



Iran was able to build atomic bomb but it didn't



Iran's economy won't wait for Europe: TCCIMA head

TEHRAN — Head of Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA) warned Europeans that competitors would replace them in the Iranian market if they procrastinate any further.

"INSTEX, which was set to open a channel for financial interactions between European and Iranian companies, hasn't started operating yet and it seems that

this financial mechanism can no longer be trusted to work. The Iranian economy has no choice but to turn from the West and look for eastern partners," Masoud Khansari said in an Iran-Germany business forum in Tehran on Tuesday.

The business forum was attended by officials from the two sides as well as representatives of Iranian and German companies. ➔4

Economic war targeting public health, Zarif laments

TEHRAN — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Wednesday that the United States' sanctions and economic war on Iran have targeted the ordinary people's health and livelihood.

During a speech at an international conference on global economy and sanctions held at Alzahra University in Tehran, the foreign minister said that the United States have turned "economy and dollar" into tools of warfare.

"There was a time when such warfare was used to simply limit activities of some countries. However, new warfare of the United States and what Trump has called the 'economic war' have targeted the ordinary people's livelihood and health," the chief diplomat lamented.

He said the U.S. is abusing its economic power and dollar as a tool to exert pressure against other countries. ➔2

Erdogan says operation in northeast Syria has started

TEHRAN — Turkey launched a military operation against Kurdish fighters in northeast Syria on Wednesday, with air strikes hitting the border town of Ras al Ain.

President Tayyip Erdogan, announcing the start of the action, said the aim was to eliminate what he called a "terror corridor" on Turkey's southern border.

Turkey had been poised to advance into

northeast Syria since U.S. troops began vacating the area in an abrupt policy shift by U.S. President Donald Trump, widely criticized in Washington as a betrayal of America's Kurdish militia allies.

A Turkish security source told Reuters the military operation into Syria has been launched with air strikes and will be supported by artillery and howitzer fire. ➔13

ARTICLE

Mahnaz Abdi

Head of the TehranTimes Economy Desk

Banking system reform: improving or interrupting?

Last week, Iranian Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Farhad Dejjpasand announced that a plan for reforming the country's banking system has been prepared by the ministry and handed over to President Rouhani in late September.

And on Monday, the minister announced the start of the mentioned plan in the government-owned banks.

He said, "Following the president's order and considering the fact that reforming the banking system has become a top priority for the government, we set up a working group and by analyzing the past experiences we developed a plan which is more focused on practicality."

According to the minister, the plan covers many areas including banks' privatization, private and public sector's deferred debts to banks, increasing banks' capital and adequacy, corporate governance, easing banks' frozen assets, and reforming the banks' internal management.

It could be said that the banking system reform requires some changes or amendments in the banking strategy of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI), which is the major governing body of the country in monetary sector.

And as the CBI's major responsibility is to lay the ground for economic development of the country through proper monetary and credit policies, the mentioned reform plan is among the important measures being taken by the government to strengthen the national economy.

Speaking in a recent meeting with the CEOs of the government-owned banks, the finance minister has stressed that the ministry is going to follow up on the provided solutions in the reform plan through relevant authorities.

While the plan seems to bring satisfactory results for different economic sectors, as Dejjpasand has said that for preparing it, consultations have been conducted with the representatives of the private sector, and several academics, economists and consulting parties, so that it will meet satisfaction of all sectors, it has also provoked some criticisms. ➔4

EU evading JCPOA responsibility

By Hamid Bayati

TEHRAN — The opportunity to save the JCPOA (the nuclear deal concluded between Iran and the 5+1 group in 2015) is narrowing down, but the European signatories of the international deal, known as EU3 (Britain, France and Germany), are not daring enough to counter the U.S. and accept the expenses of their resistance against Washington's illegal withdrawal from the JCPOA.

The European countries are evading their responsibility to fulfill their commitments under the pretext that companies are private, claiming that due to the companies' non-governmental status they are not able to force them to trade with or invest in Iran.

Based on evidence, the EU3 can grant legal guarantee to their companies to protect them against the U.S. sanctions.

Shireen Hunter, a professor of Georgetown University, has said, "The current laws are not very effective in countering American sanctions. Moreover, the real issue is that Europe does not want to escalate confrontation with America for the sake of Iran."

The European countries' refusal to fulfill their commitments to the nuclear deal is mostly different from their resistance approach against the U.S. pressure in 1996 when Washington imposed sanctions against Cuba without companionship of its European partners. In 1996, the European nations managed to resist against the U.S. via ratifying new laws. Now there is a question whether Europe is currently able to resist against the U.S. pressure and unilateralism as they did in case of Cuba?

Professor Hunter says, "Iran issue is more

complicated than Cuba because it is linked to other Middle East -related issues. Europe has very little economic relations with Cuba. Moreover, America was not so keen in getting European cooperation regarding Cuba than it has been vis a vis Iran. The main issue is that Europe does not want to endanger its economic interests in America for Iran's sake."

Bloomberg news network's analyst Jonathan Tirone also believes that the European Union's reactions towards the U.S. measures against Iran and the JCPOA is mostly summarized in political gestures, holding meetings and issuing statements in support of the nuclear deal. The analyst says Europe has been very slow in applying policies to decrease the U.S. sanction pressure on Iran. ➔6

White House refuses cooperation in impeachment probe

TEHRAN — The White House said it would not cooperate with an impeachment investigation into President Donald Trump, labelling the process partisan, illegitimate and unconstitutional as it blocked an ambassador from giving evidence to the inquiry in the United States.

In a fiery eight-page letter, White House counsel Pat Cipollone claimed House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and the chairmen of three congressional panels leading the inquiry simply wanted to remove Trump from office.

"Put simply, you seek to overturn the results of the 2016 election and deprive the American people of the president they have freely

chosen," Cipollone wrote.

"Your inquiry lacks any legitimate constitutional foundation, any pretence of fairness, or even the most elementary due process protections," he said of the inquiry, which is weighing whether Trump abused his office by seeking a corruption investigation in Ukraine of his rival Joe Biden.

"President Trump cannot permit his administration to participate in this partisan inquiry under these circumstances."

Pelosi fired back, calling the letter "manifestly wrong" and describing it as "another unlawful attempt to hide the facts."

"Mr President, you are not above the law. You will be held accountable," she said, warning that "continued efforts to hide the truth of the president's abuse of power from the American people will be regarded as further evidence of obstruction."

According to Al Jazeera, Pelosi formally launched the impeachment inquiry last month after revelations that Trump pressured Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky in a July 25 phone call.

The standoff risks a constitutional crisis, with the potential for a court showdown just as the U.S. gears up for the 2020 election.



Tehran hosting congress on medical tourism in Islamic world

TEHRAN - The 4th International Health Congress of Islamic Countries started at Tehran's Homa Hotel on Wednesday with the aim of promoting health and medical tourism among the Islamic countries.

The three-day event has brought together officials, senior scholars, academia, and travel agents from the public and private sectors in order to introduce their latest achievements, share experiences and discuss issues concerning economic and technological developments. ➔10

ARTICLE

Martin Love

Political analyst from North Carolina

Reasons to be optimistic and steadfast in Iran

So, Donald Trump is abandoning the Kurds in northeastern Syria and allegedly pulling out U.S. troops, giving Turkey a green light to try to ensure that a Kurdish state will not threaten Turkey's eastern Anatolia. But the fear is that ISIS will be resurrected somehow, and on it goes in a kaleidoscope of sectarian and political confrontations in the Middle East where the sands beneath one's feet seem to shift on a weekly basis.

But in the U.S., Trump's move this week, which some Democrat and Republican "hegemonic" devotees are already squealing about, seems to underscore what he originally promised on the campaign trail in 2016 — to get the U.S. out of fruitless, unwinnable and costly wars, even if this is just the first instance of his doing what he promised and the move comes well into his first and maybe last term as President.

Trump indeed has made many errors, with the canning of the JCPOA being error number one, but he has not started a fresh big war in the Mideast and for that he must get some credit. He has, for one thing, stuffed John Bolton, and now Bolton in a revenge move may be attempting to get Trump in deeper straits over the matter of trying to deck Joe Biden with regard to his nepotistic games in Ukraine.

First, it's fair to say that no public has been so propagandized as Americans. Especially with regard to the Middle East and particularly with respect to Iran and Syria. The mainstream media in the U.S. has been derelict, and there is some truth to Trump's assertion that a lot of the news is "fake" except that when he declares it as such, he is primarily saying so because he's being criticized about issues that can affect whether he is going to survive as POTUS. He's a narcissist who becomes apoplectic over criticism, warranted or not. The U.S. has never had such a loose cannon as President, nor one as impulsive and therefore dangerous.

However, there are a few reporters and commentators, many of whom have often been ignored and denigrated, who DO understand what's been going on over the last decade and their narrative is quite different from that of the mainstream media whores. ➔6

Pakistan's Khan to visit Iran in mediation efforts between Tehran and Riyadh

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan will travel to Iran and Saudi Arabia in near future, the Pakistani media reported on Wednesday.

Khan, who was on an official visit to China, returned to Pakistan on Wednesday to finalize his future trips to Tehran and Riyadh, Mehr quoted Pakistani media as saying.

Sources have said the visit to Tehran will take place upon a request from officials in Riyadh.

The Pakistani prime minister is likely to travel to Iran and Saudi Arabia until next week.

The media did not give details.

Earlier, Khan had said that he was making an effort to mediate between Tehran and Riyadh. Last month, he held talks with Saudi Arabia's leaders in Riyadh, as well as with President Rouhani of Iran on the sidelines of the annual United Nations conference in New York.

The Pakistani prime minister visited Iran in May 2019. He has also traveled to Saudi Arabia five times.

Ambassador: Cementing ties with neighbors atop Iran's foreign policy agenda

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iran's Ambassador to Tajikistan, Mohammad Taqi Saberi, said on Wednesday that increasing all-out ties with neighbor, including Tajikistan, has been atop agenda of Tehran's foreign policy.

Saberi, who was addressing an international conference in Dushanbe, highlighted historical, civilizational, religious, cultural and lingual commonalities between Iran and Tajikistan and said, "The Islamic Republic of Iran was among the first countries that recognized the Republic of Tajikistan's independence and was the first nation that opened its embassy in Dushanbe."

He added, "During the last 27 years, Iran has implemented a number of important construction projects in Tajikistan, including Esteghlal tunnel, the Sangtoodeh 2 power plant, participation in construction of the large Raqoun power plant, the tractor-manufacturing company and a number of food stuff and dairy producing companies."

He further underscored that Iran is after reinvigoration of security and stability in Tajikistan and is ready to share it experiences with Dushanbe to counter terrorist threats especially those by Daesh (ISIL).

Vice president says U.S. moves against Iran are return to 'barbarism'

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — La'aya Joneidi, the Iranian vice president for legal affairs, on Wednesday criticized Washington for its hostile policies against independent countries including Iran, saying such illegal moves will push the world toward "barbarism".



in other nations' internal affairs to tell them what to do based on its own laws."

Iran urges Intl. community to fulfill commitments to refugees

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — In a quad-lateral meeting attended by his Afghan and Pakistani counterparts and representative of UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Geneva..., Iranian Interior Minister Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli called on the international community to fulfill its obligation regarding asylum seeker and refugees.

"Refugees' issue must go under pathology, the root cause of problems must be reviewed and then based on gathered data a committee must be formed to draft the countries' commitments and missions for a specific time to fulfill them," Rahmani Fazli opined.

"Role, views and opinions of regional nations should be regarded, because, without any accurate assessment from the region's situation, a new flow of immigrants and refugees towards other countries will be witnessed," the minister mentioned.

Iran has been a generous host for millions of Afghan refugees for about four decades, with little help from the international community.

Tehran has called on the international community to strengthen support for Iran for hosting the Afghan refugees and help provide facilities for repatriation of the refugees.

Voluntary repatriation of Afghan refugees from Iran has slowed in recent years in the face of poor security and economic conditions in Afghanistan, which Tehran blames on the U.S.-led invasion of the country in 2001.

The office of the UNHCR was established by the UN General Assembly in 1950.

According to the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, the agency is mandated to lead and coordinate international action to protect refugees and resolve refugee problems worldwide. Its primary purpose is to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees.

UNHCR first opened an office in Iran in 1984 and expanded its presence with the massive influx of Iraqi refugees following the Persian Gulf War in 1991 and the start of Afghans' mass return movement to Afghanistan in 1992.

Today UNHCR has its central representative office in Tehran, plus three sub-offices in Mashhad, Kerman, and Ahwaz.

Economic war targeting public health, Zarif laments

1 → Zarif said on September 5 that the U.S. economic terrorism against countries including Iran, Cuba, Russia, China and Syria targets civilians.

"#US #EconomicTerrorism against Cuba, China, Russia, Syria, Iran &... deliberately target civilians, trying to achieve illegitimate political objectives through intimidation of innocent people. US rouse behavior now includes piracy, bribery & blackmail

We salute Cuba & stand w/it," he tweeted.

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," he said.

During a speech at the 42th session of the UN Human Rights Council in September, Esmaeil Baghaei Hamaneh, Tehran's ambassador and permanent representative to the UN office in Geneva, called the consequences of unilateral sanctions against Iran "crime against humanity".

He urged the United Nations to take actions in stopping the sanctions.

President Hassan Rouhani said in June that the U.S. sanctions are examples of "crime against humanity and economic terrorism" because they have targeted ordinary people's "lives and needs".

"It should not be said that the U.S. has imposed sanctions on us, because they are not sanctions. They are crime against humanity.



They could be called sanctions if they targeted some of our sensitive industries, but they are crime against humanity and economic terrorism when they target the people's lives and needs," he stated.

Trump withdrew Washington from the 2015 nuclear deal, known as the JCPOA, in May 218 and restored the previous sanctions against Iran and ordered new ones. Trump has described his government's sanctions against Iran as "economic war".

■ 'Using the word sanction for U.S. moves has no legal base'

Zarif also said that using the word "san-

tion" for the U.S. actions has no legal base.

"Sanction is a legal word which means using a tool to take a legal action. If an action is legal, legal tools can be used to carry it out. The United States' actions are not just to execute law, but are to violate law. In Iran's case, the United States has violated the JCPOA and also the 2231 resolution of the Security Council. So, the United States' action is intrinsically illegal," stated Zarif, a professor of international law.

The JCPOA was turned into international law as the UN Security Council adopted resolution 2231 in July 2015 endorsing the

Leader: Iran was able to build atomic bomb but it didn't

"We have 4000 knowledge enterprises now that should reach 400,000"

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Leader of the Islamic Revolution said in remarks on Wednesday that although Iran was able to build nuclear weapons it did not do so because according to Islamic sharia it is absolutely banned and there is no reason to waste money for production and stockpile of such weapons.

"Though we were able to take such a step, based on the decree of the dear Islam we declared it completely haram (religiously banned), therefore there is no reason to incur cost for production and stockpiling of a weapon that its use is absolutely haram," the Leader said in a meeting with a large number of highly-talented youth.

Ayatollah Khamenei said that science unlocks the true benefits of knowledge only when it is paired with the right understanding of humanitarianism.

"In the case of the key and very beneficial nuclear science... when it was paired with a thirst for more power, it resulted in the creation of the nuclear weapon and turned into a major threat to the world and humanity," he said, according to Press TV.

Ayatollah Khamenei said that while Iran sees no shame in learning new sciences from others, it does not want its universities to replicate the American education system and copy the "wrong Western culture."

"Imitating others will kill innovation and the real vigor that comes with science," the Leader noted.

Elsewhere in the meeting, Ayatollah Khamenei stressed the need for an acceleration in the pace of scientific progress.

Although the Islamic Republic has gloriously gained top world positions in a number of new sciences such as nanotechnology and biotechnology in recent years, such advances are "by no means adequate" and should not satisfy Iran, and the scientific progress must be accelerated, the Leader said, according to Tasnim.

The Leader also referring to his visit to an exhibition of knowledge-based companies

on Tuesday, saying, "Yesterday (Tuesday) there was an exhibition here; I witnessed the enthusiasm, confidence and self-esteem. Out of the several thousand knowledge enterprises, there were only 30 companies present. We have 4000 knowledge enterprises now; that should reach 400,000."

"Of course," he added, "the legal infrastructure of these companies must be provided first; and the barriers should be removed."

Ayatollah Khamenei also advised officials to protect the talented generation from becoming subjected to the phenomenon of brain drain that is being encouraged by certain groups.

The Iranian prodigies are the valuable assets of their own country and must be protected against attempts to lure them out of the country by using financial incentives and other false promises.

The Leader hailed the Iranian scientists' achievements in defense industry, medical

agreement.

■ 'Sanctioning CBI is illegal'

Zarif also pointed to the U.S. action in imposing sanctions on the Central Bank of Iran (CBI), described it as illegal.

He said that the sanctions on the CBI will prevent it from providing food and medicine, adding the action can only be described as "economic terrorism".

Trump said in September that he has ordered sanctions on Iran's central bank at "the highest level." Trump, who had initially imposed the sanctions applied to the central bank, said the new penalties on Iran mark the "highest sanctions ever imposed on a country."

■ 'Traditional view cannot work in current situation'

Zarif also said that there are complications in decision making at the international arena and "traditional view" cannot work in the current situation.

He said that the Iranian Foreign Ministry is making efforts to find ways to do international economic interaction without being affected by the United States.

"Removal of dollar in foreign interaction and use of national currency in interaction with countries are examples of this issue," he explained.

Elsewhere, Zarif said that Iran should avoid unnecessary tension with neighbors in order to be able to counter Washington's policy of "maximum pressure".

sciences, engineering, nanotechnology and peaceful nuclear energy despite the increasing foreign pressure.

"We live in a different situation than others," Ayatollah Khamenei said. "We need to think Iranian, act Iranian and live Iranian and this trend can be accelerated by adopting the Islamic-Iranian blueprint for progress."

He said Iranians need to attain such high scientific standards that "in 50 years' time, all talented people wishing to acquire the latest scientific findings should learn the language of Farsi. This is something that can be achieved through reliance on Iranian genius, intellect and persistence."

Ayatollah Khamenei further called on the society of the talented Iranians to play a role in public diplomacy, saying, "Our approach is neither socialist nor based on liberal democracy. Thanks to Islam, we offered a third way to nations, as we should further attract the hearts to this beneficial approach for humanity with our logical words and deeds, and to save nations from the increasing influence of the decadent Western culture."

Tehran writes to UN to protest U.S. sanctions on space program

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iran, in a letter to director of Vienna-based United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA), has protested at Washington's sanctions against the Iranian Space Agency (ISA) and two other space research institutions as a violation of the international law.

The permanent representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Vienna-based international organizations handed over the protest letter to the UNOOSA director.

The letter points at the recent the U.S. illegal and unilateral sanctions against the ISA, Space Research Center and Outer Space Research Institution whose responsibilities and missions have only concentrated on non-military and peaceful uses of outer space activities.

The letter further underlines that the U.S. hostile unilateral measures are in contrast to international law in general and coopera-

tion principles in the fields of space activities and free access of all government to space in particular.

The letter further emphasizes that Iran is a country prone to natural disasters including earthquake, flooding, drought, etc, so utilizing space technology is vital for preventing the disasters and narrowing down their side-effects.

On March 19, 2019, massive downpours began sweeping Iran, with raging currents of water battering houses, washing away cars and killing people in several provinces.

The intense rainfalls eventually caused rivers to burst their banks triggering the worst flooding in decades in 25 of the country's 31 provinces.

The flooding caused an estimated \$2.5 billion in damage to roads, bridges, homes and farmland. It affected 4,400 villages, damaged 14,000 kilometers of roads and destroyed more than 700 bridges.

