sports in Japan. Speaking with my father yesterday on the phone I was telling him that I'm going to have an opportunity to meet sumo wrestlers," 16-times Grand Slam singles champion Djokovic added.

"He and I were remembering many years ago when we used to watch Akebono ... someone we supported a lot."

(Source: Reuters)

Sarri says Juve need to 'lighten up' in Champions League quest

Juventus coach Maurizio Sarri believes his side need to enjoy themselves more if they are going to have any chance of ending their 24-year wait for the Champions League trophy.

The 60-year-old Sarri will oversee his first Champions League match at home in the Allianz Stadium on Tuesday.

Juventus host Bayer Leverkusen in their second Group D clash, having being held 2-2 at Atletico Madrid in their opener.

"The Champions League is really the top for a player and coach, but at the same time we should also have fun," Sarri told a pre-match press conference in Turin.

"At the moment it's difficult for Italian teams to be among the favourites. English teams are favourites for obvious reasons but we should be easier on ourselves.

"The idea is to really cheer up a little bit. Our goal is to go all the way until the Champions League final but it's a competition that can only be determined in certain moments. I'm expecting a good result tomorrow."

- Dangerous Leverkusen -
The eight-time reigning Italian champions are unbeaten so far this season.

They are up against a Bayer Leverkusen, who finished fourth in the Bundesliga last season, and are sixth this term.

The Germans slumped to a surprise 2-1 defeat at home against Lokomotiv Moscow in their opener. Leverkusen won 3-1 the last time the two teams met in 2001-02, when the Germans reached the final.

Sarri said he would make his team selection after training on Monday, deciding who would play up front alongside Cristiano Ronaldo.

(Source: AFP)

World Rugby apologizes to Georgia for playing Russian song after win

World Rugby apologized to Georgia for playing a Russian song following their 33-7 World Cup win over Uruguay on Sunday after their coach and captain brought up the issue during the post-match news conference.

"I want to take this moment to ask the person who played the Russian music, next time don't make the mistake again please," skipper Jaba Bregvadze told reporters following their Pool D victory in Kumagaya.

Coach Milton Haig explained that his team had not taken too kindly to the error by the organizers.

"They were playing a song after the match, it was a Russian song - sung by a Georgian singer but a Russian song. We want to make it clear Russia is not Georgia and Georgia is not Russia," the 55-year-old said.

"We have a different language, different culture, different everything so to World Rugby, make sure to get this ironed out for us please."

A World Rugby spokesperson said that the governing body was sorry for any embarrassment caused to Georgia.

"Sincere apologies to our friends from Georgia for any embarrassment caused. We have discussed the matter with the organizing committee to ensure no such issues occur moving forward," the organizers said in a statement on Monday.

(Source: Eurosport)

Coach sacked over Thunberg insult

Serie D club Grosseto have sacked youth coach Tommaso Casalini after he said 16-year-old activist Greta Thunberg could "take a pounding".

Thunberg has become a global figure for taking a stand on climate change, but her actions provoked a vile response from Casalini, who had been assistant Coach of Grosseto's Giovanissimi A team.

"A 16-year-old can take a pounding, she's at the right age," he wrote on Facebook.

That was followed by the non-League side announcing they had dismissed the trainer for "not acting in line with the club, who focus on moral values even more than technical values."

Casalini later issued a grovelling apology for his remarks.

"I'd like to publicly apologize to everyone, starting with Greta Thunberg, for the post I wrote on Facebook last week.

"It was an outburst written in a moment of anger against the young Swedish activist with absolutely the wrong language and content I regret.

"I never thought or could never have really thought about certain things, especially a minor. However, when you make a mistake then it's only right that you take responsibility for your mistakes.

"Therefore I willingly accept Grosseto's decision to remove me from my role as assistant Coach of the Giovanissimi A, and I apologize to the club for the obvious embarrassment caused by my gesture."

(Source: Football Italia)

Mothers day as Fraser-Pryce, Felix seal record golds at Worlds

Jamaican sprint queen Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce surged to an unprecedented fourth 100m crown and US legend Allyson Felix broke Usain Bolt's gold medal record tally as the returning new mothers lit up the World Championships here Sunday.