Rouhani: Only Syrian army is able to provide security at border with Turkey

President says Turkish security concerns in border with Syria should be allayed

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said on Wednesday that security at Syria-Turkey borders can just be provided by the Syrian Army, renewing Tehran's call that the United States' forces should leave Syria.

"We have announced that security at north of Syria and south of Turkey can just be provided by the Syrian Army and we should make the grounds for the Syrian Army's presence in this region. Other countries should help and the United States' forces leave this region, and the Kurds in this region, which is their own country, should be beside the Syrian Army," he said at a cabinet session.

Rouhani noted that the Turkish government has concerns about its southern borders which should be allayed.

"We believe that right way and method should be chosen on this path," he added.

Rouhani also said, "Today, the main issue is not north of Syria and east of Euphrates. The main problem is the Idlib region in which all the terrorists have gathered. We hope that the regional countries would help in this respect and the government of Turkey would be more careful in this line so that we will not face a new problem in the region."

The Turkish Defense Ministry announced early on Tuesday that preparations for a military operation in northern Syria are complete.

The Iranian Foreign Ministry issued a statement on Tuesday, voicing Tehran's strong opposition to any possible Turkish military intervention in Syria, warning that such a move will certainly exacerbate the security situation in the region.

The statement underlined that military aggression against Syria and deployment of Turkish forces in the northern part of the war-torn

country will not allay Ankara's security concerns.

"Iran is ready to mediate via holding urgent contacts with senior Turkish and Syrian officials to meet existing concerns through peaceful and diplomatic ways. Tehran believes that Syria's integrity and national sovereignty should be respected and reiterates that the Adana Pact enjoys suitable basis for resumption of such mediating talks," the ministry's statement read.

■ 'U.S. maximum pressure will not affect Iran anymore'

Elsewhere in his remarks, Rouhani said that the U.S. policy of "maximum pressure" has failed and will not affect Iran anymore.

"Today, all the statistics and also the people's spirit show that the time that the maximum pressure affected is gone," he opined.

He noted that the Iranian people have defeated sanctions and policy of maximum pressure.

The president also said, "The path that has

been taken by the people, system, Leader, armed forces and all the factions (against sanctions) is right and we should continue it through unity and integrity."

During a meeting with top officials of the Intelligence Ministry on Tuesday, Rouhani said that the Iranian nation has successfully passed the difficult test of countering the "maximum pressure" policy by the ill-wishers in the White House.

"The enemies of the Islamic establishment and the Iranian nation, while they may not confess, have accepted the fact that the maximum pressure strategy has failed and they must throw away such approach when facing the Iranian nation," he pointed out.

U.S. President Donald Trump quit the 2015 nuclear deal in May 2018 and introduced the harshest ever sanctions on Iran as part of "maximum pressure" against the country.

Army stages unplanned exercise in northwest Iran

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iranian Army's Ground Force on Wednesday held an unplanned military exercise in regions near Urmia, the capital of the northwestern province of West Azarbaijan.

According to IRNA, the goal of the exercise was to test the preparedness of the ground forces.

The military exercise's theme was "one target, one bullet".

Quick reaction and mobile offensive units as well as back-up helicopters of the Ground Force took part in the exercise.

■ **Army chief says Iran ready to counter any threat**

Major General Abdolrahim Mousavi, chief of the Iranian Army, hailed the units' preparedness and agility during the exercise.

"We are ready for and will counter any level of threat by the enemy," General Mousavi said.

"This exercise is a good message for the great Iranian nation that their soldiers and children are fully prepared to carry out their mission of countering any possible threat by the enemy," he remarked.

The general warned the enemies of the ramifications of any miscalculation against



the Islamic Republic.

"We are fully prepared to defend the ideals

of the establishment, Revolution and country and to protect the borders of the Islamic

Iran," he reiterated.

Kiomars Heidari, chief of the Army Ground Force, said the exercise came after General Mousavi's order the previous night.

"Boosting the combat readiness, defense power, strength, mobility and speed were among the goals of the unplanned exercise of the Ground Force," he explained.

Iranian armed forces hold routine military exercises throughout the year.

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

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

"Without a moment of hesitation, the country must move to acquire whatever is necessary for defense, even if the whole world is opposed to it," Ayatollah Khamenei said at the time, according to Tasnim.

Tehran advises Ankara to reconsider Syria operation

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Presidential chief of staff Mahmoud Vaezi has advised Turkey to reconsider its decision to carry out an operation inside Syria, saying such moves will only harm the region.

"We understand Turkey's concerns regarding its borders with Syria and we have talked about this issue with them, but according to our understanding of the region and its issues, military moves toward Syria will be detrimental to the region and will not create security," Vaezi told reporters on the sidelines of Wednesday's cabinet meeting.

The comments come against the backdrop of Ankara's decision to go forward with a planned offensive targeting the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) in northern Syria.

Turkey considers the YPG to be a terrorist organization and an extension of the PKK, which has been fighting for an autonomous region inside Turkey since 1984.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan says it is necessary to purge the YPG from the region so that Turkey can create a safe zone where it will relocate millions of refugees, according to Press TV.

Ankara's plan for an extensive ground and air operation in northeastern Syria has also concerned the United Nations, with Secretary-General Antonio Guterres calling



for "maximum restraint" and the protection of civilians.

"The secretary-general is following with great concern recent statements regarding northeastern Syria, in particular the risk to civilians from any potential military actions," Stephane Dujarric, the UN chief's spokesperson, said in a statement on Tuesday. "He calls on all parties to exercise maximum restraint."

Iran and Russia have warned that the offensive could further escalate tensions in Syria. The Damascus government has also voiced its opposition to the incursion.

■ **Tehran says welcomes U.S. withdrawal from Syria**

In his Wednesday remarks, Vaezi said regional issues should be resolved through dialogue.

He also said the presence of other foreign forces including the U.S. forces, who are in Syria without Damascus's permission, has created insecurity in the region.

Vaezi welcomed a U.S. decision to withdraw its forces from Syria, saying Tehran hopes that the United States withdraw its forces from Syria and other countries.

"Different countries can negotiate with each other, reach agreements and solve their problems by themselves," he added.

The White House announced in a statement on Sunday that the U.S. would be withdrawing its forces from northern Syria, clearing the path for Turkey's operation against the Kurdish militants, who had long enjoyed Washington's support.

"The United States Armed Forces will not support or be involved in the operation," said the statement, adding that the American troops "will no longer be in the immediate area," without clarifying whether they will completely leave Syria or will be redeployed within the country.

U.S. President Donald Trump later said in a tweet that it was too costly to keep supporting the Kurdish militants in the region.

Iran's military achievements based on modern technologies: Salami



POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Chief of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) says the achievements of Iran's armed forces in defense sector are based on modern technologies.

"The Guards has made great achievements in all scientific, economic, technical and industrial fields of the defense sector following the cruel sanctions that were imposed by the Global Arrogance," Major General Salami said on Wednesday, referring to the United States.

"The defense power of the Guards has reached a point where it can unveil new modern achievements every day," Mehr quoted Salami as saying.

Iranian military experts and technicians have in recent years made great headways in manufacturing a broad range of indigenous equipment, making the armed forces self-sufficient in the arms sphere.

In August, Iran unveiled a domestically-built missile defense system dubbed "Bavar-373"

Bavar-373 is a mobile missile defense system designed to intercept and destroy incoming hostile targets. The system employs missiles that have a maximum range of 300 kilometers. The system is capable

of simultaneously detecting up to 300 targets, tracking 60 targets at once and engaging six targets at a time.

President Hassan Rouhani said after the unveiling ceremony that the missile defense system is more powerful than S-300 missile system and is more like S-400.

Tensions have soared between Iran and the U.S. in recent months, especially after the U.S. drone downing incident and the drone attacks on Saudi Arabia's Aramco facilities.

On June 20, the IRGC's aerospace unit 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 drone was shot by homegrown air defense missile system "Khordad-3rd".

Following the incident, General Salami said the downing of the 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," Salami said.

MP says U.S. military coalition in Persian Gulf has failed



POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Spokesman for the Iranian Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Committee said on Wednesday that the so-called military coalition in the Persian Gulf proposed and led by the U.S. failed at its first step.

"The U.S. plan for the Persian Gulf has definitely failed because a (large) number of countries did not welcome it," Seyyed Hossein Naqavi Hosseini said.

He further said that Iran believes that settling differences in the region is not indebted to military tensions, foreign meddling and trans-regional forces' deployment in the region.

"Security concerns in the Persian Gulf must be solved via dialogue among regional countries," the MP pointed out, adding, "That is why Tehran welcomed Saudi Arabia's negotiations offers to restore security and tranquility in the Persian Gulf. We believe that the regional nations should resume close dialogue to achieve unity of view."

"The Iranian president's Hormuz Peace Initiative's main core is negotiations among regional states through which we hope to materialize the plan's goals," Naqavi Hossein further said.

President Hassan Rouhani has proposed a regional security plan for the Persian Gulf, tentatively called the "Hormuz Peace Initiative."

The idea entails the concerned countries cooperating to ensure security in the Persian Gulf and Sea of Oman, though importantly excluding the U.S. participation which is stirring up regional tensions.

Washington blamed Tehran for the mysterious tanker attacks that occurred earlier in the summer and the Houthis' recent drone strike against the world's largest oil processing facility in Saudi Arabia, which the U.S. then exploited as the justification for bolstering its military presence in the Persian Gulf in order to "milk" Saudi Arabia.

As part of its efforts, the U.S. has struggled to form an international coalition for patrolling the regional waterways to supposedly ensure "freedom of navigation," a move that Iran has labeled as provocative primarily intended to bully Tehran. It's therefore imperative for the regional nations to take security into their own hands instead of relying on self-interested outsiders like the U.S. which have over four decades of experience in trying to destabilize Iran after its 1979 Islamic Revolution.

called Iranian threats.

He was speaking after talks with Saudi and Emirati leaders over recent attacks on Saudi Arabian oil facilities that Washington and Riyadh have blamed on Tehran. Iran denies any involvement in the attack.

The Yemeni forces on September 14 launched drone attacks on two plants at the heart of Saudi Arabia's oil industry, including the world's biggest petroleum processing facility.

Araghchi holds Washington responsible for heightened tensions in Persian Gulf

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has said the heightened tensions in the Persian Gulf is a result of Washington's meddling policies in the region.

"The priority of the Islamic Republic of Iran is to establish security, stability and economic prosperity for the entire region," Araghchi said on Tuesday, Mehr reported.



He made the remarks in a meeting in Tehran with Portugal's Foreign Ministry director general for political affairs.

The senior diplomat also pointed to the issues surrounding the implementation of the Joint comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), also known as the Iran nuclear deal, saying Iran expects European countries to secure Tehran's interests under the deal.

Araghchi further criticized European countries for failing to stand up to the U.S. unilateralism and avoiding to pay the costs of saving the JCPOA.

The Portuguese diplomat, for his part, voiced his country's interest in boosting bilateral relations with Iran.

He said Europe was really seeking to preserve the JCPOA and that Portugal was in line with EU policies in that regard.

U.S. President Donald Trump abandoned the nuclear deal in May 2018 and imposed the harshest ever sanctions on Tehran. However, Trump has been repeatedly calling for dialogue with Iran.

On May 8, exactly one year after the U.S. withdrawal, Tehran began reducing its commitments to the agreement at bi-monthly intervals.

Iran blamed European countries' inaction for its decision, saying the decision would be reversed as soon as they fulfil their obligations under the deal and protect Iran's interests.

Late last month, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said that the Europeans have failed to meet their nuclear commitments and Iran should not pin hope on them.

"Despite their commitments, the Europeans have practically stayed committed to sanctions of the United States and have taken no action. It is very unlikely that they will be able to do anything for the Islamic Republic. So, we should not pin hope on the Europeans," Ayatollah Khamenei said during a meeting with members of the Assembly of Experts.

"As frequently mentioned before, we should not at all place hope and trust on anyone except for the domestic forces, in particular, not on those that have raised the flag of hostility against the Islamic Republic and the Islamic establishment, firstly led by the U.S., and next by the European countries," he added.

Region needs dialogue between Iran and Saudi Arabia: Russian diplomat

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Russian Ambassador to Lebanon Alexander Zasyepkin has said that the Middle East needs a dialogue between Iran and Saudi Arabia without a pre-condition.



In an interview with Al Akhbar daily, Zasyepkin criticized the United States' policies in the region and said that Washington does not respect international law and the countries' sovereignty, ISNA reported on Wednesday.

In an interview with Al Jazeera published on October 1, Iranian Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani said that Iran is open to starting a dialogue with Saudi Arabia and other countries in the region.

"An Iranian-Saudi dialogue could solve many of the region's security and political problems," Larijani predicted.

Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi said on September 30 that he believes Saudi Arabia is looking to de-escalate tensions with Iran.

In an exclusive interview with Al Jazeera, he said, "Everybody is open to dialogue."

"Iran says [it is] willing to negotiate if sanctions are lifted; the U.S. [also] asks for dialogue ... neither does Saudi Arabia close the door for dialogue," Abdul Mahdi said.

Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman said in an interview with CBS's 60 Minutes program aired on September 29 that he preferred a peaceful resolution with Iran, describing it as "much better than the military" option.

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

Rouhani warned world leaders on September 25 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."

Persian Gulf more secure without Western presence: general

TEHRAN (Tasnim) — Commander of Iran's Border Police Brigadier General Qassem Rezaei described Western fleets of warships sailing across the Persian Gulf as "microbial viruses" and said if they leave the region, the waters will be more secure.

"The Persian Gulf does not accept microbial viruses like the fleet of Western countries' warships," Brigadier General Rezaei said upon his arrival in the southern province of Hormozgan on Wednesday.

"The message of all nations of the Persian Gulf region is that they (foreign fleets) should end their inauspicious presence so that the region becomes peaceful," he added.

The top commander further emphasized that the security of the region would be stable without the presence of the West's fleet of warships.

The remarks came as U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo recently reiterated Washington's plan to build a maritime coalition in the Persian Gulf to deter what he

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	313049.0
IFX	4075.63

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	46,048 rials
GBP	51,314 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$58.88/b
WTI	\$53.21/b
OPEC Basket	\$59.09/b
Gold	\$1,506.35/oz
Silver	\$817.89/oz
Platinum	\$891.60/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

Saffron export exceeds \$78m in 5 months

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iran exported 74 tons of saffron valued at \$78 million during the first five months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-August 22), according to an official in the Ministry of Agriculture.

Hossein Zeinali, the director for the ministry’s plan of medical herbs, said the product has been exported to 40 countries and Spain, Vietnam, Qatar and United Arab Emirates were the major export destinations, IRNA reported.

Banking system reform: improving or interrupting?

1 → Some opponents of the plan say that it will create limitations for the government for implementing some projects for them money should be injected.

But its supporters say that it could exit the idle money from the banking system to inject it into the stock market, use it for strengthening infrastructures and creating jobs, and promote industries and production, something that will have definitely noticeable effects in the life of people.



Mohammad Hassan-Nejad, a member of the economic committee of the parliament, is among the opponents of the reform plan. He says that the current banking law is a complete and comprehensive one.

“I do not believe that the banking law should be reformed; because in my idea a law as large as the banking law, with so much effect in all sectors of the society, could not be suddenly changed. It would have been better if the weaknesses had been removed and reforms had been done gradually in a way that the banking system could have adopted itself to the new changes”, according to the MP.

He also criticizes the way of announcing and also enforcing this plan, saying that there have been some ambiguities in this due.

But, Mohammadreza Pour-Ebrahimi, the previous chairman of the parliament’s economic committee and a current member of the committee, is of the opinion that resolving economic problems is currently the major concern of the parliament and government and banking system reform is a major approach to this end.

This reform will strengthen the livelihood status of the people and lead to more employment, he says.

Unfortunately, banking regulations have not been amended since [Iranian calendar year] 1362 (March 1983-1984), and most of people, those active in the economic sectors, and also the Shi’a clerics in the country believe that there are currently some ambiguities in the banking system, so its reform and amendment is very vital and important, according to Pour-Ebrahimi.

The MP says that the parliament takes any endeavor to remove economic barriers for the country and in this due it will support the government in any field.

Italy’s economy minister sees web tax launch next year

Italy will implement a planned “web tax” in 2020, obliging big digital companies to pay a 3% levy on some Internet transactions, Economy Minister Roberto Gualtieri said on Tuesday.

According to reuters.com, Italy and fellow European Union members have long complained about the way Facebook, Google and other web giants collect huge profits in their countries but pay taxes of a few million euros at most.

Digital companies shift earnings to low- or no-tax locations such as Ireland and international treaties protect them against paying tax in countries where they do not have what is termed a “permanent establishment”.

“Profits have to be taxed where they are made,” Gualtieri told a parliamentary hearing.

In Rome on Tuesday to present a production partnership with Italy’s biggest commercial broadcaster Mediaset, Netflix Chief Executive and founder Reed Hastings said the U.S. video streaming service planned to open offices in Italy and pay taxes in the country.

Iran’s economy won’t wait for Europe: TCCIMA head

1 → As the fourth largest economy in the world, unfortunately Germany hasn’t shown much strength in the face of the U.S. sanctions and done little for continuing economic cooperation with Iran, Khansari said.

■ U.S. sanctions impacts on Iran-Germany trade

Speaking in the event, Managing Director of Germany-Iran Chamber of Commerce and Industry (AHK Iran) Dagmar von Bohnstein said the current political situation (sanctions) is negatively affecting the economic relations between Iran and Germany.

The official noted that affected by the U.S. sanctions, the trade between the two countries fell about 49 percent in the first seven months of 2019 compared to the same period in the previous year.

The official noted that since U.S. withdrawal from the nuclear deal and re-imposition of sanctions, German companies have shown more willingness for continuing economic activities in Iran, compared to the other European countries, although their activities have also been affected by the U.S. sanctions.



Head of Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA) Masoud Khansari delivering speech in an Iran-Germany business forum in Tehran on Wednesday.

She stressed the U.S. sanctions to be the biggest problem in the way of Iran-Germany economic relations, saying “Unfortunately, German companies have the most exports to the U.S. market and statistics show. Ger-

man exports to the United States totaled 58 billion euros in the first half of this year, while Germany’s imports from the United States totaled 35 billion euros.”

According to the official, the German

companies operating in Iran are active in a variety of fields, including machinery and industrial equipment, agriculture, petrochemicals, pharmaceuticals, renewables and foodstuff.

■ Germany supports its traders in Iran

Elsewhere in the event, German Deputy Ambassador to Tehran Oliver Schnackenberg said the economic relations between Iran and Germany have been close for a long time, and through the centuries’ long common economic history, there have been constructive cooperation between businessmen and engineers in both countries.

“The German government has tried to support German companies, but since the U.S. market is so important to German companies, we cannot fully protect them against sanctions,” Schnackenberg said.

He further mentioned the German embassy’s plans for increasing the number of annual visas issued for Iranians, saying “At present the German Embassy in Tehran is the largest visa issuing center in Iran, and, we intend to increase our visa issuance capacity up to 65,000 visas per year.”

Iran self-sufficient in rice production

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iran has become completely self-sufficient in rice production as it plans to cut up to two million tons of imports a year, Press TV reported, quoting a senior Iranian agriculture ministry official as saying.

According to Deputy Agriculture Minister Abdolmehdi Bakhshandeh, the country’s total production of rice is going to top 2.9 to 3 million tons (nearly 3.3 million American tons) this year, with harvest season expected

to conclude at the end of November in the southwestern province of Khuzestan.

The Statistical Center of Iran estimates that Iranians consume approximately 35 kilograms of rice per person each year. That would mean a domestic demand of nearly three million tons for a country of 83 million people.

It is the first time that Iran, a country known for its high-quality rice, announces self-sufficiency in the crop. The country imported 960,000 tons of rice, mainly from India, in the

six-month period starting late March 2019. Bakhshandeh said part of that inventory of rice would be stored for strategic purposes.

He said the land dedicated to rice cultivation across Iran increased by almost a third this year to reach 830,000 hectares, helping to grow more than 4.4 million tons of rice hull.

The official said farmers had finished harvesting rice in the north, where the bulk of Iran’s rice is grown. However, he insisted

that the increase in yearly production was mainly due to more cultivation of the crop in Khuzestan, where the total cultivation area this year reached a record of 205,000 hectares.

Bakhshandeh said rice self-sufficiency would save Iran more than \$1.1 billion in imports, adding that it would also be a major success amid efforts to minimize the impacts of the American sanctions on food security in the country.

Iran, Azerbaijan stress bolstering joint investments

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iranian Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Farhad Dejpasand and Azeri Minister of Labor and Social Protection of the Population Sahil Babayev met on Tuesday to discuss ways of boosting trade ties, Shada reported.

In the meeting which took place at the place of Iranian ministry, the two sides stressed bolstering joint investment and mutual economic collaboration as ways of boosting trade ties between the two neighbors.

Mentioning the two countries’ shared background and good political relations, Dejpasand said “A shared history and cultural background alone is not enough to sustain the two countries’ positive relations, and we also need joint economic activities to maintain our good relations.”

He further stressed the need for strengthening of economic relations between the two countries, saying “development of joint ventures and mutual trade are two pillars of the bilateral

relations between Iran and the Republic of Azerbaijan.”

“The Islamic Republic of Iran has good capacities for cooperation with Azerbaijan in the fields of investment, customs, taxation and insurance, which can be tapped on within the framework of the two countries’ joint economic committee’s activities,” he added.

The Azeri minister for his part, expressed satisfaction with his visit to Iran, and referred to the common religion, language and history with Iran.

He pointed to the numerous meetings between the presidents of the two countries in the past five years as indications of the two countries’ willingness for promoting comprehensive relations.

Referring to the 70-percent growth in the volume of trade between Iran and Azerbaijan, he said “Certainly the activities of the two countries’ joint committee will deepen and accelerate the economic cooperation between the two sides.”



Iran’s Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Farhad Dejpasand (1st R) held talks with Azerbaijan’s Minister of Labor and Social Protection of the Population Sahil Babayev (1st L) in Tehran on Tuesday.

Latvia climbs to 41st in World Economic Forum’s Global Competitiveness Index

In the World Economic Forum’s Global Competitiveness Index Latvia has climbed to 41st place, still remaining behind Lithuania and Estonia, according to the latest published study.

According to bnn-news.com, Lithuania and Estonia have also improved by one place each – Lithuania is the 39th most competitive country in the world, whereas Estonia is 31st.

Arnis Sauka, director of Stockholm School of Economics in Riga Center for Sustainable Business, which represents the Global Competitiveness Index in Latvia, notes that this index is based on a comparison of the world’s countries based on 12 criteria groups or pillars.

Nevertheless, considering the focus on productivity, which is the main pillar for economic development, as well as changes in competitiveness that come with emerging digital technologies and globalization processes, the World Economic Forum, after analyzing competitiveness, has included a number of other pillars since 2018.

Following the latest trends in research and changes in specifics of competition, the new methodology introduces changes to the way these pillars are measured, including business surveys and putting more emphasis on different statistical sources in measuring the competitiveness of different countries.

■ The most competitive country

Results of the new Global Competitiveness Index show that Singapore is the most competitive country in the world. Other most notable countries include USA, Hong Kong, Netherlands, Switzerland, Japan, Germany, Sweden, United Kingdom and Denmark.

Among countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the biggest progress is noted for Estonia (31st) and Czech Republic (32nd). Slovenia remains 35th and Poland – 37th. Lithuania is 39th, between Malta and Taiwan. Latvia is 41st – one step above Slovakia and six steps above Hungary.

Similar to 2018, this year Latvia and 33 other countries of the world share first place in the index’s environment pillar’s Macroe-



conomic Stability. Both indexes of this pillar are highly valued: both inflation and state debt dynamic. Latvia holds 15th place in ICT adaptation pillar (11th place in 2018), which, among things views quantity of internet use, quality of internet connection and mobile phone use trends, notes SSE Riga Centre for Sustainable Business.

The center also adds that Latvia’s results are generally poor in environment category’s pillars such as – institutions (47th place), which is still two spots better when compared to 2018, and infrastructure – 43rd place (47th in 2018).

In the human capital category Latvia has made progress in the skills pillar (22nd). Latvia’s most highly scored index under this pillar is the average years spent in school (studying) (9th place), as well as the ratio of children and teachers in elementary schools (18th), whereas the lowest score is found for the simplicity of finding skilled workers (100th). Vocational quality is rated 64th, the level of skills of graduates is rated 58th, and critical thinking during education process is rated 46th.

In the innovations ecosystem category Latvia’s accomplishments are not particularly high, the center notes, adding that the country holds 40th place in the business vitality index. As for innovations capacity pillar, Latvia is in 54th place. In the business vitality pillar, attitude towards business risks in Latvia is scored particularly low (90th), whereas insolvency regulation is scored relatively highly (26th). The same can be said for the period of time within which it is possible to start a business (27th).

Singapore just beat out the U.S. as the world’s most competitive economy again

Singapore is now the world’s most competitive economy after beating out the United States, which was last year’s number one, the World Economic Forum (WEF) said on Wednesday.

According to businessinsider.my, the U.S. now sits in second spot, where Singapore was placed last year, in the Global Competitiveness Index (GCI) published with the Global Competitiveness Report 2019.

The annual GCI ranks 141 economies through 103 indicators organized into 12 pillars: institutions, infrastructure, Information and communications technology (ICT) adoption, macroeconomic stability, health, skills, product market, labor market, financial system, market size, business dynamism, and innovation capability.

As this year’s world number one, Singapore earned an overall score of 84.8, up from last year’s 83.5.

Singapore ranked first on three pillars: infrastructure, health and labor market. It also came in second for institutions (losing to Finland), product market and financial system (both losing to Hong Kong).

According to the report, Singapore scored full marks on the pillar for health, which is an assessment of health-adjusted life expectancy.

The Republic also scored close to full marks (99.7) on macroeconomic stability, but was ranked 38th because 35 other economies, including Malaysia, scored a perfect 100. France and the U.S. each scored 99.8 and ranked 36th and 37th respectively.

The U.S., which remains the world’s most competitive large economy, saw its overall score fall from 85.6 in 2018 to 83.7 in 2019.

Nonetheless, the U.S. ranks first on the pillar of business dynamism and second on the innovation capability pillar.

At third place on the GCI is Singapore’s longtime rival Hong Kong, which saw its ranking rise one spot with an improved score of 83.1 from 82.3 in 2018.

In May this year, Singapore was also

named the world’s most competitive economy, overtaking Hong Kong and the U.S. in the World Competitiveness Ranking compiled by Swiss business school IMD.

The most improved economy in WEF’s index this year was Vietnam, which rose 10 places from 2018 to 67th spot this year.

When comparing regions, Asia-Pacific is the most competitive in the world, followed closely by Europe and North America.

On average, the 141 economies scored a dismal 61 points over 100. “This global competitiveness gap is of even more concern as the global economy faces the prospect of a downturn,” the WEF said.

■ Better performers

However, some of this year’s better performers – including Singapore and Vietnam – appear to be benefiting from the trade feud through trade diversion, WEF added.

The “report shows that those countries which integrate into their economic policies an emphasis on infrastructure, skills, research and development and support those left behind are more successful compared to those that focus only on traditional factors of growth.” said Klaus Schwab, founder and executive chairman of the WEF.

In a statement, the WEF said that the global economy “remains locked in a cycle of low or flat productivity growth despite the injection of more than \$10 trillion by central banks”.

“While these unprecedented measures were successful in averting a deeper recession, they are not enough on their own to catalyze the allocation of resources towards productivity-enhancing investments in the private and public sectors,” it said.

Noting that monetary policies are starting to run out of steam, the WEF said it is now “crucial for economies to rely on fiscal policy and public incentives to boost research and development, enhance the skills base of the current and future workforce, develop new infrastructure and integrate new technologies.”

227 water, electricity projects to be inaugurated by March 2020

E N E R G Y
d e s k

TEHRAN — Iranian Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian said 227 major water and electricity projects worth 331.74 trillion rials (about \$7.89 billion) will be inaugurated in the country in the second half of the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 19, 2020), IRIB reported.

Speaking to the press on the first day of a program called “A B Iran” (the acronyms A and B stand for water, electricity in Persian), Ardakanian said 10 trillion rials (over \$238 million) of projects will be inaugurated in each of the country’s provinces, on average.

Based on the “A B Iran” program, Energy Ministry plans to inaugurate some water, electricity projects across the country every week.

“[in the mentioned period]10 dams will be inaugurated in six provinces, by which a total of 745 million cubic meters of water will



be added to the country’s water resources,” Ardakanian said.

“The projects will provide drinking water to nine cities with a population of 1.5 million,” he added.

According to the official, in the next six months, over 1,124 villages will also be supplied with drinkable water.

The projects worth 7.45 trillion rials (about \$177.38 million) and every week six villages will be connected to the country’s water network, Ardakanian said.

During the mentioned period, also 29 Wastewater treatment plants, over 3,000 megawatts (MW) capacity of thermal power plants and 278 MW capacity of renewable power plants, as well as projects for increasing the efficiency of the country’s agricultural sector through modernizing the irrigation systems, are planned to be inaugurated.

Oil prices extend slide to third straight day, U.S.-China trade doubts grow

Oil prices slipped for a third consecutive session on Wednesday as the prospect of the United States and China striking a trade deal in talks this week dimmed, raising uncertainties for global economic growth and oil demand.

As per reuters.com, U.S. industry data showing a bigger-than-expected rise in stockpiles at the world’s top oil producer also depressed prices: Brent crude futures LCOc1 fell 27 cents, or 0.5%, to \$57.97 a barrel by 0148 GMT, while U.S. West Texas Intermediate crude CLc1 was at \$52.38, down 25 cents or 0.5%.

Negotiators from the world’s top two

economies will meet in Washington today and tomorrow in the latest effort to hammer out a deal aimed at ending a long-running trade dispute that has slowed global economic growth.

The “market is just over-bearish at the moment, too focused on the demand side of the equation,” Lee said.

That has even overshadowed the threat of losing at least a third of Ecuador’s oil supply amid anti-government protests in the member of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries that have seriously affected oil output.

Ecuadorian state-run firm Petroamazonas

estimates it could lose some 188,000 barrels per day (bpd), or more than a third of its crude production, due to unrest at its facilities.

In the United States, meanwhile, crude stockpiles rose by 4.1 million barrels in the week ended Oct. 4 to 422 million, data from industry group the American Petroleum Institute showed on Tuesday. Analysts had expected an increase of 1.4 million barrels, a Reuters poll showed.

The EIA said on Tuesday U.S. crude production is expected to rise by 1.27 million barrels per day (bpd) in 2019 to a record 12.26 million bpd, slightly above its previous forecast for a rise of 1.25 million bpd.



Output in 2020 is forecast to rise by 910,000 bpd to 13.17 million bpd, according to the EIA, lower than its previous estimate of a rise of 990,000 bpd to 13.23 million bpd.

New global energy technology to help businesses cut energy costs and carbon

A fast-growing global energy and technology consultancy has developed ground-breaking new technology to help businesses monitor and manage their energy usage more effectively.

As stated by energylivenews.com, the Global Procurement Group (GPG) has developed innovative new technology which provides real-time data that helps companies determine how much energy their assets use at any given point in time. The technology has been developed by the company’s tech arm – ClearVUE Systems and Energy Lab – based in Malta and India respectively.

The innovative technology allows businesses to accurately measure usage and proactively manage it, helping them to reduce costs and carbon, in the drive towards the UK Government’s 2050 zero net economy.

ClearVUE’s Alpha.Lite energy software as a service (e-SaaS) is the first of its kind, cloud-based, low-cost monitoring and targeting platform, requiring no expensive hardware or site visits. It provides businesses valuable insight into their energy consumption, identifying inefficiencies and helping them reduce energy costs and waste.

While Alpha.PRO is a next-generation, cloud-connected monitoring and targeting system offering businesses the opportunity for live streaming of energy data down to one-second granularity, which provides the opportunity for instant action. Businesses gain a 360-degree view of their energy fundamentals, from a single circuit to multiple assets across the globe. It instantly shows them where energy efficiency can be improved and energy waste reduced,



saving costs and cutting carbon emissions.

Fokhrul Islam, GPG CEO and founder of Northern Gas and Power – part of GPG – said: “From talking to our customers, we understand there’s a real demand for change. But the utilities sector needs not only a change of attitude; it also needs a change of technology.”

“There is the opportunity to totally transform how businesses use and manage energy, as we move towards a sustainable, low-carbon economy. People want change – businesses tell us they want to become more eco-friendly, but technology has limited their ability. We know there is a real demand for change in people’s behaviors and we need to drive that through technology.”

■ The company’s technology

The company’s technology is used by customer Alnwick Garden, a leading attraction in Northumberland with 360,000 visitors per year. The Duchess of Northumberland’s venue boasts the largest Treehouse in Europe and a stunning water fountain display.

Mark Brassell, Alnwick Garden director, said: “This partnership has put the power back in our hands, giving the team access to plan ahead. It’s all about avoiding high energy costs and reducing waste. Sustainability is high on our list.”

Not only does the technology transform how businesses manage their energy portfolio, it also underpins GPG’s future growth.

Founded in 2012 by Fokhrul Islam and headquartered in North East England, Northern Gas and Power employed 75 people by 2016/17, growing to 228 the following year and currently at 550 globally. In 2018 revenues reached £29m and are on track for £44m by the end of 2019, with projected GPG revenues to reach £62m by 2020.

In addition to new technology, the company has also launched two energy price comparison sites – Business Energy Quotes and Energie SuperMarché. Targeted to the UK and French markets these are the fastest and easiest low-cost, online business energy prices comparison sites available in their respective markets. Requiring minimal customer input, just business name and post code, can generate a comprehensive range of competitive tariffs from a variety of suppliers.

Renewables sector’s just transition roadmap to target coal and gold regions

By Terence Creamer

South Africa’s renewable-energy industry is preparing a detailed ‘just transition’ roadmap that will incorporate employment, spatial and industrialization components to the deployment of solar and wind in a bid to catalyze economic activity and job creation in areas where coal and gold mining are in terminal decline.

The plan will seek to direct independent power producers (IPPs) to develop projects in areas such as Emalahleni, in Mpumalanga, where the coal industry will be negatively affected by the decommissioning of several Eskom power stations over the coming two decades, as well as the gold mining towns such as Klerksdorp, where production has been waning for decades.

It is envisaged that these two towns, together with areas surrounding Beaufort West, will be designated as Renewable Energy Development Zones (REDZs) by the Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries (DEFF), along with eight already selected during an earlier Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEA), known as phase one. The phase-one zones were Gazetted for designation in 2018, and DEFF will now consider designating the three new zones selected in phase two.

Environmental approvals for projects developed in the REDZs are typically fast-tracked by the DEFF, owing to the fact that the areas have already been scoped for environmental risks. Such scoping for the mining-linked zones has been concluded by the department, with support from the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR). These expedited environmental processes, or SEAs, are

applicable only within designated REDZs.

The mining areas identified for designation as REDZs during the phase-two SEA were chosen and prioritized by the CSIR in consultation with solar and wind developers. It emerged that wind developers would favor a REDZ in the Beaufort West area, while the Emalahleni and Klerksdorp areas emerged as preferred locations from a solar photovoltaic (PV) perspective.

■ The onshore wind and solar PV

Kabi Solar director Mike Levington, who served on the steering committee who oversaw the REDZs’ selection, tells Engineering News Online that the aim is to create a detailed framework that maximizes the employment and industrialization spin-offs from onshore wind and solar PV, the deployment of which is expected to rise strongly, owing to the fact that the two technologies have emerged as the cheapest new-build option.

The plan will also be aligned with the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition’s initiative to create industrial development master plans for various sectors under its ‘re-imagined industrial strategy’, as well as the Public Private Growth Initiative (PPGI), set up with the aim of supporting President Cyril Ramaphosa’s drive to galvanise \$100-billion-worth of investment between 2018 and 2022.

The renewables sector is one of 12 sectors earmarked by the PPGI and Trade and Industry Minister Ebrahim Patel has indicated that it should finalize its master plan within the coming ten months.

The initiative is also likely to feed into the Presidential Climate Change Commission, which Environment, Forestry and Fisheries



Minister Barbara Creecy says will become a key platform for facilitating South Africa’s just transition to a low-carbon economy.

Levington, who has been central in the development of the Solar Industry Development Plan, reports that the solar-focused strategy is currently being broadened into the Renewable Energy Industry Development Plan, with the support of the South African Renewable Energy Council (SAREC).

SAREC is currently also in consultations with Mineral Resources and Energy Minister Gwede Mantashe on the contribution renewables could make to reigniting growth in South Africa.

The Minister has controversially requested IPPs to consider voluntarily lowering the tariffs associated with the early renewables projects so as to offer relief to Eskom and consumers.

■ The extension of time horizon

Some of the solutions being proposed include the extension of the time horizon for power purchase agreements, which could

allow some plants to lower tariff charges. Also under consideration is the accelerated initiation of the next procurement rounds, which, owing to the steep fall in solar PV and wind prices since the previous procurement rounds, will immediately help lower the average tariff paid to IPPs by the single buyer office, currently located within Eskom.

However, Levington stresses the need for a longer-term framework that directly links a government commitment to sizable and regular procurement rounds to socioeconomic contributions from the renewables sector. These could range from ensuring that former coal miners received employment preference in new renewables projects, through to the establishment of manufacturing enterprises to supply into the renewables plants.

“Without a detailed inclusive plan everyone is staring into the dark and everyone just sees the energy transition as a threat, but it can also be an opportunity if we choose to prepare for a just transition. Before that can happen we need a shared vision of an energy future, then everyone knows where we are going,” Levington explains.

This gels with Creecy’s call for the just-transition debate to move beyond that of it being only a threat to embrace the emerging global consensus of there being no contradiction between economic growth and development and the investments required to mitigate against and adapt to climate change.

“We can’t just see climate change as a threat. We also have to see it as an opportunity,” Creecy argues.

(Source: m.engineeringnews.co.za)

New oil, gas fields discovered in Iran

E N E R G Y **TEHRAN** — The director of National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC)’s Discovery Department has announced discovering of new oil and gas fields in the country, IRIB reported on Wednesday.

Sharing a video on his social media, Saleh Hendi said the details of the discoveries will soon be revealed by the Oil Ministry.

Back in August, Hendi had announced that a new gas field was discovered in southern Iran.



He furthered noted that following the country’s sixth five-year development plan (2016-2021), NIOC have had very good achievements in exploration of new oil and gas reservoirs, so that now Iran ranks first in terms of oil and gas reserves.

“The U.S. sanctions haven’t had a significant impact on NIOC’s discovery activities and we are proceeding on schedule”, he added.

The official also said that plans were underway for beginning new exploration operations in northeast of the country.

The official noted that although exploration activities are costly and with more risks in the mentioned area, considering the region’s great distance from the country’s energy resources in the center or south, NIOC has put it on the agenda to start such operations.

This year, NIOC’s Exploration Directorate has also signed numerous agreements with Iranian universities and knowledge-based companies for research in various fields of geophysics, geochemistry, unconventional hydrocarbon resources and drilling.

EU gas market can’t absorb surplus LNG, say analysts

European gas prices are set to remain “weak” this winter with the market unable to absorb the ongoing surplus of LNG, which has led to an unprecedented number of stranded cargoes, market participants told Montel.

According to hellenicshippingnews.com, the November contract on the Dutch TTF hub, Europe’s most liquid, was last seen at a three-year low of EUR 15.25/MWh.