Fraser-Pryce and Felix, both racing in their first major championships since taking time off from the sport to have children, lit up a pulsating day three of competition even if the action was played out inside a near-empty Khalifa Stadium.

The 32-year-old Fraser-Pryce, who skipped the 2017 championships to give birth to her first child, delivered a barnstorming run to take the 100m in 10.71sec.

Britain's Dina Asher-Smith took silver with a time of 10.83sec while Ivory Coast's Marie-Josée Ta Lou claimed bronze in 10.90sec.

"To be standing here as world champion again after having my baby, I am elated," said Fraser-Pryce.

"The females keep showing up. We love to put on a performance and for me I am just really happy to come away with the win."

Fraser-Pryce was in control from the gun, rocketing out of the blocks and taking the lead in the opening 20 metres.

From that point there was only going to be one winner, and the veteran Jamaican swept over the line majestically to add to the world titles won in 2009, 2013 and 2015 before setting off on a victory lap carrying her two-year-old



son Zion.

The two-time Olympic champion's dominant display was the highlight of a day three which also saw US track queen Felix win a record 12th World Championship gold medal.

Felix only returned to the sport in July after a 13-month layoff which saw her give birth to her daughter Camryn by emergency C-section last November.

The 33-year-old, who failed to qualify for the individual 400m event in Doha, took gold

in the 4x400m mixed relay as the United States motored to victory in a world record time of 3min 09.34sec.

Felix's 12th gold medal broke Jamaican legend Bolt's record tally of 11 World Championship gold medals.

Record haul

Overall, Felix now has an incredible 26 medals, a dazzling haul that also includes six Olympic golds.

Felix, competing in her ninth straight world

championships, has accumulated more World Championship and Olympic honours than any other track and field athlete in history.

"So special, to have my daughter here watching means the world to me," Felix said afterwards. "It's been a crazy year for me."

Felix later paid tribute to the support of Fraser-Pryce as she worked her way back to fitness this season.

"We've talked a lot this year and been there for each other," Felix said. "She's been an amazing support. I'm just thrilled to see her back on top and better than ever, and I hope that is an inspiration to others. I know that she's an inspiration to me."

There was another victory for a returning mother in the final event of the day, the women's 20km race walk, where China's 2016 Olympic champion Liu Hong won gold.

Liu, 32, who took a maternity break from 2017-2018, shrugged off steamy heat and humidity to lead a Chinese sweep of the medals in 1hr 32min 53sec and secure her third world title.

Qieyang Shenjie took silver in 1:33:10 while compatriot Yang Liuqing won bronze in 1:33:17.

Elsewhere Sunday, triple jump king Christian Taylor completed a superb hat-trick of World Championship titles after surviving near elimination in a nerve-jangling final.

The two-time Olympic champion and now four-time world champion clinched gold with a leap of 17.92m.

(Source: France 24)

Russian anti-doping chief calls for dismissal of state sports officials



The head of Russian anti-doping agency RUSADA has called for a full overhaul in the country's sports management that would include the dismissal of state officials involved in an ongoing doping scandal, a letter seen by Reuters shows.

RUSADA finds itself on the brink of suspension for the second time over alleged manipulation of anti-doping laboratory data which has sparked concern that the country's participation in next year's Tokyo Olympics could be at risk.

In a six-page open letter dated Monday, RUSADA Director General Yuri Ganus said the situation around Russian sport was tragic and that major changes in management were needed.

"Our sport deserves full membership in the international sports family, but first we need to remove the unacceptable approaches, methods and people who have driven it into a dead end and discredited it in the eyes of the world," Ganus wrote, without naming the officials he would like to see dismissed.

RUSADA was reinstated by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) last year after having been suspended since 2015 over evidence it was enabling drug cheats

in athletics rather than stopping them.

But last week WADA said it had uncovered inconsistencies in data from the Moscow anti-doping laboratory that had to be turned over as a condition for RUSADA's reinstatement. It gave Russia three weeks to explain.

Ganus said the situation showed Russian sport had been betrayed by those meant to reform it.

"We were betrayed, we were taken away the right to be on the side of truth," Ganus wrote. "It was taken away by those responsible for getting sport out of the doping crisis."

The laboratory data, which is not under RUSADA's jurisdiction, is needed to open doping cases from major events including the 2014 Sochi Olympics, where anti-doping officials said Russian authorities took part in an elaborate scheme to cover up doping tests.

Russia has denied running a state doping programme but has acknowledged that officials were involved in covering up doping cases.

Ganus said the approaches and methods used by Russian sports authorities are "weighing down on the situation".

(Source: Reuters)

Tensions escalate between Barça players and the club



Just one days before Barcelona make their home debut in this season's Champions League, the club finds itself heavily in the media spotlight for a supposed rupture between players and club directors. In Monday's edition of Sport, two pages are dedicated to the deterioration of the relationship between the dressing room and Bartomeu's board.

Sport report that the tension between the squad and top officials isn't new and refer to comments Leo Messi made about the club's attempts to re-sign Neymar over the summer: "I don't know to be honest if they did everything they possibly could [to sign him]. I didn't have a lot of information about how the negotiations went - only that they had spoken to Ney. He was keen to come back. I don't know if the club really wanted him back or not. I don't want to leave Barcelona - this is my home but I want to be part of a project which is capable of winning silverware"

Mundo Deportivo meanwhile highlighted Gerard Piqué's comments following Saturday's game against Getafe at the Coliseum. Those comments did not go down well in the back offices at Camp Nou - especially seeing as they came from one of the captains and that has only in-

creased the tension.

National daily El País leads their sports section with an article on the rupture at Barcelona. "The Barça squad received a bonus for every win and have pay deducted when they lose - a pact which hasn't been signed but is understood by both parties. It all came to light after the defeat at Anfield and now, apathy sets in once a game has been resolved - as we saw in Getafe because the balance at the end of the season isn't about how many trophies the team own anymore", Ramón Besa began his piece.

Gerard Piqué spoke about the situation after the Getafe game and the 'therapy dinner' that the squad held last Wednesday. "It was the team who organized the dinner. It's always nice to get together but we need to be united. When I say we need to be united, I am also talking about about the fans and the board of directors. We know the club and those of them who know us, we know who wrote certain articles - even though they were not signed. We don't want to get angry. We want to pull ourselves out of this and start winning again. We hope nobody tries to provoke battles where none exist - none of us want that. The club has to stay united."

(Source: AS)

Defense is king as Madrid go back to basics ahead of Brugge test

Real Madrid's revolution was supposed to be built around their attack but resilience has been the base for the recovery ahead of their Champions League group game at home to Club Brugge on Tuesday.

At the end of last season, as Zinedine Zidane's dreary run-in came to a close and paved the way for what many expected to be a spectacular summer, polls were published by Madrid's newspapers asking fans which of the world's deadliest strikers they hoped would arrive at the Santiago Bernabeu.

Harry Kane, Mohamed Salah, Sergio Aguero, Mauro Icardi and Robert Lewandowski were some of the names offered up and, in the end, Luka Jovic arrived, the Serbian who has struggled for starts so far and is yet to score a goal.

Eden Hazard is tasked too with helping fill the void left by Cristiano Ronaldo, even if the Belgian's own opening in Madrid has also been underwhelming, stalled by injury and now seemingly a period of adjustment.

"We would like him to score because it will release him," said Zidane on Saturday. "But there is no problem with him."

Yet the stalemate against Atletico Madrid, in which neither side ever looked likely to find a winner, was a stark indication of how Real Madrid have relied on their defense to ease the pressure on their coach.

"We have been compact and again we have not conceded," said Zidane after the derby draw. "We have missed a little offensively but we are in it and we can improve."

This is the first time Madrid have kept three consecutive



clean sheets in the league under Zidane and in the games against Sevilla, Osasuna and Atletico, they have had to cope with just a single shot on target.

"Defending is very important, it is the fundamentals," Zidane said.