There were at least 10 LNG cargoes in the region stranded offshore, said Kjell Eikland, founder and director of Oslo-based consulting firm Eikland Energy, adding the logjam could worsen amid limited capacity in regasification plants and more supply entering the market.



“It’s a classic surplus situation that markets can’t absorb and the only solution is to not take their LNG cargoes.

“This type of market surplus with ships pilling up all over the place hasn’t even happened in Asia. It’s amazing,” said Eikland.

“It’s going to be quite a weak winter (for prices),” said Laura Page, lead LNG analyst at Refinitiv.

Europe’s declining demand amid a global economic slump and gas reserves at record highs, along with robust hub-priced piped supply from Russia and Norway, have coupled with an unprecedented availability of cheap LNG that was dragging prices lower, she added.

■ The LNG-buildup

The LNG build-up cold worsen as Iberia, the biggest LNG importer normally priced at a premium to European markets, turned away 11 cargoes in September, with nine more expected this month.

“We are talking about a surplus that is going to last for some weeks before upstream and downstream could be balanced. The industry has not faced this before,” Eikland said.

“Winter would have to come this week and last a few months to absorb the gas. You are going to see negative prices to (unload LNG). People are paying to get rid of LNG. This will last a few weeks,” he added.

“This market is changing,” said Wayne Bryan, analyst at Alfa Energy, adding steady growth in global LNG supply “in the midst of a global economic slowdown” would make it harder to balance the gas market.

Even in the case of a cold winter, the European market would struggle to absorb the LNG glut, though the possibility of Russian supply cuts if no transit deal was struck with Ukraine could lead to a price spike, analysts said.

Asian demand is not picking up the excess LNG either. “What you are really seeing is Asia doesn’t need LNG, so (its LNG prices) are tracking Europe.”

Companies with flexible, long-term LNG supply contracts were already slowing or cutting their scheduled deliveries, said Eikland.

“I’ve been waiting for that to happen. It’s the only way to clear the market. It’s that desperate. You can’t place any more volumes.”

“What you can potentially see is deeper maintenance,” said Page. “We’ve been seeing Norway flexing down on their volumes”, citing an outage at the country’s Troll field and also “winter maintenance at LNG plants”.

“What is exciting is what happens now. No more storage, no more tanks, so something has to give,” said Eikland.

Reasons to be optimistic and steadfast in Iran

1 → One of them is Sharmine Narwani, based in Beirut now but a former graduate of Columbia University Journalism School in New York (like myself) and then for several years a scholar at St. Antony's College at Oxford, has been called rather cynically an "idealist", and yet she above anyone else seems to have a big grip on the facts and the overall trends.

For examples, she has reported very much about the conflict over Syria. She has reckoned that Syria constitutes the main battlefield to date in what may amount to World War 3, where Western and GCC and Zionist funded and supplied terrorists like al-Qaeda were involved from the beginning of hostilities in 2011. She has reported about the internal, liberal reforms that Assad instituted almost a decade ago which were ignored by the West.



She has said that the reforms were "unprecedented" but still ignored, and that all the carnage since could have been avoided, and that a majority of Syrians supported, and currently support Assad overwhelmingly. She has remarked that the "axis of resistance" to Western imperialism and Zionist greed and control – Iran, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon – is a very real construct targeted by Sunni extremism funded by the West and its "allies", where the main goal has been to cripple Iran.

None is this is news to Iran, but then Narwani's idealism comes to the fore because she also asserts, as have some others but not as well, in taking the long view, that what the world is witnessing is a huge, major, global balance of power shift from West to East.

One could argue that what Napoleon began with his invasion of Egypt over 200 years ago, Western imperialism on the Middle East, is on its last legs, is being eradicated finally, and in part because the West, principally the U.S., is more or less broke financially and has not "won" anything of any value this century or even since Vietnam. This shift favors an outlook that is Eastern, not Western, and one that focuses on regional cooperation and projects like China's Belt and Road initiative.

It is also worth stating that the Pentagon has reportedly spent many millions waging "war games" against Iran, and in every instance they show the U.S., being roundly defeated in all the important strategic angles. And no doubt, the emergence of China, and the re-emergence of Russia, and Russia's and Iran's aide to Syria which effectively turned the tables on the terrorists in Syria, have been important factors in this global shift which has been underway for the past decade. It may be said in time that Iran, Russia and China will be key players in this coming, fresher world order where Western imperialism will be vanquished finally.

The risk of course is that the global hegemon and its allies (who have become flat footed behemoths with ossified thinking) will refuse to fade quietly and create yet more horrendous conflicts, but the TREND of major change is what's important and what must be grasped by Iran and its allies and give them heart and confidence to hold together patiently while the world becomes better balanced toward mutually beneficial relations and trade.

And it's worth noting that even some Iranians have remarked that sanctions may be helping "save" the country by forcing Iranians to begin to become producers, exporters and manufacturers of goods beyond petroleum. Russia, also under sanctions, seems to be prospering in many respects with the internal shifts it has been forced to make. Something to keep in mind in the Islamic Republic where internal liberalization, however slow, is happening – the latest move allowing females to attend soccer matches at Azadi is smart, for one thing, because it suggests more confidence among Iran's leaders.

Europe's pretext for evading Iran's demands

1 → He further said last summer Europe unveiled a new version of blocking law to counter the U.S. secondary sanctions.

The blocking law approach allows the European companies to lodge complaint before the European courts and demand compensation if they face the U.S. sanctions for their trade with Iran. But the said blocking law approach has not thus far been implemented.



The EU still lacks a united policy to turn rhetoric to applicable policies. In the meantime, deep engagement of the European and U.S. economies means that European politicians do not want to face severe reaction from European companies which do not want to choose one at the cost of the U.S. market.

At the end, it should be mentioned that the European countries' action over preliminary nuclear deal in 2003 and also over the JCPOA testifies their disloyalty to their promises. The European signatories of the JCPOA have not thus far done any acceptable measure to convince Iran to stay in the deal. Now, instead of pressing Brussels to protect the JCPOA as an important international deal, Paris has given a one-month time to Iran to agree with French President Emmanuel Macron's plan to save the deal.

Measures adopted by both the EU and the U.S. since May 2018, when Donald Trump withdrew Washington from the JCPOA, have proved that Tehran must never rely on the Western side's promises and that Brussels must shoulder its responsibility to convince Iran to remain in the deal.

“This is an attack on national sovereignty”: Algeria warns French MP Mathilde Panot

By Hana Saada

ALGERIA — Algerian Foreign Minister reacted to the controversy over the participation of the French MP Mathilde Panot at the popular movement in Algeria.

The Head of the Algerian diplomacy Sabri Boukadoum considered what the French MEP has committed as an "attack on national sovereignty".

Asked by the press on the sidelines of the opening of the National Conference on Bets for the Completion of the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement, with respect to the recent statements that were made by a member of the European Parliament on the popular movement and the political situation in Algeria, the Algerian Foreign Minister said that : "The principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries is a rule that Algeria will not depart from, and also rejects any external interference in its internal affairs from anyone, whether it is a civilian or a political person".

He clarified that the French Mathilde Panot, vice-president of the parliamentary group of La France insoumise – the left-wing party founded by Jean-Luc Mélenchon , has never been questioned.

"There was no question," he stressed.

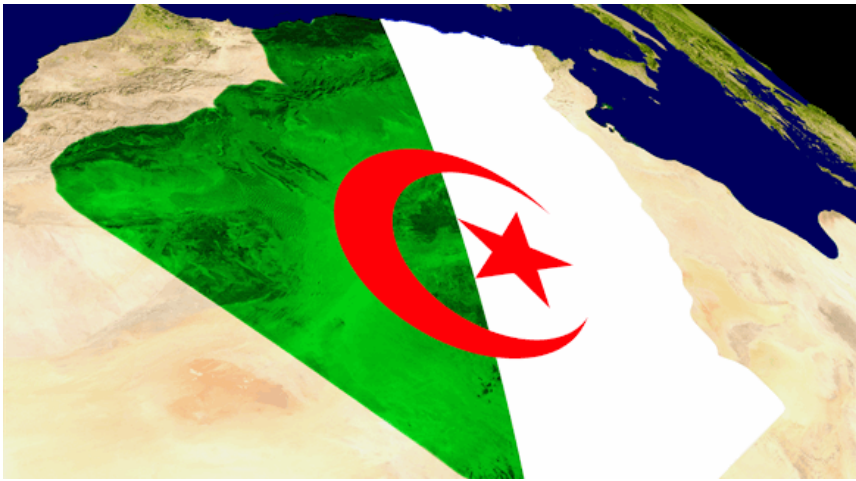
According to him, the French MP came to Algeria "with a tourist visa and tried to do things that have nothing to do with tourism".

"If an Algerian parliamentarian, a politician or even a journalist participates in demonstrations abroad, how will the host country respond? What will be the verdict of an Algerian citizen, MP or politician who might be arrested in marches in foreign countries?" wondered the Minister before continuing: "This is an attack on national sovereignty [...] She is a parliamentarian in France and not in Algeria".

Boukadoum asserted that the French MP is living in France and not in Algeria and its participation in Algerian protests may be considered as foreign interference and prejudice to the national sovereignty".

"This was not an arrest," he highlighted, underlining that "the demonstrations all over the world are reserved for the citizens of the country and not foreigners."

As a reminder, Mathilde Panot and her companions were "immobilized" for hours by the Algerian police, while they tried to go to Bejaia. For the member, this action is not



justified by any reason.

This move did not go unnoticed by the Algerians, who categorically rejected her interference in their country's affairs.

"The yellow vests in France need your support more than the Algerian people," they stressed, before adding: "Go to your country and support the demonstrators!"

In this vein, the Algerian official stressed that Algeria remains attached to its position and principle of "non-interference" in its political affairs and those of other countries, adding that this is one of the inalienable fundamentals of the Algerian diplomacy.

This event coincides with the Algerian Diplomacy Day celebrated in Algeria on October 8 of each year. The first president of independent Algeria Ahmed Ben Bella raised the colors of the Algerian flag at the UN headquarters in New York on October 8, 1962. One of the bases of Algeria's foreign policy is the sanctity of the sovereignty of states and non-interference in their internal affairs, while categorically rejecting any foreign interference in its internal affairs.

This is not the first time France interferes in Algeria's internal affairs since the outbreak of the popular movement on February, 22nd, 2019.

For his part, the Algerian Deputy Defense Minister, Army's Chief of Staff, Ahmed Gaid Saleh, recently accused Paris of "indirectly interfering in Algerian affairs," stressing that France has no right to get involved, and it is up to the Algerians only to decide and through a

democratic dialogue.

The Army Chief lambasted, too, EU interference in the country's affairs, vowing to flout external dictates. The remarks made on Saturday, September 28, by Marie Arena, President of the European Parliament's subcommittee on human rights, announcing a hearing with "a number of actors" of the 22 February movement in Algeria and the rejection of the holding of the presidential election, slated for December, 12th, were considered by the Army's Chief, Algerian politicians and the popular class as "a blatant attempt at interference" aimed at disrupting the holding of the 12 December presidential election. Her Statements sparked widespread controversy among the Algeria political and popular class, considering this move as an unjustified" provocation, especially since Algeria is preparing for important and decisive elections.

Mr. Gaid Salah said in a speech delivered during his visit to the 2nd Military Region, to the officials and personnel of this region, that he had "repeatedly stressed that there are hostile foreign parties plotting against Algeria and trying to interfere in its internal affairs with the blatant complicity of the gang, inside, that we war against playing with fire".

"With regard to the desperate attempts aimed at Algeria's security and stability, these underhanded attempts by some foreign parties with the complicity of the gang from within, which are watching Algeria and trying to interfere in its internal affairs", the Lieutenant General

stressed that the Algerian people "categorically refuse any interference in the internal affairs of their country and they do not accept any lessons from any party inviting these outrageous people to deal with the affairs and problems of their countries," the same source said.

"These are desperate attempts whose main purpose is to undermine the stability and security of Algeria and its people, who led an unprecedented Liberation Revolution, thanks to which, and also to the sacrifices of a significant number of Shouhadas, they have regained their freedom and independence and now enjoy full sovereignty in their homeland," he added.

For Lieutenant General, "this authentic and brave people has known, since the beginning of the crisis, how to expose these sneaky maneuvers and has expressed, through its peaceful marches whose civility has been welcomed by the whole world, its categorical refusal of any foreign interference in the internal affairs of its country, and it accepts no lessons from any part whatsoever, because it is sovereign in its decisions".

"I have also repeatedly stated that what is happening in Algeria is an internal matter that concerns only Algerians, and that the people, aligned alongside their army, will know how to deal with these maneuvers, which will be doomed to failure, especially as they have begun their way out of the crisis as soon as possible through the organization of free and transparent presidential elections, which will be held, with Allah's help, at their meeting scheduled for December 12," he said.

On the occasion, he reiterated that "Algeria, with its prestigious history and its free people, remains sovereign in its decisions and that the authentic Algerian people, with all its fringes, categorically refuses any blatant interference in the country's affairs by any party. As I would like to tell these outraged people to care about their affairs and the problems of their countries, Algeria will know how to triumph and emerge from its crisis, strong by its people, and safe by its army."

As a reaction to Army's Chief remarks, the European Parliament rushed to respond, backtracking in support for the movement.

For its part, the Foreign Ministry has not issued a statement on this issue, explaining that "the EU MPs are hundreds and the ministry cannot respond to anyone who initiates comments on Algeria, which is already rejected".

Bush is not your friend !

By Lucy Steigerwald

ANTIWAR — Earlier this week, talk show host Ellen DeGeneres gave a monologue justifying the time she spent with George W. Bush at a football game. In response to some outrage and annoyance over their friendly association, DeGeneres said a lot of very nice, very hollow words about disagreements not ruining friendships. All of this was fit for your hypothetical Republican or hawkish friend or neighbor, and none of it applied to a man who started two wars abroad, and built a strong foundation for spying and militarization at home.

You have to wonder what DeGeneres and Bush talked about. The answer is probably nothing. DeGeneres is obviously amusing, and Bush has that goofy, casual faux cowboy thing. Light banter, sports talk, being rich and comfortable. It is unlikely that they discussed Bush backing a constitutional amendment to prevent DeGeneres from being able to ever marry her now-wife. It's even more unlikely that they discussed the 500,000 or so deaths for which Bush is responsible.

Republicans, fetishists for civility above all things, and anyone else obsessed with the idea of "cancel culture" run amok are suddenly DeGeneres' biggest backers. Liberals and leftists were more inclined to cringe at DeGeneres' words, and a social squabble is brewing. Perhaps a few right-wing-adjacent people will correctly notice that Ellen would not have faced a backlash if she had palled around with Barack Obama, the man who set exciting new precedent in the field of perpetual drone warfare and assassinations of Americans (and others) without trial or charge.

Going through life only speaking to people with whom you agree politically is a bad idea, and a more difficult one than people complaining about various bubbles remember. However, there is a categorical difference between a former US president and just about everyone else on the planet. DeGeneres saying,

"We're all different, and I think that we've forgotten that that's OK" sounds good. However, being a terrible, warmongering president is different than the average person, and it is not okay.

Speaking to Bush doesn't doom you to hell – being in his vicinity could be irresistibly interesting. But DeGeneres' lovely bullshit confirmed that some 22 years after wounding her own career by bravely coming out of the closet, she is now Middle America's favorite nice woman.

Tonight Show host Jimmy Fallon ruffled Trump's hair, to much liberal annoyance. Stephen Colbert, who savaged President Bush to his face at a legendary White House Press Correspondents Dinner, later palled around with Henry Kissinger on his Colbert Report. Talk Show hosts are an ancient breed of mainstream that in the face of screaming cable news and a tweeting president seems warm and fuzzy and safe. Perhaps it is safe, for those of us always free to marry, or not to be bombed.. It's just easier to be like Ellen, Fallon, and Colbert – not better, not braver, not more enlightened. Just easier.

We've finally decided to pretend we understand that the war in Iraq was a monstrous thing. Rhetorically, sure, we're almost all on team "oops." But nobody who backed the war has suffered the slightest consequences. What if a vote for the war meant you weren't the Democratic nominee for president? What if the punishment for bloodshed was at the very least a cold shoulder and fewer party invitations?

President Trump's exhausting pettiness as national policy isn't the ideal. His authoritarianism is simply more naked and less wonkish than what we're used to. Americans are understandably exhausted by the politicization of everything, but the solution is not to pretend that politics is something other than it is, or that the death and misery caused by a politician is just a difference of opinion.

Politicians have much more power than the average person, why act as if their actions are nothing more than a wrongly

cast ballot? Why grant them murderous power, then act as if they just had some misguided views once? Why give them everything that easily? Why are Americans unable to back the smallest consequences for the deaths of hundreds of thousands?

People change. Talking to people you dislike or who are terribly mistaken, or have blood on their hands can be productive, fascinating, or infuriating. But George W. Bush is not the same as your Republican grandfather, unless he is your Republican grandfather. Talk to him, sure. Don't pretend that he's just another ingredient in America's melting pot.

Only a handful of people ever grasp that the small, bureaucratic parts they play in war or surveillance count as a moral failing. Whistleblower Daniel Ellsberg understood it, and risked his freedom for it. Chelsea Manning has sacrificed hers. Edward Snowden left his home, perhaps permanently, in order to try to save it from the war-fueled surveillance state. The late Congressman Walter Jones went from being the architect of the embarrassing "freedom fries" name change on the cusp of the invasion of Iraq to a man permanently guilty about his part in a terrible wrong – as he should have been.

This is not through a desire to see Jones (or anyone else) suffer. His guilt spoke to his character. He was a good enough man to realize that he couldn't fix what he had helped break, but that it was an obligation to try to alleviate some of that subsequent suffering.

Republicans are the most likely to complain about a lack of accountability – a society that involves too much coddling. They also seem the most ready to be indignant that someone might be rude or insulting towards the formerly most powerful man in the world.

DeGeneres is right that the world needs more kindness, more conversation – that shunning will not solve every social ill. Let's not start by pretending a warmongering president is the same as everyone else.

Prof. William Beeman: Impeachment of Trump for democrats is A gamble

TEHRAN (FNA) — Prof. William O. Beeman, chair of the anthropology department at the State University of Minnesota, says some Democrats point out that Trump really has committed a crime, and if they don't impeach him, they will be supporting his criminal action.

Speaking in an exclusive interview with FNA, Professor Beeman said, "These people fear that their own Democratic voters will punish them for not impeaching."

He also said "for Democrats this process is a gamble".

William Orman Beeman is an American scholar whose specialty is the Middle East; [1] he is a professor of anthropology at The University of Minnesota, where he is Chair of the Department of Anthropology. For many years he was Professor of Anthropology; Theatre, Speech and Dance; and East Asian Studies at Brown University.

Below is the full text of the interview:

■ Following Trump's phone conversation with Ukrainian President, the impeachment of Trump has come under serious scrutiny. Trump's impeachment was to be postponed until after

the 2020 US presidential election. Why did the Democrats activate Trump's impeachment plan?

A: The House of Representatives has not voted to hold impeachment hearings yet. The Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi, has opened "impeachment investigations" through six House of Representatives committees. They have purposely not voted to open formal impeachment hearings to protect Democrats who were elected from districts that voted for President Trump, and who might be in danger in the 2020 elections from voters who favor Trump. However, many people expect that the impeachment hearings will be voted on soon, and that the President might be impeached before the end of November (the Thanksgiving Holiday)

■ US Senate is said to be unlikely to get Trump removed from office. What could be the price of an unsuccessful impeachment of President Trump for the Democrats?

A: The House of Representatives impeaches a president or other government officials with a simple majority vote. The impeachment does not lead to removal. It is just a formal accusation.