The turnaround has been remarkable from Paris Saint-Germain, whose 3-0 win in the Champions League 10 days ago was Zidane's worst ever defeat as coach, as well as Levante and Villarreal, who had just scored twice against Madrid in the league.

When they were floundering last season, the focus was on their lack of goals but Madrid's defending was arguably just as problematic, with Sergio Ramos, Raphael Varane and Marcelo all woefully out of sorts.

After missing the loss to PSG, Ramos' return has coincided with the trio of clean sheets and his performances have been tighter too, more disciplined and less prone to extravagance.

Bale 'doing very well'

But perhaps the biggest gains have been made ahead of him, in central midfield where Zidane's options are light but boosted by two excellent displays from Fede Valverde, who was given a chance in the rotated line-up against Osasuna and impressed enough in defensive midfield to keep his place.

"I want to highlight Valverde as well," Zidane said after Osasuna. "He played a brutal match."

Ahead of Valverde, there has been more diligence from the front three, with Zidane singling out Gareth Bale for praise a handful of times since his move away failed to materialize in the summer transfer window.

Zidane's scepticism around Bale in the past has centered on a belief the Welshman cannot be trusted to defend but against Sevilla it was Bale who was at his own back post in injury time, hacking a cross clear from danger.

"Gareth is doing very well," Zidane said. "Above all he is also helping a lot in the defensive areas and it shows. The team is more comfortable when we all defend."

Perhaps as well, there is a sense of a team finding its reality after a fantasy summer, a coming to terms with the need to build this new era not on glamour signings but going back to basics.

(Source: AFP)

Iran look for first ever FIVB World Cup podium

1 → Iran volleyball technical staff have repeatedly said that their main is to secure a berth to 2020 Tokyo Olympics; the qualifications will be held in China's Jiangmen on January 7-12 where the team have to compete with top eight Asian rivals to win the event and secure their second presence in Olympics after 2016 Rio.

Hosts Japan and back-to-back World Championship winners Poland have qualified automatically, with the top two sides from each of the five continents joining them.

Brazil can expect competition from defending champions United States, the world number two side.

The Poles, who have never won the World Cup, are rated fourth in the world and will also be a threat.

World number three side Italy and record six-time champions Russia, ranked fifth, are other sides who will hope to challenge.

Canada, Argentina and Iran, ranked sixth, seventh and eighth in the world respectively, will also be in action in Japan.



Iran start IBSA Blind Football Asian Championships in style



S P O R T S TEHRAN — Iran football 5-a-side defeated Malaysia 4-0 at the IBSA Blind Football Asian Championships Group B on Monday. Behzad Zadaliasghari scored three goals and Vahid Rajabpour scored one in this match.

Team Melli will play Oman and Japan on Tuesday and Wednesday, respectively.

Reigning Asian champions and world number three China are in Group A

along with hosts Thailand, South Korea and newcomers India.

The 2019 IBSA Blind Football Asian Championships in being held in Pattaya, Thailand, from Sept. 30th to Oct. 7th.

The top two teams at the competition will qualify for the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games.

The 2019 Asian Championships are the 8th edition of the event, which took place for the first time in 2005 in Vietnam.

Persepolis into Hazfi Cup Round of 16



S P O R T S TEHRAN — Persepolis football team advanced to the Iran's Hazfi Cup Round of 16 thanks to a late goal from Vahid Amiri.

In the match held in Tabriz's Bon-yan Diesel Stadium, Amiri found the back of the net from close range in the dying moments of the match to give the visiting team a 1-0 win.

Persepolis Ali Alipour missed a

penalty at the 85th minute.

"I think Persepolis deserved to win because we were the better team. We defeated a strong team because they had defeated Esteghlal in their first match in the league," Persepolis coach Gabriel Calderon said.

The 2019-20 Hazfi Cup is the 33rd season of the Iranian football knockout competition and the final match will be held in Shiraz.

Education City Stadium to host FIFA Club World Cup Qatar 2019 final

Qatar will inaugurate the third of its eight FIFA World Cup 2022 stadiums when the Education City Stadium hosts the FIFA Club World Cup semi-final tie on December 18, FIFA said on Monday.

The 40,000-seat venue seven kilometers outside central Doha will also host the third-place play-off and the final of the tournament which gets underway on December 11.

The inaugural game will see Liverpool, as European champions, face either CONCACAF Champions League winners Monterrey, Al Sadd of Qatar or Hienghene Sport of New Caledonia who are Oceania champions.

The 2022 hosts have so far inaugurated the newly-built al-Janoub Stadium in May, as well as the Khalifa International Stadium which opened in 1976 and was relaunched in 2017 after a full refurbishment.

"With all three venues located a maximum of 12 kilometres from central Doha, the FIFA Club World Cup 2019 will provide a glimpse of Qatar's compact nature ahead of the FIFA World Cup 2022," FIFA said in a statement.



"Taking place around the same time of the year and with matches kicking off from 17:00 local time, this year's tournament will also give teams and fans alike the chance to experience Qatar's mild winter."

Average temperatures are expected to range between 15 and 24 celsius, it added.

Hassan Al Thawadi, Secretary General of the Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy, said following Al-Janoub's opening in May that two further new stadiums would be ready "by the end of this year (or) first quarter" 2020.

The exact date would depend on the timing of events to launch the two venues, he added.

"By 2021 all our stadiums will be ready," he said.

Situated in the heart of Education City – in the Al Rayyan district of Qatar – the Education City Stadium shall host FIFA World Cup matches up to the quarter-finals stage in 2022. Fans will be able to access the stadium using the Doha Metro Green Line, which is set to open in the coming weeks.

The design of Education City Stadium draws on the rich history of Islamic architecture, blended with striking modernity. The façade features triangles that form complex, diamond-like geometrical patterns which appear to change color depending on the sun's position.

(Source: the-afc)

Berlin crowns Marathon Majors winners

The Abbott World Marathon Majors – the world's elite series for marathon running – has crowned their Series XII Champions following Sunday's Berlin Marathon.

Manuela Schär of Switzerland achieved the unimaginable in the last 12 months – she powered through the finishing tape ahead of the pack at all seven races in the series one after the other from Berlin 2018 to Berlin 2019.

The victories included her world record-setting performance in the German capital last year, consecutive victories at the New York City Marathon and the Tokyo Marathon, and a maiden triumph in Chicago.

Schär's remarkable feat was also recognized with a specially created gold version of the Six Star finishers medal. Never before has an athlete won every race in succession.

Classic win in Berlin

Sunday's victory was classic Schär, building an early lead and never looking back. By halfway she was over two and a half minutes clear and as she crossed the line she was almost four minutes



away from the rest of the field, finishing in 1:38:07.

She was followed home by USA's Amanda McGrory. After a year out through injury, the University of Illinois athlete was delighted with her second place, and completed her full set of AbbottWMM races to earn the

coveted Six Star Medal.

Australia's Madison de Rozario came third to cement third place in the women's wheelchair leaderboard.

Silver Bullet takes gold

It was a Swiss double in Berlin as Marcel Hug pulled off a similarly dominant performance for his second win

of the Series XII campaign.

The Silver Bullet was clear of his rivals after 5km and cruised to win by over three and a half minutes. It was not enough to catch series leader Daniel Romanchuk, who was not racing in Berlin, but Hug will head to Chicago to start Series XIII in good form.

David Weir banished memories of a disappointing 2018 race in Berlin with second place ahead of last year's winner Brent Lakatos, who completes the top three in Series XII with the nine points gained in Germany.

Romanchuk takes Series XII

The men's wheelchair competition was one of the most memorable in the Series XII with a new champion being crowned in 21-year old Daniel Romanchuk from the USA.

Battling against a vastly experienced field at every Major, Romanchuk took the tape at four races this series: Chicago, New York, Boston and London. He became the first ever USA athlete to win the wheelchair race in New York and Boston.

(Source: Paralympic)

Iran to send 17 athletes to ANOC World Beach Games

IRNA — Iran will send 17 athletes to the Association of National Olympic Committees (ANOC) World Beach Games in Doha, Qatar.