The Senate then tries the official, like a court, with the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court trying to hearings. After this trial, the Senate can remove him or her from office with a 2/3 majority vote. Impeachment of Trump (the formal accusation) is likely to succeed in the House of Representatives. The removal of the president is likely to fail in the Senate, because Republicans are the majority in the Senate, and reaching a 2/3 majority (67 Senators) voting to remove the president is likely impossible.

Many Democrats feel that impeaching the President but not removing him from office is dangerous for them. They feel that if the Senate does not remove him, he will claim that he has been exonerated, and that the impeachment itself was a partisan effort on the part of Democrats and had no merit. Democrats feel that this will result in Trump being re-elected in 2020, and the loss of Democratic seats in both the Senate and the House of Representatives.

Other Democrats point out that Trump really has committed a crime, and if they don't impeach him, they will be supporting his criminal action.

These people fear that their own Democratic voters will punish them for not impeaching. So you see, this is a difficult political decision for Democrats. At present there is no clear outcome for the impeachment process.

■ What are the odds for Trump's removal. Will his impeachment lead to his dismissal?

A: No, the impeachment is just a formal accusation – an indictment. The president can only be removed by a 2/3 vote in the Senate after the impeachment is approved.

■ How will Trump's impeachment and its consequences affect the 2020 US presidential election?

A: Trump thinks that if he is impeached and not removed, it will help him with voters. Some Democrats agree. Other Democrats feel that the impeachment investigation itself will expose his crimes and make him less attractive to voters. So for Democrats this process is a gamble. Personally, I feel that Trump will not be removed from office, and may even be re-elected. A great deal will depend on which candidate Democrats choose to run against Trump

Who is Edward Snowden?

By Gilbert Doctorow

ANTIWAR — Edward Snowden's recently published autobiography Permanent Record became a bestseller instantly, before any critical reviews in major media, thanks to the author's notoriety. The reviews followed and they make for curious reading as I look over The Guardian, The Wall Street Journal, The New York Review of Books and The New Yorker. Though the reviewers take very different positions on Snowden, his villainy or heroism, they seem all to have read him very attentively and offer their readers many choice quotations from the book. Most of the reviews are fairly self-indulgent, none more so than Jonathan Lethem writing in The New York Review, who uses Snowden's book as springboard for a discursive narrative on his own life experience.

In what follows, I will try to stay close to the book, which I would call a 'page-turner' although the first half, or approximately 150 pages, are a yawn. From his earliest childhood up to his first postings abroad, in Geneva and then in Tokyo, Snowden was little more than a techie-nerd, a mono-maniac with no exceptional characteristics other than his aptitude and growing skill set in his chosen field of systems engineering in the computer world. His personal growth occurred exponentially in the six years that followed and he emerges at the end of the book fully formed, a powerful defender of freedom of speech, of privacy on the Internet and throughout our world which has become broadly digital during his lifetime.

The outstanding feature of Snowden is that we observe already in the dull first half is that he is an autodidact from start to finish. Both for reasons of ill health and for reasons of condescension to school learning, Snowden dropped out of high school after a little more than one year. His only concession to the formal demands of future employers was his taking and passing a high school equivalency exam. Thereafter his formal training was limited to the specialized courses that would confer on him the highest grade in Microsoft programming certification, the absolute requirement for his future career, the 'open sesame' for his gaining access to the entirety of NSA, CIA and other employers' cyber infrastructure, alongside the top secret clearances he received for reasons of his youth and tabula rasa record when he entered the government employ.

From his earliest years, Snowden put the bare minimum of effort and presence into the public schools, reserving for himself the nights which he spent online playing video games and picking up whatever was available to learn in cyber space. What exactly there was to learn and how he proceeded through these riches he does not tell us. And that is the single biggest enigma of this book, of this personality which leads me to ask Who is Edward Snowden?

There are two dimensions to his self-education that jump out at any careful reader of this book. First, how did he acquire and properly integrate his fairly broad knowledge of the law, political science, history and languages, which include French, German, Latin and Japanese. Second, where did he acquire the moral compass that his very few peers in the field possess, which drove him ultimately to decide the questions before him of "if not me, then who?" and "if not now, then when?" as he took his leap across borders, left behind his comfortable and well-paid existence in Hawaii living with the woman of his dreams, for a path of betrayal of the U.S. intelligence services that could as easily have led to his summary execution or being hooded and shackled by agents of his employers for return to the United States and a pro forma trial behind closed doors.

These questions remain unanswered as you close Snowden's book. However, there are other insights which provide partial compensation. One is that he embodies the consummate engineer's personality which revolves around the question: how does it work? As a young child, during his father's absence, he disassembled the treasured home computer and then almost, but not quite managed to reassemble it. It is this intensely inquiring mind that ultimately led him to investigate the capabilities and ambitions of the NSA in mass data collection. This was prompted when he presented a report on such programs in China during his Japanese sojourn. As he reasoned, if the technology was there, it was sure to be deployed if it had not already been, and he was likely looking into a mirror of America's illegal activities. From that, he tracked down the elements of the relevant programs, ending in his discovery of how it all operated at the level of targets of surveillance.

The other insight explains where he found the time for his self-education and for his investigations into NSA criminality while holding down a full-time job. The answer comes from his rare skills, which led him to being virtually unmanageable by his employers.

Following his emergence as the source of the leaks regarding its big data operations on American communication systems, the NSA sought to disparage Snowden by describing him as a low-level contractor. In the pages of this book, Snowden explains that low-level was accurate only with respect to his position on the management ladder, whereas in terms of access to secure data he says he was one of perhaps a dozen people in the world with such freedom, all of which resulted from the requirements of his systems engineering job as a fixer and re-combiner of infrastructures. Moreover, Snowden goes on to explain that a very substantial share, perhaps a majority of the technical computing positions of those employed in the NSA, in the CIA alongside "govvies" are precisely employees of government contractors like Dell or Booz Hamilton Allen, where Snowden was on the payroll in an ever changing career line. The main reason he gives for this state of affairs is that it was a way for the intelligence services to work outside their congressionally approved budgets and given headcounts. Add to that the unavailability of the needed technical skills within the cohort of traditional recruits to these agencies coming from political science and law backgrounds. This arrangement also made it possible for talented technologists to earn much more than a purely government career would allow them as they moved back and forth between blue and green badges.

However, from my own knowledge of the situation in the intelligence services post 9/11, there was in parallel a massive purge initiated by Vice President Dick Cheney, when the traditional staff trained in Soviet studies was kicked out and new staff with skills in Arabic, Farsi and the other language and area studies of the current threats to American security was brought on fully trained via contractors. In tandem, there was a significant shift in the methodology of the agencies away from secret sources to open access sources.

As regards the new technologists being brought into



intelligence work, clearly there was a management issue. It made much more sense to recruit via third parties which had experience managing technologists than to place them directly under the control of mid and higher level employees who did not have a clue as to what their new reports were supposed to do.

Nonetheless, it is perfectly obvious from Snowden's book that even technically savvy contractors such as he worked for were unable or unwilling to exercise close management of employees who were serving at computer desks in the NSA or CIA. Snowden informs us directly that when he arrived at his new job in The Tunnel, in Hawaii, he immediately set up an autopilot program to essentially do his job for him, freeing all his time to pursue his investigation into NSA malfeasance, into downloading and taking away thousands of documents from the data banks of the intelligence services. This was made all the more possible by his opting for night shift work, when he was virtually alone on the floor and could do whatever he wanted without being interrupted or watched.

His words reminded me at once of a co-worker during my employment with United Parcel Service Deutschland, in the late 1980s, early 1990s. Like Snowden, my buddy had barely finished high school and made his till then meager career by his wits, namely by his inborn talent in mathematics. He told me once of his experience working for the Social Security Administration in Washington. Computers were just becoming a part of the workplace back then but already the issues flagged by Snowden had emerged. Frank would be given a computer-related task by his computer-illiterate boss, who then asked how long it would take to resolve. Frank would make a face, then say "Boss, this is a toughie. I'll need three days to work on it." That timeline would be approved. Then Frank would solve the task in fifteen minutes and take the remainder of the three days to goof off.

The technologists around Snowden seem also to have spent a good part of their time goofing off. After all, these systems engineers were basically there to fix some emergency if and when it occurred, not to baby-sit the machines minute by minute. And so they would use their time sharing nude photos of girls they were stalking online. Meanwhile, Snowden had all the time in the world for his self-education and for his chosen research project. For those of us who are professional followers of Russian affairs, the most frequently occurring publications we find in the biographical – autobiographical genre detail the life of Vladimir Putin. Such books in one way or another present and then try to answer the question Who is Vladimir Putin? Very commonly they devote considerable attention to what are considered the formative elements of his personality and behavior, his childhood in St. Petersburg (then rather poor postwar Leningrad) and his service as a KGB intelligence officer posted abroad in East Germany.

Comparison of these two individuals, Putin and Snowden, has objective merit outside the preoccupations of the Russia expert community. Both men today have in common residence in Moscow. They are both among the best known persons in the world, and possibly in their own ways are among the most influential people in the world. They are separated by something between one and two generations in age terms, separated by a chasm in terms of technology: Putin is virtually tech-ignorant and antipathetic except as the needs of the Russian economy require it. Snowden is the incarnation of the Internet age generation, representing the wave of the present and future.

But what they have in common is precisely their service in the intelligence services. Both were, in the broad sense of the word, spies. Meanwhile, in the narrow sense of the word, both have demonstrated remarkable talent in assuming different guises, in fitting into hostile environments, and in carrying on with extraordinary sang froid under very stressful situations when confronted by real or potential enemies. And there you have the key to the opening question: why it is difficult to explain who they are and how they came to be who they are today.

It is interesting that, writing from Moscow, from the country which was perhaps the only one in the world with the ability and the determination not to heed threats from Washington over his extradition and instead to grant him temporary and renewable asylum status, Snowden does not once mention Putin by name in his 340 page book, nor does he describe his feelings about Russia and Russians though he has been there now more than six years. This is all the more surprising given that Russia did in fact experience a serious deterioration in relations with the United States when the Obama administration decided to punish the country for its intractability over Snowden. Instead we read in Snowden statements on his libertarian political views. These are given in relation to the Arab Spring. But, reading between the lines, they are also obliquely anti-Russian, anti-Putin:

"In an authoritarian state, rights derive from the state and are granted to the people. In a free state, rights derive from the people and area granted to the state...It's this clash, between the authoritarian and the liberal democratic, that I believe to be the major ideological conflict of my time – not some concocted, prejudiced notion of an East-West divide, or of a resurrected crusade against Christendom or Islam. Authoritarian states are typically not governments

of laws, but governments of leaders, who demand loyalty from their subjects and are hostile to dissent. Liberal-democratic states, by contrast, make no or few such demands, but depend almost solely on each citizen voluntarily assuming the responsibility of protecting the freedoms of everyone else around them, regardless of their race, ethnicity, creed, ability, sexuality, or gender."

In the book, Snowden discusses at some length his motivation for becoming a whistle-blower and serving the public interest, as opposed to being a mere "leaker" who is driven by personal or institutional ambition. He is deeply offended by the NSA's violation not merely of existing US law constraining its data collection rights but by its more fundamental violation of the US Constitution's protection of privacy. He points an accusing finger at Director of National Intelligence James Clapper for perjury in declaring to the US Congress that no such data collection was going on. What he intended to do by his fully documented revelations of NSA criminality was to initiate a public debate on citizens' rights to privacy in the digital age, disputing the contention of these state agencies that individuals sacrificed their ownership of their data when they contracted with the telecoms companies and internet service providers.

Measured against this objective, Snowden can proudly tell us in the final chapter of his book that he achieved a large measure of success. Already in 2013 President Obama conceded that a national debate on these issues had begun. Both the courts and the Congress subsequently curtailed the intelligence services' collection and access to big data, while the Internet and other technology service companies have built essential encryption features into their products to protect the public, starting with the "https" designation for protected sites.

Speaking as a member of the subset within the Russia expert community that might be qualified as "dissidents," that is being opposed to the US foreign policy to Russia, which we believe is heading the West towards an unwanted and potentially catastrophic war with Moscow, I am frankly envious of Snowden's success in sparking public debate on the issue for which he was a dissident voice. We have had no such luck, and, upon reading Snowden, it is apparent why: to bring his case to the American public, Snowden relied entirely on the Fourth Estate, the press. With the brave, unstinting support of journalists Laura Poitras, Glenn Grenewald and Ewen MacAskill, and of the publications they worked for or cooperated with, including The Guardian and The Washington Post, Snowden's stories reached the broad American and global public within days of his placing his cache of documents in their hands. A video interview with him during their initial meeting in his Hong Kong hotel taken by Poitras was aired on YouTube.com and on television, bringing his case directly to that vast audience even before the intelligence agencies had the time or opportunity to discredit and demean him. All of this media treatment for Snowden and data privacy is in stark contrast to the challenges we in the dissident Russia expert community face. In our case, the mainstream media are precisely the handmaidens of government in discrediting our advocacy of détente and of national self-preservation, applying to us the tar of "stooges of Putin."

Snowden has been blessed with recognition by some in mainstream as well as alternative media as an intellectual leader. He is now a member of the board of the Freedom of the Press Foundation alongside such heroic defenders of the public's right to know as Daniel Ellsberg. He has earned his living as a lecturer. That being said, one may well be skeptical of the survivability of the Fourth Estate in our digital age. The very dis-intermediation and monetizing of personal data by corporations that have accompanied the digital wave are destroying the economic foundations of journalism, an issue that Snowden does not touch upon in his book, nor does it seem to be mentioned in the website of his Freedom of the Press Foundation. It is no secret that today well above 50% of graduates from our schools of journalism never enter the newsroom, instead finding corporate jobs in public relations, where careers are still to be made.

Finally, the question "who is Edward Snowden" raises several key issues with the methodology we apply when reading works in the genres of biography and autobiography. It is an open question to what extent the subjects are the product of their youth, of their formal education and even of their formal job descriptions. Second, and more relevant to the case at hand, is the importance of mind over matter, of intellect over emotion in explaining how great people evolve and enter public space. I have described Snowden's intellectual and moral growth in his 20s as exponential. The same may be said of Vladimir Putin in the twenty years he has been in power. This ability to grow in is a very rare commodity that is usually overlooked by biographers and autobiographers.

These factors also were overlooked by the NSA and the CIA when they vetted and eventually moved Snowden along his career path. It was the hubris of his employers and their assumption that those below deck could be kept there by threat of violent force, if need be, that opened the way for Edward Snowden to become the hero we encounter at the end of Permanent Record.

Trade war won't distract China's development

GLOBALTIMES — The new round of high-level China-US trade talks will be held in Washington on Thursday and Friday. The US side made positive statements not long ago, yet it also exerted new pressure on China by blacklisting 28 Chinese entities and imposing visa restrictions on Chinese officials related to Xinjiang.

The trade talks will be tough and the result highly uncertain. It is said that the Chinese delegation will leave the US on Friday night (US time) after completing the scheduled agenda. Chinese society needs to see this round of trade talks calmly regardless of the result.

Further US tariffs on Chinese products are due to take effect on October 15. But it is unnecessary for Chinese to see this date as a Sword of Damocles. The China-US trade war has lasted for over one-and-a-half years. Any new conflict will be significant, yet the impact will be limited.

An alternate trade war and trade talks may become a new normal in China-US trade relations. We need to strive for the best result in each round of trade talks, but we should also safeguard our core interests without fear of more twists in the trade talks. We need to find a balance between contradictory and complex dynamics, possibilities and choices. For a country like China, no result will really intimidate us. The internal dynamic, not external views, has provided the biggest driving force of China's development. We always stress the importance of doing our own things well. It is how we truly think, and is not a propaganda slogan.

Despite the trade war, the Beijing Daxing International Airport has been put into operation and China's high-speed railway, expressway and urban rail transit are extending their mileage. No matter we engage in trade war or trade talks, infrastructure construction in China will continue and efforts to improve our life won't cease. US pressure will spur scientific research. As China's economy grows stronger, how can the economic level go downhill?

Frankly, when the trade war will end is not up to China. But whether the country can continue developing and improving depends on China itself. The nearly 20-month-long trade war has made this clearer.

China-US relations are certainly not the same as US-Soviet Union ones. The Cold War will never return. But China-US relationship cannot go back to where it was a few years ago either. Some in the US have repeatedly stirred conflicts with China. Controlling these conflicts is of the same importance to Washington. Neither the US nor China knows how to get along with each other in the future. It might be the fundamental cause of why China-US trade talks are so difficult to reach a deal.

China and the US may need to "cross the river by feeling the stones." Chinese people should calm down and be patient. Many things have to be learned, given the complexity of China-US ties. We should neither pin our hopes on a few breakthroughs nor concern ourselves with possible unbearable changes.

The world is changing. We need to gather strength to deal with potential threats, and stay kind to make it possible to eliminate conflict. As a big power, China should be confident to move forward.

China and India can surmount geographical barriers to come together

GLOBALTIMES — The second informal meeting between President Xi Jinping and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, which is scheduled between October 11 and 12, is set to enhance bilateral relations and trust along with fostering cooperation between the two Asian countries in all fields.

In comparison with Northeast and Southeast Asia, China's links to South Asia are impeded by geographical barriers like the mighty Himalayas and the massive Karakoram mountain range.

Though China is not too distant from the Indian subcontinent, terrain renders the cost of people-to-people contacts and economic links high. Yet the prospects of cooperation between China and South Asia remain good.

India enjoys a special standing in South Asia. It leads the region in area, population and economic indicators. India is not only an important regional partner of China but also to some extent influences China's cooperation with other countries in the region.

China is a close neighbor of South Asia as it has borders with five of eight countries in the region, namely Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Nepal and Bhutan. With implementation and development of the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), Beijing has increased its investment and influence in South Asia and become an important stakeholder in the region.

There have been voices in India worrying about China's presence in South Asia. However, we are in an age in which both China and India need an enabling environment to develop the economy. It also demands deeper interactions between countries, especially neighbors, to build a community of shared future for mankind.

It is not a zero-sum game for China and India in South Asia. There is enough space for the two to cooperate with each other and with other countries in the region.

First, people wish to see China and the eight South Asian countries with stronger links. The population of about 2 billion in South Asia endows it with great business opportunities. But weak links within South Asia and between the region and China have placed severe constraints on the countries to make full use of their potential and translate demographic dividend into the fruits of economic development.

In recent years, various initiatives aiming at promoting interconnections have been proposed by China - such as the China-Pakistan and China-Nepal-India economic corridors - and by other countries.

Second, China and South Asia have great potential to carry out industry cooperation. After over 40 years of rapid growth, the Chinese economy has entered a "new normal" and is faced with the task of structural adjustment to ensure its development. In the meantime, South Asian countries are in different stages of industrialization and urbanization with strong needs for traditional manufacturing such as small appliances, automobiles and power equipment. The reality of China and South Asia being at different stages of development clearly provides a broad space for both sides to strengthen cooperation and augment capacity.

Third, China and India will be able to together promote the Asian Century. Although land connections in South Asia are not smooth, sea links are more convenient. To the east, it can be linked to Asia-Pacific region via the Strait of Malacca; while to the west, it has connections with the Middle East, East Africa and Europe.

Amid massive geopolitical and geoeconomic changes, the geopolitical importance of the Indian Ocean continues to rise, which directly boosts India's strategic position. As the world's second-largest economy, China has its strength in the West Pacific region which is second to none.