Iran will participate in four events, namely: beach soccer, bouldering, karate and wrestling with 15 sportsmen and two sportswomen.

The international beach multi-sport event is being organized by the ANOC and hosted by the Qatar Olympic Committee (QOC).

More than 1,300 athletes from around 90 countries are expected to participate in the event.

The competitions will be held from Oct. 12 to 16 in Qatar.

Iran Water Polo wins bronze at Asian Age Group C'ships

TASNIM — Iran water polo team claimed a bronze medal at the 10th edition of the AASF Asian Age Group Championships in Bangalore, India on Sunday.

Iran defeated Uzbekistan 11-4 and finished in third place in the round-robin format.

Japan won the title, followed by Kazakhstan in the tournament.

Iran started the competition with two losses against Japan and Kazakhstan but defeated India, Sri Lanka and China before beating Uzbekistan.

Spain court dismisses fraud case against Messi

Spain's National Court on Monday said it had dismissed a complaint against Barcelona's Lionel Messi filed by a former employee of the Argentine footballer's foundation, who had accused him of fraud, embezzlement and money laundering.

In dismissing the case, the judge wrote that the complaint "was based on an account put together from stories in the press, without bringing even a single element that was personally and directly known" by the plaintiff.



The complaint had been filed in June by Federico Rettori, an Argentine national living in Majorca who formerly worked for Messi's charity.

In it, he named the Barcelona striker, the charity, his father Jorge and brother Rodrigo and "all the people, as yet unidentified, who in one form or another administered or managed the funds at the Leo Messi Foundation," the document said.

He claimed that funds received by the foundation which "should have been directed to social causes" instead went "towards various private activities or bank accounts that differed from those that were declared by the foundation".

Last year, Rettori filed suit in Argentina on similar grounds. According to a judicial source, it prompted the opening of a preliminary investigation but so far, neither Messi nor his father have been charged.

(Source: AFP)

Arsenal block United States' approach for Joe Montemurro

The search for the next boss of the United States women's national team has hit a roadblock, with the United States Soccer Federation hampered in its attempts to interview Arsenal Women's head coach Joe Montemurro about the role, sources have told ESPN.

The USSF is currently in the midst of a search for a new head coach after Jill Ellis announced that she would be stepping down from the role following the conclusion of a series of "Victory Tour" matches being staged to celebrate the U.S. romping to their second-consecutive Women's World Cup in July.

Sources have told ESPN that the USSF identified and approached Montemurro -- who has expressed an interest in the role -- about interviewing for the vacant position but were prevented in doing so by his current employers, who signed the 50-year-old to a long-term contract extension in October of 2018.

In charge of Arsenal's WSL side since 2017, Montemurro rose to prominence as a coach in his native Australia when he steered Melbourne City to back-to-back W-League titles in the club's first two years in existence, including an undefeated season in 2015-16.

Named to the head coaching role at boyhood club Arsenal after the midseason sacking of Pedro Martínez Losa in 2017, Montemurro led the Gunners to the victory in the FA Women's League Cup and reached the final of the FA Women's FA Cup in his first season.

Handed a full offseason ahead of the 2018-19 campaign, Montemurro promptly guided his side to Champions League qualification and its first WSL title since 2012; earning WSL League Managers Association Coach of the Year honors and a nomination for FIFA World Women's Coach of the Year.

With three wins from three, Arsenal currently leads the WSL -- Europe's only fully professional women's league -- in what looms as a vitally important season for the competition as it looks to capitalize on the momentum generated by the success of England at the 2019 World Cup though new streaming, scheduling and prize money initiatives.

The Gunners defeated Brighton and Hove Albion 4-0 on matchday three to move them above title-rivals Manchester City, who defeated Everton 1-0, on goal difference.