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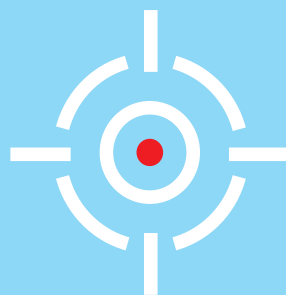
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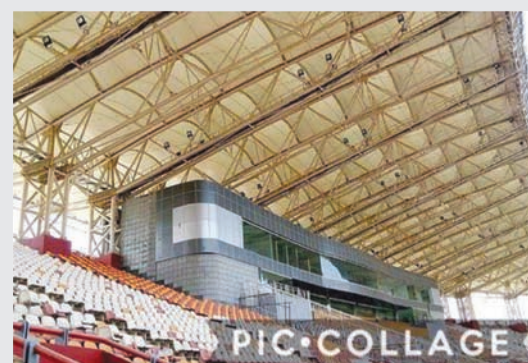
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Science of far-away planets and infant universe wins Nobel prize

Canadian-American cosmologist James Peebles and Swiss scientists Michel Mayor and Didier Queloz won the 2019 Nobel Prize for Physics on Tuesday for revealing the wonder of the evolution of the universe and discovering planets orbiting distant suns.

Peebles, of Princeton University in the United States, was awarded half of the 9-million-Swedish-crown (\$910,000) prize while Mayor and Queloz, from Switzerland's University of Geneva and Britain's Cambridge University, shared the rest.

"This year's Nobel laureates have painted a picture of our universe far stranger and more wonderful than we could ever have imagined," Ulf Danielsson, a professor and member of the Nobel Committee for Physics, told reporters as the prize was announced.

The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences said the scientists' research had "transformed our ideas about the cosmos".

Mayor and his one-time doctoral student Queloz said it was "simply extraordinary" to be awarded a Nobel for what they described as "the most exciting discovery of our entire career".

The pair announced the first discovery of a planet outside our own solar system, a so-called "exoplanet", in 1995.

"The study of exoplanets is perhaps the most vibrant field of astronomy," Martin Rees, a Cambridge University professor and Astronomer Royal, said in a emailed comment.

"We now know that most stars are orbited by retinues of planets; there may be a billion planets in our galaxy resembling the Earth," Rees added.

Since their discovery, more than 4,000



Goran K Hansson (C), Secretary General of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, and academy members Mats Larsson (L) and Ulf Danielsson, announce winners of the 2019 Nobel Prize in Physics during a news conference at the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences in Stockholm, Sweden, October 8, 2019. The 2019 Nobel Prize in Physics was awarded to James Peebles, Michel Mayor and Didier Queloz. (Claudio Bresciani/TT (News Agency/via Reuters

exoplanets have been found in the Milky Way, many of them nothing like our own world. Indeed, the first planet they found, 51 Pegasi b, orbits a sun 50 light years away that heats its surface to more than 1,000 degrees centigrade, the award-giving academy said.

With numerous ongoing searches for more exoplanets, this science might eventually also "find an answer to the eternal question of whether other life is out there," it said.

At a news conference in London, Queloz said the focus of research had now shifted from finding more planets to finding out more about them - about their atmosphere, chemistry and formation. Queloz also fielded inevitable questions about the possibility of extraterrestrial life.

"I can't believe that we're the only living entities in the universe," he said when asked if he believes "aliens" exist. "The chemistry that led to life is everywhere, so I'm a strong

believer that there must be life elsewhere."

Peebles thanked the Nobel committee for the award, although he said his advice to young people wishing to go into science would be not to be lured by the prospect of such prizes.

"The awards and prizes, well, they are charming and very much appreciated, but...you should enter science because you are fascinated by it. That's what I did," he told reporters by telephone after the award announcement.

Physics is the second Nobel to be awarded this week: William Kaelin, Gregg Semenza and Peter Ratcliffe shared the medicine prize on Monday for discoveries about how cells respond to oxygen levels.

The Nobel prizes were created in a bequest by Swedish dynamite inventor and businessman Alfred Nobel and have been awarded since 1901. This year's physics prize will be followed by the awards for chemistry on Wednesday, literature on Thursday and the peace prize on Friday.

Among the Nobels, physics has often taken center stage with winners featuring some of the greatest names in the history of science such as Albert Einstein, Marie Curie and Niels Bohr, as well as inventors such as radio pioneer Guglielmo Marconi.

Using theoretical tools and calculations, Peebles was able to interpret trace radiation from the infancy of the universe and discover new physical processes, the Nobel academy said.

He showed that matter readily seen around us, be it pebbles, mountains or stars, actually make up only 5%, with the rest made up of dark energy and dark matter.

(Source: Reuters)

Putin bestows award for courage on U.S. astronaut who survived rocket failure

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday bestowed a prestigious state award for courage on Nick Hague, the U.S. astronaut who survived a botched space launch last year.

A Russian Soyuz rocket bound for the International Space Station malfunctioned two minutes after liftoff on Oct. 11, 2018, forcing its two-man crew of Hague and Russian cosmonaut Alexei Ovchinin to make an emergency landing.

They landed unscathed in the Kazakh steppe after plunging 31 miles (50 km) in a capsule with parachutes slowing their descent.

Almost a year after the accident, Putin awarded Hague



the Order of Courage, according to a decree published on a government portal, noting the professionalism he had shown during the rocket failure.

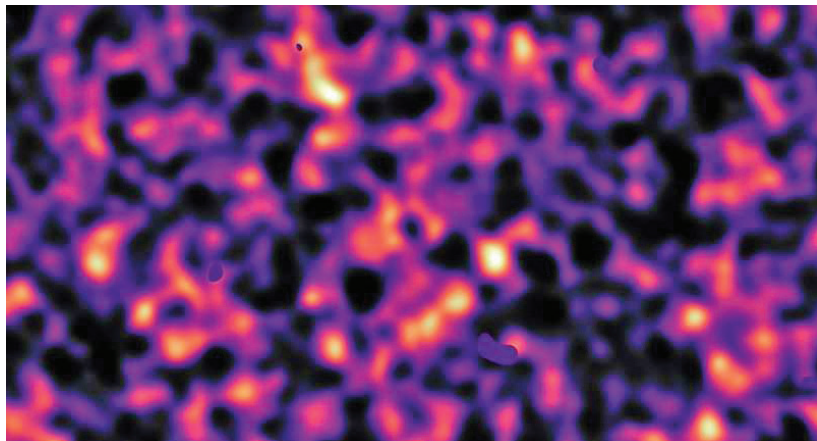
It was not immediately clear whether or when Hague would receive his award at a ceremony.

Russian investigators have said the rocket failure was caused by a sensor that was damaged during assembly at the Soviet-era cosmodrome at Baikonur.

Hague last week returned to Earth having successfully made it to the International Space Station in a repeat launch in March this year.

(Source: Reuters)

Cesium vapor aids in the search for dark matter



The hunt for dark matter is one of the most exciting challenges facing fundamental physics in the 21st century. Researchers have long known that it must exist, as many astrophysical observations would otherwise be impossible to explain. For example, stars rotate much faster in galaxies than they would if only 'normal' matter existed.

In total, the matter we can see only accounts for, at the most, 20 percent of the total matter in the universe -- meaning that a remarkable 80 percent is dark matter. "There's an elephant in the room but we just can't see it," said Professor Dmitry Budker, a researcher at the PRISMA+ Cluster of Excellence of Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz (JGU) and the Helmholtz Institute Mainz (HIM), explaining the problem he and many of his colleagues worldwide are contending with.

But so far no one knows what dark matter is made of. Scientists in the field are considering and researching a whole range of possible particles that might theoretically qualify as candidates. Among these are extremely lightweight bosonic particles, currently considered to be one of the most promising prospects. "These can also be regarded as a classical field oscillating at a specific frequency. But we can't yet put a figure on this -- and therefore the mass of the particles," explained Budker. "Our basic assumption is that this dark matter field is coupled to visible matter and has an extremely subtle influence on certain atomic properties that would normally be constant."

Budker and his team in Mainz have now developed a new method which

they describe in the current issue of the leading specialist journal Physical Review Letters. It employs atomic spectroscopy and involves the use of cesium atom vapor. Only on exposure to laser light of a very specific wavelength do these atoms become excited. The conjecture is that minute changes in the corresponding observed wavelength would indicate coupling of the cesium vapor to a dark matter particle field.

"In principle, our work is based on a particular theoretical model, the hypotheses of which we are experimentally testing," added the paper's principal author, Dr. Dionysis Antypas. "

With their new technique, the scientists have now accessed a hitherto unexplored frequency range in which, as postulated in relaxation theory, the effects of certain forms of dark matter on the atomic properties of cesium should be relatively easy to spot. The results also allow the researchers to formulate new restrictions as to what the nature of dark matter is likely to be. Dmitry Budker likens this meticulous search to the hunt for a tiger in a desert. "In the frequency range that we've explored in our current work, we still have not pinpointed dark matter. But at least, now that we've searched in this range, we know we don't have to do it again." The researchers still don't know where dark matter -- the tiger in his metaphor -- is lurking, but they now know where it is not. "We just keep on targeting in more closely on the part of the desert where the tiger is most likely to be. And, at some point, we will catch him," maintained Budker with confidence.

(Source: Science Daily)

Scientists observe year-long plateaus in decline of type Ia supernova light curves



This is a surprising finding as astronomers had expected that the light curve would not only continue decreasing but even experience a sharp drop, rather than flattening into a plateau.

The discovery is a huge step forward for astronomers as they use the brightness of these kind of supernovae to measure the rate of expansion of the universe.

The project began when scientists at the Center for Astrophysics | Harvard & Smithsonian (CfA) in the U.S. first noticed strange light curve behaviors while studying late-time Type Ia supernovae in 2015. This year they then confirmed light curve plateaus in Type Ia supernovae.

To better understand the strange behavior, the CfA teamed up with Adam Riess of The Johns Hopkins University and the Space Telescope Science Institute to study nearby supernovae using Riess's already-set HST programs.

Dr Luke Shingles from Queen's University Belfast played a role in interpreting the data. He commented: "This finding is a big surprise and will lead to advanced new simulations to analyze the plateau behavior in more detail. The discovery will also impact the way astronomers use Type Ia supernova light curves to measure distances, and give us more precise data on the expansion of the universe."

Or Graur from CfA said: "Most supernova research is conducted in the weeks or months immediately following an explosion, but we wanted to see how light curves behave at late times, around 500 to 1,000 days after explosion.

"Optical observations of SN2012gc in 2015 revealed a slowdown in the light curve as expected, but as we studied additional

supernovae over time, it became apparent that other mechanisms were at play, so we started looking for patterns to explain what was going on."

He added: "Even though these were all nearby supernovae, at these late times they were very faint. We needed Hubble's resolving power to be able to tell them apart from other stars in their respective galaxies.

"But what made the difference to our observations was that Adam's programs on Hubble also had near-infrared data in the H-band. What started as a fishing expedition revealed a portion of time where the light curve is flat, and that period lasts for up to a year. That was a surprise. I didn't expect to see that."

The idea of supernova light curve plateaus is not completely new to astrophysics. Type IIP supernovae, which are born of the collapse and explosion of hydrogen-rich super giants, commonly experience light curve plateaus roughly 100 days in length.

Dr Shingles said: "One hundred days is not only shorter than the year-long plateau that we found here but a bigger problem is that we think the plateau in Type IIP supernova is caused by hydrogen colliding with electrons, and Type Ia supernovae don't contain any hydrogen. This means we need a completely different explanation for the plateau in these objects."

Dr. Matt Nicholl, in the School of Physics and Astronomy at the University of Birmingham, says: "Type Ia supernovae produce a lot of iron. We think that the plateau might be related to how the iron atoms behave as they cool. They can absorb ultraviolet light and re-emit it in the infrared, so what we are seeing could be this fluorescence.

(Source: Science Daily)

New metasurface design can control optical fields in three dimensions

A team led by scientists at the University of Washington has designed and tested a 3-D-printed metamaterial that can manipulate light with nanoscale precision. As they report in a paper published Oct. 4 in the journal Science Advances, their designed optical element focuses light to discrete points in a 3-D helical pattern.

The team's design principles and experimental findings demonstrate that it is possible to model and construct metamaterial devices that can precisely manipulate optical fields with high spatial resolution in three dimensions. Though the team chose a helical pattern—a spiral helix—for their optical element to focus light, their approach could be used to design optical elements that control and focus light in other patterns.

Devices with this level of precision control over light could be used not only to miniaturize today's optical elements, such as lenses or retroreflectors, but also to realize new varieties. In addition, designing optical fields in three dimensions could enable creation of ultra-compact depth sensors for autonomous transportation, as well as optical elements for displays and sensors in virtual- or augmented-reality headsets.

"This reported device really has no classical analog in refractive optics—the optics that we encounter in our day-to-day life," said corresponding author Arka Majumdar, a UW assistant professor of electrical and computer engineering and physics, and faculty member at the UW Institute for Nano-Engineered Systems and the Institute for Molecular & Engineering Sciences. "No one has really made a device like this before with this set of capabilities."

The team, which includes researchers at the Air Force Research Laboratory and the University of Dayton Research Institute, took a lesser-used approach in the optical metamaterials field to design the optical element: inverse design. Using inverse design, they started with the type of optical field profile they wanted to generate—eight focused points of light in a helical pattern—and designed a metamaterial surface that would create that pattern.

"We do not always intuitively know the appropriate structure of an optical element given a specific functionality," said Majumdar. "This is where the inverse design comes in: You let the algorithm design the optics."

While this approach seems straightforward and avoids the drawbacks of trial-and-error design methods, inverse design isn't widely used for optically active large-area metamaterials because it requires a large number of simulations, making inverse design computationally intensive.

Here, the team avoided this pitfall thanks to an insight by Alan Zhan, lead author on the paper, who recently graduated the UW with a doctoral degree in physics. Zhan realized that the team could use Mie scattering theory to design the optical element. Mie scattering describes how light waves of a particular wavelength are scattered by spheres or cylinders that are similar in size to the optical wavelength. Mie scattering theory explains how metallic nanoparticles in stained glass can give certain church windows their bold colors, and how other stained glass artifacts change color in different wavelengths of light, according to Zhan.

"Our implementation of Mie scattering theory is specific to certain shapes—spheres—which meant we had to incorporate those shapes into the design of the optical element," said Zhan. "But, relying on Mie scattering theory significantly simplified the design and simulation process because we could make very specific, very precise calculations about the properties of light when it interacts with the optical element."

Their approach could be employed to include different geometries such as cylinders and ellipsoids.

The optical element the team designed is essentially a surface covered in thousands of tiny spheres of different sizes, arranged in a periodic square lattice. Using spheres simplified the design, and the team used a commercially available 3-D printer to fabricate two prototype optical elements—the larger of the two with sides just 0.02 centimeters long—at the Washington Nanofabrication Facility on the UW campus. The optical elements were 3-D-printed out of an ultraviolet epoxy on glass surfaces. One element was designed to focus light at 1,550 nanometers, the other at 3,000 nanometers.

The researchers visualized the optical elements under a microscope to see how well they performed as designed—focusing light of either 1,550 or 3,000 nanometers at eight specific points along a 3-D helical pattern. Under the microscope, most focused points of light were at the positions predicted by the team's theoretical simulations. For example, for the 1,550-nanometer wavelength device, six of eight focal points were in the predicted position. The remaining two showed only minor deviations.

(Source: phys.org)

Paralyzed man hails 'feat' of walking again with robot exoskeleton

The French tetraplegic man who has been able to walk again using a pioneering four-limb robotic system, or exoskeleton, said walking was a major feat for him after being immobile for years.

The French scientists behind the system, which was publicly unveiled last week, use a system of sensors implanted near the brain which send signals to the robotic system, moving the patient's legs and arms.

Speaking to media on Monday in the French city of Grenoble, the 30-year-old patient, who was identified only by his first name, Thibault, said he had to re-educate to use his brain when he started to try the whole-body exoskeleton.

"As I hadn't moved for two years I had to re-learn to use my brain," he said.

"At the beginning, walking was very difficult. Now I can stand up for two hours in the exoskeleton and I can do walking cycles for a very long time", he also said. "This is a feat for me."

In a two-year-long trial, two recording devices were implanted, one either side of Thibault's head between the brain and the skin, spanning the region of the brain that controls sensation and motor function.

Each recorder contained 64 electrodes which collected brain signals and transmitted them to a decoding algorithm. The system translated the brain signals into the movements the patient thought about, and sent his commands to the exoskeleton.

Over 24 months, the patient carried out various mental tasks to train the algorithm to understand his thoughts and to progressively increase the number of movements he could make. For now the exoskeleton is purely an experimental prototype.

(source: Reuters)

India to lift travel advisory on Kashmir two months after crackdown

SRINAGAR, India (Reuters) — India on Thursday will lift an advisory asking tourists and pilgrims to leave Jammu & Kashmir, further rolling back steps taken during a crackdown launched before the government scrapped the special status of the Muslim majority state two months ago.

But underlining the continued security risks after the state government issued its advisory late on Monday, police said on Tuesday that two militants belonging to Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) had been killed.

A military official told Reuters the militants were caught in a firefight in Pulwama district, some 25 kilometers (16 miles) south of Srinagar, the state's summer capital, and in the same area where in February a suicide bomber rammed a car into a bus carrying Indian paramilitary police.

A police official, who declined to be named, said the two deaths meant six militants had been killed since the crackdown began in August.

Thousands of Indian tourists, pilgrims and workers fled Jammu & Kashmir in early August after authorities issued a security alert over possible militant attacks by Pakistan-backed groups, assertions rejected by Islamabad.

Telephone and internet services were suspended and public movements restricted in some areas to prevent protests hours before India announced it had revoked the region's special status.

China's tourists cut back foreign travel over 'Golden Week', choose patriotic destinations at home

BEIJING (Reuters) — Chinese mainland tourists cut back on trips and spending abroad during the long "Golden Week" holidays in early October, with a weaker yuan, political turmoil in Hong Kong and global tensions dampening their enthusiasm to travel too far from home.

But "patriotic" tourism to local historic sites boomed on the 70th anniversary of the People's Republic of China. The annual holiday to mark the modern nation's founding, during which hundreds of millions of people travel, began on National Day on Oct. 1 and ended on Monday this year.

According to a report from Alibaba, which owns travel app Fliggy, hotel bookings in 10 classic destinations that had witnessed key moments in the history of the ruling Communist Party rose by an average of 300% year-on-year over Oct. 1-3.

Domestic tourism revenue grew 8.47% year-on-year over the break, slipping from 9.04% growth last year and marking the lowest growth in at least 17 years, according to data released by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism.

President Xi Jinping oversaw a massive military parade in Beijing on Oct. 1 to celebrate the anniversary.

Amid a cooling economy, many local governments across the country had ramped up tourism campaigns and promises of cheaper holidays in the run-up to the National Day holidays this year.

Chinese tourists also cut back overseas travel and spending. China is the single largest source of tourists in the world.

For the first six days of the holiday, the number of border crossings by Chinese mainland residents fell 15.1% from the previous year, according to the National Immigration Administration.

Tourists from the top seven Chinese cities for outbound travel reduced their per capita spending by amounts ranging from 16% to 25% compared to last year, according to Reuters' calculations based on data from online travel firm Ctrip.com.



ROUND THE GLOBE

Historic centers of Berat and Gjirokastra

These two fortified historic centers are remarkably well preserved, and this is particularly true of their vernacular buildings. They have been continuously inhabited from ancient times down to the present day.

Situated in the Balkans, in Southern Albania, and close to each other, they bear witness to the wealth and diversity of the urban and architectural heritage of this region.



Berat and Gjirokastra bear witness to a way of life which has been influenced over a long period by the traditions of Islam during the Ottoman period, while at the same time incorporating more ancient influences. This way of life has respected Orthodox Christian traditions which have thus been able to continue their spiritual and cultural development, particularly at Berat.

Gjirokastra was built by major landowners. Around the ancient 13th century citadel, the town has houses with turrets (the Turkish kule) which are characteristic of the Balkans region. Gjirokastra contains several remarkable examples of houses of this type, which date from the 17th century, but also more elaborate examples dating from the early 19th century.