(Source: ESPN)

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■ Managing Director: Mohammad Shojaeian
■ Editor-in-Chief: Mohammad Ghaderi

» Editorial Dept.: Fax: (+98 21) 88808214 — 88808895
editor@tehrantimes.com
» Switchboard Operator: Tel: (+98 21) 43051000
» Advertisements Dept.: Telefax: (+98 21) 43051450
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No. 18, Bimeh Alley, Nejatollahi St., Tehran, Iran
P.O. Box: 14155-4843
Zip Code: 1599814713





GUIDE TO
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Virtue is the basis of refraining from sin.
Imam Ali (AS)

Rendezvous with Madness Festival to screen Farmanara’s “Tale of the Sea”

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — “Tale of the Sea”, a psychodrama by Iranian director Bahman Farmanara, will go on screen at the 27th Rendezvous with Madness Festival (RWM) in Toronto, Canada.

The film centers on a writer who witnesses a brutal murder and spends three years in a mental institution. But after release, things are not as the writer thinks.



A scene from “Tale of the Sea” by Iranian director Bahman Farmanara.

The screening of the film will be followed by a review session with Iranian filmmakers Ali Saeidi and Aref Mohammadi and psychiatrist Kamran Bordbar.

The Rendezvous with Madness Festival is a multidisciplinary event that includes visual arts, performances, music, plays and films with the themes of mental health and addiction issues.

The festival, which is the first and largest mental health festival in the world, will be held from October 10 to 20.

Ardavan Jafarian selected for Intl. Music Council’s executive board

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iranian musician and music publisher Ardavan Jafarian has been elected as a new member of the Executive Board of the International Music Council (IMC), the Persian service of ISNA reported on Monday.



Iranian musician Ardavan Jafarian in an undated photo.

Founded in 1949 by UNESCO, the International Music Council (IMC) is the world’s largest network of organizations and institutions working in the field of music.

The council promotes access to music for all and the value of music in the lives of all peoples.

Through its members and their networks, the IMC has direct access to over 1000 organizations in some 150 countries and to 200 million people eager to develop and share knowledge and experience on diverse aspects of musical life.

Russian theater and film director Mark Zakharov dies at 85

MOSCOW (AP) — Mark Zakharov, a renowned Russian theater and film director whose productions were widely acclaimed and loved by several generations of Russians, has died. He was 85.

Zakharov died in Moscow on Saturday, according to the Lenkom Theatre, which he had led for more than four decades. The theater’s chief administrator, Mark Varshaver, said Zakharov died of pneumonia.

Born in Moscow, Zakharov graduated from the capital’s leading theater school in 1955 and worked as an actor for a decade before he became a stage director. He served as the Lenkom Theatre’s director from 1973 until his death.

Many of Zakharov’s theater productions become iconic. He also gained fame as a film director.

In a condolence letter, Russian President Vladimir Putin hailed Zakharov as a “colossal personality” and praised the late director’s “remarkable talent, freedom and dignity.”

Official stresses media’s key role in promoting Ashura’s message during Arbaeen

By Manijeh Rezapoor

TEHRAN —Deputy Culture Minister for Press Affairs Mohammad Khodadi has stressed the importance of the media’s role in promoting the message of Ashura during the Arbaeen gathering.

He made the remarks in a press conference on Monday attended by a large number of media experts and journalists.

Ashura is the 10th day of Muharram, the day upon which Imam Hussein (AS) and his companions were martyred in Karbala as a result of their valiant stand against the injustices of the oppressive Umayyad dynasty in 680 CE.

Arbaeen, which will be observed on October 19 this year, marks the end of the 40-day mourning period following the martyrdom of the Imam and his loyal companions on Ashura.

“This is a unique gathering in the world where hundreds of thousands of people come together to promote the message of peace and unity,” he added.

“The media’s duty is to convey this message to those who don’t have the opportunity to attend,” he remarked.

Khodadi said that a number of international media will be covering the gathering.

“The media plays a vital role by covering this great event properly through their news, informing people of the facilities provided throughout the journey,” he noted.

Hundreds of thousands of Iranians embark on a journey to the Iraqi city of Karbala to observe Arbaeen at the holy shrines of Imam Hussein (AS), the third Imam of the Shia, and his brother, Hazrat Abbas (AS).



Deputy Culture Minister for Press Affairs Mohammad Khodadi speaks during a press conference at his office in Tehran on September 30, 2019. (Mehr/Majid Asgaripur)

Khodadi also mentioned that a committee has been established at his office to provide more information about the great event.