Berat bears witness to a town which was fortified but open, and was over a long period inhabited by craftsmen and merchants. Its urban center reflects a vernacular housing tradition of the Balkans, examples of which date mainly from the late 18th and the 19th centuries.

(Source: UNESCO)

Swiss people know Iran for its ancient civilization: ambassador

TOURISM d e s k TEHRAN — Swiss ambassador to Tehran has said people of his country know Iran for its ancient civilization and the significant role that the country plays in the Middle East.

Markus Leitner told ILNA in an interview released on Wednesday that there are many issues Swiss people have heard about Iran and [it is clear that] when they visit Iran, they will definitely gain a deeper insight.

The Iranian people know more of Switzerland than just its precise watches, the same as the Swiss people know Iran because of its great civilization, natural sceneries and landscapes, and the important role it plays in the Middle East, the envoy said.

"There are many things that Swiss people know about Iran, and when they can travel to Iran, they will definitely know the country better. Of course, I think Iranians know much more than just Swiss watches about Switzerland."

He went on to say that the Swiss people are well-informed and know enough about Iran, like the Iranians that know

lots of things about Switzerland.

"Obviously, if we can make it easier for tourists to travel to both countries, better understanding will happen. Therefore, we encourage Swiss people to visit Iran. We also tell the Iranians that if they travel to Switzerland, they will face a different country. So we also encourage Iranians to travel to Switzerland."

"Although there are various capacities in Iranian tourism that can attract Swiss people traveling to the country, I think that Swiss tourists in Iran are interested in the arenas of cultural heritage and historical monuments that are found in cities like Isfahan, Shiraz and Yazd."

The ambassador also pointed to photos that Georg Gerster (Swiss journalist and a pioneer aerial photographer) took from Iran's landscapes and historical monuments in the 1970s, saying, "I think the photos of Georg Gerster, taken from the sky over Iran, have so far been shown in numerous exhibitions in Switzerland and elsewhere around the world, and it shows just how the Swiss people are interested in seeing Iran."



Rome's ambassador to Tehran Giuseppe Perrone (2nd L) meets with National Museum of Iran Director Jebrael Nokandeh at the museum in downtown Tehran, October 9, 2019.

Italian envoy visits National Museum of Iran

TOURISM d e s k TEHRAN — Rome's ambassador to Tehran Giuseppe Perrone on Wednesday paid a visit to the National Museum of Iran, exchanging views with the museum's director Jebrael Nokandeh to deepen cultural ties.

They also explored avenues for strengthening museum-related ties between Iran and Italy, CHTN reported on Wednesday.

Talking about a loan exhibit of Italian cultural heritage that the National Museum of Iran aims to host in the future, the two officials discussed an upcoming exhibition of works by Italy-based Iranian sculptor Bijan Basiri, which is scheduled to go on display at the National Museum of

Iran on Friday.

Moreover, the Embassy of Italy in Tehran is organized a one-day exhibit entitled "Nottambulo" ("Night Owl") in collaboration with the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art (TMCA) to mark Italy's Day of Contemporary Art, which falls on October 11, the TMCA announced on Tuesday.

Earlier this month in an interview with IRNA, Perrone said that for more than 20 centuries Iran and Italy have been the embodiment of Eastern and Western civilizations and such a long history of relationships and many historical, religious and cultural commonalities between the two nations has helped Iran and Italy better understanding each other today.

Tehran hosting congress on medical tourism in Islamic world

1 → Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Turkey, India, South Africa, Russia, Serbia, Hungary and Kyrgyzstan are among the countries whose representatives have been invited to take part in the event.

This event is not only for the Islamic countries, but it is also for all companies and organizations attempting to work in this huge market, according to organizers. Paying special attention and supporting active startups in the field of health tourism is another objective of this international event.

Addressing the audience, Alireza Zali, the president of the congress, stressed the importance of health and medial tourism in bringing non-oil revenues for Iran, saying that cities of the country, particularly Tehran, have a vast potential to offer quality medical services to foreign travelers at reasonable-prices.

Tourism minister Ali-Asghar Mounesan said in August that medical [and health] trav-



elers constitute a significant share of arrivals in the country.

"[Nearly] 7.8 million foreign nationals visited Iran over the past [Iranian calendar] year [ended March 20] that a significant number of whom were medical tourists," Mounesan noted.

The Islamic republic hosted a record high of nearly 600,000 medical travelers during the first four months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-July 21), nearly equal to the figure for the whole past year, according to an Iranian association for the health tourism promotion.

Many domestic experts say that medical tourism in Iran produces win-win outcomes as the country yields considerable benefits to international health-care seekers, offering affordable yet quality treatment services.

The country has set its goals to exceed its yearly medical travelers to around 2 million in [calendar year] 1404 (March 2025-March 2026).

Why your airline says it's sorry

The domestic airlines would like you to know that they are very sorry.

Delta is sorry about the time it kicked a family off a flight and threatened to arrest them. American is sorry about the time its employee seemed to almost accidentally hit a baby while grabbing a stroller. And United is probably the sorriest of all, about the time it put a passenger on a plane to San Francisco rather than Paris, about the time an infant passed out on a plane that sat on a hot tarmac and, of course, for that time a passenger sustained a concussion, a broken nose and lost two teeth when being ejected from a flight to accommodate an employee.

Air carriers have become more apologetic in the wake of the viral video spawned by that last episode, but those quick regrets have not led to broad systemic change in policy toward customers. Even as customer complaints against them soar, the airlines often respond with a quick refund or voucher, an apology that grabs headlines in a local news outlet, and business as usual. Some compensation policies for bumping passengers are more generous, but the main impact on consumers has been a seemingly never-ending stream of apologies that are a catalog of customer relations gone awry.

There is reason to say sorry, though. Justin T. Green, a lawyer at the New York City law firm Kreindler & Kreindler who specializes in aviation law, said apologizing reduced the chance of consumers' pursuing legal action because it leaves them feeling as though they have been honored. "An apology will go a long way to avoid a lawsuit and is a very effective and economical way to improve customer relations," he said.

The apologies picked up steam in April, after Dr. David Dao was dragged, bloodied, from the United

flight "The Dr. Dao instance was a public relations crisis for United, but worse, the airline didn't rush to say 'I'm sorry,' which led to even more customer outrage and even caused the airline's stock price to drop," said Joshua March, the founder of Conversocial, a software system that allows companies to engage with customers over social media.

Mr. March pointed out that United was already in hot water because of an episode a few weeks earlier at Denver International Airport, when a gate agent for the airline barred two teenage girls, who were "pass" passengers flying free, from boarding a flight after deeming that the leggings they were wearing were inappropriate.

"Both issues hurt United's image badly," Mr. March said, "and the lesson learned was that airlines need to jump to offer a heartfelt apology to their customers for any wrongdoings."

Since then, the airline has publicly apologized at least six times. It has plenty of reason. According to the Transportation Department, it had the highest number of reported complaints per customer in April.

Other United States carriers have also taken public blame — though less frequently — for customer mishaps. American's most notable apology came after the stroller episode, in which video — circulated heavily on social media — appears to show a flight attendant violently grabbing the stroller from a woman who was holding her 15-month-old twins, nearly hitting one of the babies as a result.

The airline suspended the flight attendant and said in a statement, "We are deeply sorry for the pain we have caused this passenger and her family and to any other customers affected."



Delta, too, apologized in its dealing with the family it was asking to leave an overbooked flight: The airline kicked a couple, Brian and Brittany Schear, and their two toddlers off an overbooked flight departing from Maui, Hawaii, to Los Angeles so that their seats could be given to waiting passengers; the Delta employee who asked them to leave said that they would be arrested if they didn't deplane. After the Schears posted a video of the interaction, Delta said in a statement that it was "sorry for the unfortunate experience."

Airlines don't always apologize, however. Over the weekend when Takeoff, a member of the rap trio Migos, was kicked off a Delta flight, the carrier arranged another flight for the group but offered no public apologies, saying that he had failed to listen to crew member instructions.

(Source: The New York Times)

Riyadh changing tack on Tehran: Mirage or oasis?

By Mehrdad Ferdows

TEHRAN — Saudi Arabia has sent a series of recent signals interpreted as willingness to de-escalate Tehran-Riyadh tensions, which have dominated the political landscape in the West Asia for a couple of years. But could these signals be taken seriously?

The first part of an article trying to answer this question was published on the October 10 edition of the Tehran Times.

This is the final part of the article:

■ Youthful bravado

Under President Hassan Rouhani, Iran has shown restraint toward what seen as the Saudi game of brinkmanship.

Speaking in a conciliatory tone, Tehran has spared no chance to invite its southern neighbor to dialogue on their differences and call for their cooperation in forming mechanisms to restore calm to the chaotic region.

But the oil kingdom has been spurning Iran's overtures during all these years, claiming Iran is a hopeless case and negotiations won't do any good.

It seems a combination of factors have prompted the House of Saud to take a pragmatic approach to mend fences with what it sees a bitter foe.

The 33-years-old crown prince Mohammed bin Salman, who has quickly moved up in the Saudi hierarchy, has faced setbacks associated with Saudi Arabia's foreign policy, particularly on Qatar and Yemen.

The ambitious prince, who effectively rules the country behind his desk at the royal palace, faces harsh outcomes resulting from serious miscalculations and his youthful bravado.

■ Failure to form anti-Iran coalition

Since taking the throne in January 2015, the new king and his son abandoned the kingdom's decades-long conservative foreign policy and employed an aggressive approach toward Tehran to challenge what they saw as Iran's growing influence in the region.

The setbacks associated with this policy of trying to pull the carpet from under Iran's feet in the region may have pushed the Saudi leadership to think about course corrections.

Shortly after coming to power, King Salman started trying to build an anti-Iran coalition to isolate Tehran, which fresh from years of sanctions after the 2015 nuclear deal was seeking to broaden its international engagement.

But one year later, when Riyadh cut relations with Iran, just a few of sidekick states toed the line and broke off contact with Iran, although the kingdom invited its allies to follow suit.

Even neighbors such as the UAE, Bahrain, Kuwait and Qatar fell short of its expectations by opting to only downgrade Tehran ties, and Oman kept its Iran relations untouched.

■ Qatar imbroglio

In January 2017, with the coming to power of Trump, who is deeply antagonistic toward Tehran, the Saudi government thought it is well positioned to achieve its long-sought goal.

Riyadh organized the so-called Arab Islamic American Summit the same year, where Salman and Trump—who was on an arms-selling trip to the Kingdom—took turns to vilify Iran as the top sponsor of terrorism and call on dozens of regional countries to work to isolate Tehran.

The Saudis, emboldened by the strong support by the US president, took steps days later to deal with Qatar's opposition to their anti-Iran designs.

In June 2017, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, along with Egypt and Bahrain, imposed a blockade of the peninsular nation and set conditions including that Doha should restrict ties with Tehran.

Perhaps Riyadh expected the tiny kingdom to come back to big brother cap in hand in no time, but the Qatari government facing megaphone diplomacy has so far weathered boycott and seems intent on outwitting the Saudi-led bloc.

Even worse, the Saudi push has ended up with an imbroglio, as Qatar normalized its relations with Tehran and broadened trade ties with the country.

Despite employing checkbook diplomacy to tilt regional states toward the Saudi side, any hope of isolating Tehran shows yet no immediate sign of materializing.

Apparently, the Saudi project to form an anti-Iran coalition has come across a huge obstacle too and has not-so-bright prospects.

■ Unreliability of Trump

Another source of concerns for the Saudi government is the US, on which it has depended for its external security ever since Ibn Saud's meeting with Franklin Roosevelt during World War II.



Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

Day by day, the Saudi government is feeling stronger that it can no longer rely solely on the US, whose influence in the region seems to be on the decline.

In May 2017, the Saudi government signed hundreds of billions of dollars of arms and other deals with Trump in Riyadh during his first overseas trip, apparently in a big investment to appease the capricious US president who at the election time had lashed out at Saudi Arabia as a lead supporter of terrorism and key provocateur in the region's disorders.

But the Saudi government may have come to the conclusion that they cannot rely on Trump's assistance to sustain their regional policies, as Trump faces real risk of impeachment.

Besides, the businessman-turned-politician who has grown accustomed to rapidly changing positions seems to care more about money than loyalty.

■ Shameful war in Yemen

The House of Saud's recurrent failures in achieving goals in Yemen are another bad news.

The Saudi invasion of Yemen has turned into a quagmire and turned the conflict in the country into a crisis of the first order.

The initial predication was that the war would last for a short period of time;

The need to manage twin fronts, the domestic one against dissident and the foreign one in the region, combined with Trump increasingly looking an unreliable backer, might have pushed Bin Salman to seek reconciliation with Tehran.

however, over four years later, it is still raging and there is no light at the end of the tunnel.

The stated goal for the Saudi-led intervention in the poorest Arab country was to return to power Hadi and push back Ansarullah from the capital Sana'a.

But the expensive Saudi war machine has so far failed to achieve objectives.

The highly costly and unsuccessful US-backed intervention has drawn enormous criticism towards Saudi Arabia over mounting civilian casualties.

According to the UN, the world's largest humanitarian crisis is in Yemen and with the country's infrastructure and economy devastated, the prolonged military onslaught and all-out blockade, it is heading towards "total collapse."

The Saudi-led war in the 27-million-strong country has left more than 80% of the population reliant on some form of humanitarian aid and over seven million on the brink of starvation.

Perhaps much to Saudis' surprise, Anarullah and its allies who form near half of the population are not yet wiped off the map.

Saudis seem to have sowed seeds of anti-Saudi hatred in Yemen that won't ease unless House of Saud is history.

■ Syria dreams long gone

Moreover, developments in Syria and Bahrain are not going well in the eyes of Saudis.

In Syria, the House of Saud sees practically frustrated plans to topple the government, as the Syrian Army are winning round after round of battles and the lingering conflict is marching toward the end.

For over seven years, Saudi Arabia

and some other west-aligned regional governments generously supplied arms and logistics to extremist militants fighting to bring down the Syrian government.

The struggle that has left hundreds of thousands dead and millions displaced to create the worst manmade calamity in the 21st century.

But the Syrian forces, assisted by Iran's advisory support and Russia's air power, managed to turn the tide of the war in their favor.

Western and regional states that were until recently committed to toppling the Syrian President Bashar al-Assad have now resigned to him staying.

Turkey, Syria's northern neighbor who backed the militancy more than any other state, has joined Iran and Russia in the Astana peace initiative.

■ Unending conflict in Bahrain
Bahrain problems of the Saudi kingdom also seem unending.

The country has been plagued by unrest since 2011, when protesters comprised of the Shia majority staged their uprising to bring democracy to Bahrain.

The Bahraini monarch Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, who is strongly backed by Saudi Arabia, has so far failed to answer calls for dialogue by demonstrators and instead has been struggling to quell the

These all label bin Salman as a failed leader unable to protect his country's interests.

■ Reasons to be pessimistic

The need to manage two fronts, the domestic one against dissident and the foreign one in the region and further afield with hesitant US backing may push Bin Salman to seek reconciliation with Tehran.

However, although the House of Saud sees itself entangled in several embarrassing situations, this does not necessarily mean it is really ready to change tack on Iran.

There are a number of other reasons that make a genuine Tehran-Riyadh rapprochement something like a dream.

The split between the Islamic Republic and the absolute monarchy has roots in several geo-political factors.

The main cause of lingering tensions in Tehran-Riyadh can be traced back to 1979, when the Islamic Revolution succeeded in toppling the US-backed monarch Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, who was analogues to Saudi kings.

Fears of inspirational message of Iran's revolution panicked the House of Saud, causing grave concerns over the future of the rule of their family over the land that until early 20th century was consisted of several local governments in Hijaz, Nejd and other parts of the Arabian Peninsula.

Saudi leaders bankrolled the bloody Iraqi invasion of Iran one year later and extended political backing to the Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein during the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war.

After the war, Iran tried to forget bitter memories of the Saudi-backed offensive that cut short the life of almost a million people on both sides, and Tehran-Riyadh ties experienced a relatively warm period.

However, relations became particularly tense after the Arab Spring rocked the region in 2011, as the two regional powers stood on opposing sides in several conflicts.

But the real problem emerged after Salman bin Abdulaziz ascended to the throne, who only extended the long list of Tehran-Riyadh problems.

Another factor playing a role in widening fissures between the two countries is religious differences, which are not as important as the political ones but are older than them.

The House of Saud formed its government early 20th century with the assistance of Wahhabis, followers of a fanatical interpretation of Islam that sees all Shia as apostates punishable by death.

Since then, Wahhabism has been the state-sanctioned doctrine and the Saudis have long funded the construction and operation of Wahhabi mosques around the world to spread the sect.

Wahhabism is the trademark of many terror groups wreaking havoc in the Middle East and other regions, including the Islamic State and Al Qaeda.

Under the late king Abdullah, the Saudi government tried to keep an arms distance from Wahhabis and not to arouse anti-Shia sentiments.

But under King Salman, Saudi officials are actively encouraging anti-Shia rhetoric both at home and abroad, and are often highlighting religious differences with Iran to justify their political antagonism towards the country.

■ Tactical or strategic?

The assertive Mohammad bin Salman has shown such a deep antagonism toward Tehran that it seems hard to believe he has changed his mind about Tehran and started seeing the error of his ways.

So the changing tenor seems to suggest a change in tactics from Saudi Arabia with respect to Iran and not a desire to find solution to problems.

There are rumors that Mohammad bin Salman will soon replace his aged father, and the Saudi attempts at easing tensions and even dialogue with Tehran can help them manage the status quo until the young prince officially takes the helm and can freely pursue his own designs.

Less tensions with Tehran will also help the House of Saud not to burn all its bridges with Iran in a volatile region and gives it more room for maneuver in case it needs to adopt an alternative regional policy.

The Saudi government can also wait to see the fate of the 2020 US election, as Trump vies for reelection.

Anyway, a lessening of tension in that rivalry is in Saudi Arabia's interests, as well as in the interests of Iran.

The normalization of ties between the two powerhouses could have profound impact on the region deeply embroiled in conflicts.

But unless the path of real fence-mending dialogue is not actually opened, one cannot expect the settlement of differences.

(concluded)

Fake or Deepfake? Why modern technology leaves us with little choice but to revive critical thinking

By Helen Buyniski

RT— Deepfakes are keeping people from all walks of life up at night — just one photo can place anyone in a compromising situation. How can we judge reality in a post-deepfake world, when what we see is no longer what we get?

Rooted in the porn industry, deepfakes — computer-generated video forgeries — are pouring into the mainstream. There are 14,678 deepfake videos online, according to a report published last month by DeepTrace, which monitors “synthetic media” cyber-threats. While just four percent of those videos are not porn, that percentage is bound to increase as the tools for manufacturing deepfakes become more widely available and the rewards for making them increase.

Many social media users shocked by how far deepfake technology has advanced since a faux Barack Obama appeared on Youtube in 2017 shouldn't be. They've been helping its makers along for years with every photo they upload to Facebook and apps like FaceApp that transform a photo subject into an older, younger, male or female version of themselves. FaceApp uses generative adversarial networks to age photos — the same tech used by deepfake producers like Face2Face to make photos move.

The more faces “fed” to an AI, the more skilled it becomes at making faces move — or generating entirely new ones. Intelligence services running fake social media profiles no longer have to steal other people's profile photos — they can synthesize their own. Scammers have already availed of this service, creating bogus LinkedIn accounts to con people out of their personal information for espionage and self-enrichment.

Facebook, which introduced a new global facial recognition setting shortly after deepfakes debuted in 2017, has a whole library of faces to help, and Google recently found itself in hot water after a third party contractor paid homeless black men \$5 to give up their faces to its own facial recognition database. Social media users would be wise to remember — if you're not paying for a service, you are the product.