He also gave some details about the number

of Iranian media, including news agencies, newspapers, monthly, and periodicals that are either active or have an activity license in the country, and how his office and the

Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance were able to help and support the media by providing the required papers to bypass the economic sanctions imposed by the U.S.

Finland hopes Iran Finnish Film Week aids mutual understanding



Finish Ambassador Keijo Norvanto autographs a poster for the Finnish Film Week during the opening ceremony of the event at the Iranian Artists Forum in Tehran on September 28, 2019. (Borna/Matin Qasemi)

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — Finish Ambassador Keijo Norvanto said on Saturday the Finnish Film Week in Iran aids mutual understanding between Iran and his country.

Speaking at the opening ceremony of the film week at the Iranian Artists Forum in Tehran, he said that in the host country, finding good partners who seek to enhance cultural relations for mutual benefit is a crucial part of a diplomatic mission.

He called the film week an important event of his mission and added that Iran and Finland spent two years organizing the film week and both countries now are enjoying the benefits of their collaborations.

He said that watching films provides an opportunity for people to learn

and share their hopes and fears, and expressed his hope that the film week can help create a bridge between Iranians and the people of Finland.

Finnish Film Foundation CEO Lasse Saarinen also attended the opening ceremony.

In his short speech at the ceremony, he said that Iranians enjoy world-class filmmakers who have received the highest accolades at international events, and expressed his hope that they could take pleasure in watching films from other countries.

A lineup of 16 short and feature movies from Finnish filmmakers are scheduled to be screened during the Finnish Film Week in the three Iranian cities of Tehran, Isfahan and Mashhad until October 4.



A scene from “Exodus” by Bahman Giarostami.

Iranian films to compete in New Orleans festival

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — A lineup of four Iranian films will be screened in various sections of the 30th edition of the New Orleans Film Festival, which will be held in the U.S. city from October 16 to 23.

“Exodus”, a documentary by Bahman Kiarostami, is the highlight of the lineup.

The film is about thousands of Afghan migrants who have lined up to leave Iran as the renewed U.S. sanctions have sparked a recession, but first, they must endure interrogations at an immigration center in Tehran.

“Exodus” was named best film at the 12th Cinema Verite, Iran’s major festival of documentary films,

last December.

Short films “Black Eared” by Behzad Azadi, about a young babysitter who is accused of mistreatment, and “Absent Wound” by Maryam Tafakkori, about a girl who tries to enter the forbidden zones of male activities, are also among the films.

“Gray Body” by Samaneh Shojaei, about a doctor who is visiting a roomful of psychiatric patients, will also go on screen in the short animation competition.

Over 200 films from all over the world will compete at the New Orleans Film Festival, which is an Oscar-qualifying event.

Artist displays 440 pairs of high heels for women murdered in Turkey in 2018

ISTANBUL (Reuters) — Turkish artist Vahit Tuna has mounted 440 pairs of high heels on the facade of a building on a busy Istanbul street, to symbolize the number of women murdered in domestic or sexual violence in Turkey in 2018.

“We are standing in a street now and maybe people are faced with a work of art for the first time, an open and bleeding wound for the very first time. I believe this has an impact,” said Tuna.

“I think this (installation) creates aware-

ness and is something that influences people and makes them think,” he added.

In Turkey, there is a tradition of placing the shoes of someone who passed away outside an entrance. The artwork covers an area of 260 square meters.

“Frankly, I do not feel safe on the streets and this view is really awful. There are 440 pairs of shoes here and it means that many lives have been lost in 2018. This is very upsetting,” said Turkish banker Serap Kilic.



Another banker, Hilal Koseoglu, said: “As long as everybody remains silent, violence against women will increase and this violence is not just about murdering women but also suppressing and silencing them.”

Around 440 women were killed in 2018 in Turkey, according to a report published by Kadin Cinayetlerini Durduracagiz Platformu (We Will Stop Femicide Platform) which keeps records on murders. The platform reported that 49 women were killed by men in the month of August 2019 alone.