■ Panic in Washington

US politicians are scrambling to regulate deepfakes, very much aware that one computer-generated scandal could be the end of their careers. Several bills have already been introduced either mandating the labeling of deepfakes or making their manufacture a federal crime — neither of which will do anything to stop the production of deceptive fakes, especially since the bills include a loophole for “national security purposes.”

In a colossal irony, one of the congressmen who wrote to then-Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats last year warning that deepfakes would “undermine public trust in recorded images or videos as objective depictions of reality” was Adam Schiff, the California Democrat who recently gave a dramatic reading of a wholly fictional phone call between President Donald Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky.

The Pentagon, too, is joining the battle against deepfakes — or so it claimed in a presentation soliciting examples to train its detection algorithms. In reality, the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) has declared war on “polarizing viral content,” which includes memes and other “malicious dissent.” As it did with terrorism, the Pentagon is using a poorly understood threat to further roll back Americans' civil liberties.

That does not mean deepfakes aren't a threat. They complete the destruction of the fundamental principle of the internet age — “pics or it didn't happen” — that Photoshop manipulation began to erode. We can no longer believe our eyes — at least, not without backup. Internet users will have to apply the same kind of critical thinking and analysis used to evaluate still photographs. Trusting sources will become extremely important.

■ Fool me twice, shame on me...

Cultures where critical thinking is highly valued have the potential to adjust quickly to this brave new world. In the US, however, viewers of mainstream media are required to suspend their critical faculties when tuning in, bombarded with absurd statements on a daily basis. Whether it's tear-stained testimony that the Iraqi army is throwing babies out of incubators, an abnormally well-spoken Syrian girl begging the US to bomb Syria, or a journalist insisting Donald Trump has been a Russian agent since 1987, many of the stories Americans are required to digest are incompatible with critical thinking. US media consumption habits must change dramatically if Americans are to avoid falling prey to the deepfake makers. The adjustment period will be difficult.

Already, “shallowfakes” like the slowed-down ‘drunk Nancy Pelosi’ video and a doctored broadcast of Trump sticking out his tongue, created without the aid of deepfake technology, have fooled viewers who uncritically accept whatever they're shown on TV. Audiences who place such trust in a medium that has lied to them about the rationale for going to war in Iraq, about “Russian collusion,” about the necessity for regime change in whatever enemy country is being vilified this week, don't stand a chance against well-made deepfakes.

Propaganda has evolved significantly since the days of “babies on bayonets,” but the desire the average news-consuming American has to believe the worst about their designated enemy has not ebbed. Venezuelans eating rats? Assad gassing his own people? Saddam stockpiling weapons of mass destruction? Sure, why not?

“The nation that cannot tell factual events from fake ones has no right to elect their own leaders,” a rather unconvincing deepfake of Vladimir Putin recently told an audience at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Collusion enthusiast Adam Schiff — and a handful of other congressmen — have been screaming to the skies that deepfakes will disrupt the 2020 election, and for once, he's not completely wrong (although he does blame Russia when he should be looking closer to home). Having viewed a convincing deepfake, he explained, “you will never completely shed the negative lingering impression you have.” In an era where just one careless racial slur can get a celebrity “cancelled,” deepfakes can wreak unimaginable destruction on a credulous populace.

■ The dawn of the post-truth era

In the same way that deepfakes allow anyone to be smeared, they also provide a seemingly ironclad defense against such smears. Malaysian Minister of Economic Affairs Azmin Ali blamed an expertly-crafted deepfake after a sex tape surfaced in June that apparently showed him engaged in homosexual activity with a rival minister's aide. While experts examining the video did not see signs of fakery, such doubt will shadow any incriminating video going forward. Going forward, “truth” will be the province of whoever has the better story.

This is most likely why already-powerful entities like Google and the Pentagon are encouraging the creation of deepfakes, ostensibly to give them practice detecting and defeating the technology but with the added benefit of forcing the average citizen to mistrust their perceptions. With near-total control of the American information apparatus, they can weaponize deepfakes and the attendant self-doubt to set themselves up as the ultimate arbiters of reality. Who are you going to believe — them or your lying eyes?

Culling badgers actually spreads TB, latest study suggests

The government’s claim that culling badgers reduces tuberculosis rates in cattle has come under fire after a major study suggested it could be making the problem worse.

Killing off badgers sees the creatures that survive cover 61 per cent more land each month, say scientists from the Zoological Society of London and Imperial College of London.



After a cull, the odds of a badger visiting a new area increases 20-fold. This is because new territories open up as individuals are removed – which increases the risk of TB transmission to both cattle and other badgers, according to the paper published in Applied Ecology.

The badger cull is designed to halt the spread of bovine TB, which costs taxpayers more than £100m a year in compensation payouts to farmers.

The practice is highly controversial, with farmers and ministers often squaring off against campaigners who have called it “the biggest destruction of a protected species in living memory”.

Lord John Krebs, emeritus professor at the University of Oxford, commented: “This research shows how important it is to find out about badger behaviour. It shows that culling badgers can cause surviving individuals in an area to move around more, and as a result they could come into contact with infected cattle and help to spread TB.

“The ill-thought out plan to control TB by killing badgers could therefore backfire.”

Scientists say the changes were witnessed as soon as culling began, meaning even badgers that were killed may have first spread the infection over wider areas while the scheme was being implemented.

However, the animals spent less time outside of their setts in culled areas – on average, 91 minutes less per night.

Researchers believe this could be linked to reduced competition and increased food availability as badgers are removed from the population.

The research group, from ZSL’s Institute of Zoology and Imperial’s MRC Centre for Global Infectious Disease Analysis, studied 67 badgers across 20 cattle farms in areas with and without farmer-led culling in Cornwall, collecting GPS-collar data between 2013 and 2017.

Separate research published in March also suggested culling badgers spreads TB. It found that culls disrupt local populations and drive them into previously uninfected areas.

Scientists at Scotland’s Rural College found that unless strict rules are followed, it may be better to carry out no culling at all rather than continuing an ineffective operation that makes things worse.

Lead author and ZSL-Imperial PhD researcher Cally Ham said: “Badgers spend a large proportion of the night foraging for food above ground, and as culling reduces the size of the population, competition for food will also be reduced.

“We believe this accounts for the reduced activity levels, as well as bold individuals becoming obvious targets for culling and being quickly removed from the population.

“Because culling partly relies on shooting badgers moving around at night, the fact that badgers were active for fewer hours per night could actually be undermining culling efforts to further control badger numbers.”

(Source: The Independent)

WORDS IN THE NEWS

International migration of Afghans

(December 19, 2001)

Afghans remain the world’s largest refugee community, with many millions sheltering in Pakistan, Iran, Russia and the Central Asian republics. Many more have travelled to the West either as asylum seekers or as illegal immigrants seeking employment. This report from Pam O’Toole:

The collapse of the Taleban has led to **renewed optimism** among Afghan **exiles** around the world. The number of Afghan refugees **repatriating** from neighboring countries is rising--the UN refugee agency says more than 33,000 Afghans returned from Iran over the past month.

It’s not clear how many of these people are returning permanently. Some may be visiting home for **the Eid celebrations**, or **testing the water** before deciding their next move. But if large numbers were to begin leaving Iran, their absence would be noted. While the Iranian media accuses Afghan **refugees** and **migrants** of taking jobs away from Iranians, others point out that Afghans often do **poorly paid jobs** that Iranians don’t want. Afghan workers, they say, could be hard to replace.

Afghans in the West are also watching the situation closely. **gratified** by the new international interest in their country. Some exiled businessmen are talking eagerly of going home, or of investing in Afghanistan. The United Nations is hoping that educated Afghans will return from abroad to aid Afghanistan’s reconstruction effort and a number of exiles are included in Afghanistan’s new **interim administration**.

Words

renewed optimism: the return of a hopeful feeling
exiles: people who are forced to live outside their own country
repatriating: the process of refugees returning home
the Eid celebrations: festival to mark the end of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan

testing the water: trying to see if something is possible
refugees: people who are forced to leave their country, usually due to war, or political belief
migrants: people who move from place to place, often to find work

poorly paid jobs: work or labor that earns very little
gratified by: satisfied and pleased by

interim administration: the government in the transition period

(Source: BBC)

UNHCR welcomes Iran’s new child citizenship law

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — The **d e s k** United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has welcomed a recently declared law on conferring Iranian citizenship on children born to Iranian women and non-Iranian men regardless of where they are born.

The law was approved by the Iranian Parliament (Majlis) and submitted to the Government for implementation on October 8, allowing Iranian women to pass their nationality to their children.

According to the law, children of Iranian women and non-Iranian men who were born before or after the law can be an Iranian citizen in case the Iranian mother requested if they have no security problem before the age of 18.

These children, after reaching the age of 18, can apply for Iranian citizenship if not requested by the mother, then will be granted Iranian citizenship in case of no security problem.

Through a series of resolutions beginning in 1995, the UN General Assembly gave UN-



HCR the formal mandate to identify stateless people, prevent and reduce statelessness around the world, as well as to protect the rights of stateless people.

At the 14th World Summit of Nobel Peace Laureates, Nobel Peace Laureates and Peace Laureate Organizations demonstrated their support for UNHCR’s global campaign called #IBelong launched in November 2014 to end statelessness within ten years.

By now, UNHCR is in the middle of its 10-year campaign to eradicate statelessness; a high level will be held as part of UNHCR 2019 Executive Committee meeting in Geneva in October, which will assess the achievements to date and to encourage concrete pledges by member states and others on this issue.

Worldwide, statelessness affects millions of people, leaving them without the basic rights and official recognition that most of us take for granted. Some 3.9 million stateless people appear in the reporting of 78 countries, but UNHCR believes the true total to be significantly higher.

\$47m earmarked for Lake Urmia restoration

ENVIRONMENT **TEHRAN** — A total budget of 2 trillion **d e s k** rials (nearly \$47 million) was approved to be allocated to the Lake Urmia restoration program, government spokesman Ali Rabiei said on Wednesday.

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

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

During a cabinet meeting on Wednesday, the lake’s con-



dition was discussed and it was approved to allot some 2 trillion rials (nearly \$47 million) to help revive the lake, Rabiei stated, IRNA reported.

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

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

The level of water at Lake Urmia increased by 1.04 centimeters on September 24 compared to the same day last year, according to the studies conducted by the Lake Urmia conservation program committee.

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

However, rain alone cannot contribute to the full restoration of the lake so measures along with budgets are needed, as well.

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

‘Every 40 minutes a woman develops breast cancer in Iran’

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — Every 40 **d e s k** minutes, a woman in Iran is diagnosed with breast cancer, indicating a sharp rise in prevalence of the disease, founder of a national campaign for fighting breast cancer has said.

At present, 8 percent of the female population in the country are infected with the disease, and among each eight affected women only 2 are aware of their disease, Afsaneh Eghbal Nia lamented.

If this trend continues to be ignored, the rate of breast cancer will reach up to 28 percent among women by the next year,

she highlighted.

She went on to say that early detection of the disease is critical, if the cancer is diagnosed early, the patients may not have to go through chemotherapy, and they may even end up having total remission.

According to World Health Organization, breast cancer is the most frequent cancer among women, impacting 2.1 million women each year, and also causes the greatest number of cancer-related deaths among women.

In 2018, it is estimated that 627,000 women died of breast cancer – that is approximately 15% of all cancer deaths

among women. While breast cancer rates are higher among women in more developed regions, rates are increasing in nearly every region globally.

Mohammad Hadizadeh, a cancer expert at Tehran’s Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences has said that every year, 10,500 new cases of breast cancer are diagnosed among women.

“Women account for around 99 percent of breast cancer patients and men account for only one percent. In Iran, there are 200 to 250 cases of breast cancer among men,” he added.



Humpback whale spotted in Thames east of London

A humpback whale measuring at least 5 metres (16ft) has been spotted in the River Thames east of London.

“We are 99.9999% sure it is a humpback whale – there have been multiple sightings,” said a spokesman for the Port of London Authority (PLA), which oversees the river.

Sightings of the animal were reported over the weekend and its presence in the river was confirmed by British Divers Marine Life Rescue.

“It seems to be doing fine,” said Julia Cable, national coordinator for BDMLR. “We watched it doing normal diving

and surfacing behaviour. It is surfacing once every five or six minutes, which is normal.”

A humpback whale was spotted in the Channel last week, according to BDMLR, but it is not clear whether this is the same one.

Last year, a beluga whale, nicknamed Benny the Beluga, spent more than three months in the Thames. It is thought to have made its own way back out to sea in the new year. The PLA spokesman said of the latest sightings: “It is not Benny, it is not a beluga.”

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → €

Iran to implement food safety program

A food safety document will be approved and implemented in the future in the country, Vahid Mofid, an official with the Food and Drug Administration has stated.

The document is consisting of standards through which food safety is best ensured; the whole food production process from cultivation to markets will be under control, it also identifies and controls hazards in the production, manufacturing and handling of food rather than relying on end product standards alone, he explained. The standards enable the country to oblige food businesses to meet the document principles, they will be subject to periodic observations by a suitably qualified food safety auditor, he added.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“-ate”

■ **Meaning:** become

■ **For example:** the disease has been **eradicated** from the world.

PHRASAL VERB

Poke around

■ **Meaning:** to look for something, especially by moving a lot of things around

■ **For example:** James began poking about in the cupboard, looking for the sugar.

IDIOM

On the cusp

■ **Explanation:** a point in time that marks a transition or the beginning of a change

■ **For example:** Some people think the world is on the cusp of a new era.

اجرای سند ایمنی غذا در حال پیگیری است

مدیرکل فرآوردههای غذایی و آشامیدنی سازمان غذا و دارو درباره وضعیت فعلی سند ایمنی غذا گفت: سند ایمنی غذا در حال تکمیل شدن است و تا پس از طی مراحل اداری اجرا شود. وحید مفید روز جمعه در گفت و گو با خبرنگار ایرنا افزود: با این سند، نظارت بر کل حلقه‌های تولید در زنجیره غذا از مزرعه تا سفره تحت کنترل بخش‌های مختلف درمی‌آید و میزان سموم مصرفی، انواع کودهای مصرف شده و چگونگی حمل مواد غذایی و توزیع آن، نوع آب و آبیاری زمین‌ها در سند ایمنی غذا تعریف شده است چراکه این عوامل در کیفیت محصول غذایی تاثیرگذار هستند.

مدیرکل فرآورده های غذایی و آشامیدنی سازمان غذا و دارو اظهار داشت: این استانداردها کشور را قادر می سازد که تولیدکنندگان غذایی به رعایت اصول سند مجاب کند، و شرکت های تولیدکننده مواد غذایی هر دوره توسط یک سازمان ایمنی مواد غذایی کنترل خواهند شد.

America can't be trusted at all; it stabs own allies in the back: Nasrallah

TEHRAN— The secretary general of the Lebanese Hezbollah resistance movement has warned against placing trust in the United States, emphasizing that Washington cannot be trusted at all as it betrays own allies in a surreptitious way and does not stand committed to any agreement.

"No one can rely on (the United States of) America and an agreement struck with it because of the latter's disloyalty and treachery," Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah said in an address to his supporters in a televised speech at Sayed al-Shohadaa Complex in the Lebanese capital city of Beirut on Tuesday evening.

Nasrallah then pointed to President Donald Trump's decision to withdraw U.S. forces from northeastern Syria, saying, "America broke faith with Kurds at once, and abandoned them. Such a fate awaits anyone who trusts Washington."

"Americans can't be trusted at all since they break promise with anyone who depends on them, and left them alone," the Hezbollah chief said.

White House Press Secretary Stephanie Grisham said in a statement on Sunday that Washington had begun withdrawing U.S.



troops from Syria's border with Turkey, adding that the American forces "will not support or be involved in the (Turkish) operation" and "will no longer be in the immediate area."

Trump on Monday defended the decision to withdraw U.S. troops from northern Syria, saying it was too costly to keep supporting its allies.

"The Kurds fought with us but were paid massive amounts of money and equipment to do so. They have been fighting Turkey for decades," he said in a series of tweets.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on the same day that the Turkish army was ready to launch operations against militants of the People's Protection Units (YPG), the backbone of the so-called Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), at any moment.

"There is a phrase that we always say: we can come any night without warning," the Turkish president told reporters in televised remarks. "It is absolutely out of the question for us to further tolerate the threats from these terrorist groups."

SDF later warned that a Turkish military invasion would spark a major resurgence of the Daesh Takfiri terrorist group, and vowed to battle Turkey's military.

According to Press TV, Ankara views the YPG as the Syria branch of the homegrown Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) militant group, which has been seeking an autonomous Kurdish region in Turkey since 1984.

Merkel and Macron to meet ahead of crunch Brexit summit

TEHRAN — The European Union's two most powerful leaders, Germany's Angela Merkel and France's Emmanuel Macron, will meet just days before a crunch Brexit summit next week which Britain says is the last chance to secure an orderly departure from the bloc.

As the clock ticks down to the Oct. 31 departure date, Brexit descended into a public row between London and Brussels this week as both sides position for another delay followed by an election or an acrimonious divorce.

After a Downing Street source said a Brexit deal was essentially impossible because German Chancellor Merkel had made unacceptable demands, the EU accused Johnson of playing a "stupid blame game".

Macron will meet Merkel at the Elysee Palace this coming Sunday to discuss European affairs ahead of the Oct. 17-18 EU summit and preparations for a Franco-German summit on Oct. 16, Macron's office said.

EU diplomats, though, are skeptical about the chances of a deal. Most expect Johnson to be forced to accept a delay to

Brexit - a step that could ultimately lead to either a disorderly exit or the reversal of the entire Brexit endeavor.

"There will be no rabbit-out-of-the-hat solutions," one EU official told Reuters. "There will be more talks and more political contacts. But, for the time being, there is no breakthrough to be reported."

Johnson has repeatedly cast the EU summit next week as the last chance for the EU to strike a deal or face the disruption of a no-deal Brexit that would divide the West, threaten the unity of the United Kingdom and roil financial markets.

A week ago, he proposed a possible solution to ensure the border between the British-ruled province of Northern Ireland and EU member Ireland does not become a backdoor into the EU's single market and customs union.

The EU's cool reaction to his proposals indicates that, short of an unexpected last-minute breakthrough, Johnson will have to decide whether to accept another delay or to go for a no-deal Brexit and get around a law demanding he extend, Reuters reported.

Ukraine peace drive hits first bump, but Moscow says summit possible

TEHRAN — Ukraine on Wednesday refused to pull back troops in its restive east, saying for the second time this week that continued shelling by pro-Russian separatists there precluded the implementation of a disengagement agreement.

Moscow, however, said the door was still open for a fresh meeting of the leaders of Russia, Ukraine, France, and Germany to discuss resolving the five-year-long conflict in the Donbass region, in which U.N. monitors say more than 13,000 people have been killed.

In a breakthrough this month, negotiators from Ukraine, Russia and the rebels agreed that Kiev would grant the rebel region special status and hold local elections there. Under the agreement, rebel fighters and Ukrainian troops would also pull back from the line of contact.

But it remains unclear how exactly any of these steps would be implemented and the stalling of the easiest one - the troop pullback - could indicate that the actual settlement of the conflict remains a distant possibility.

The pullback originally scheduled for Monday and then delayed until Wednesday

has now been put off again because of continued shelling by the rebels, a spokesman for Ukraine's defense ministry said, adding that a straight week of strict ceasefire adherence was a prerequisite.

Commenting on the delay, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said a successful pullback would have jump-started the implementation of peace accords, but it was up to the leaders of the countries known as the Normandy Four to decide whether to press ahead with a summit aimed at ending the conflict.

"Let us see whether it (the pullback) happens or not in the end... (and if it fails) find out who is to blame for the failure," Peskov told reporters.

According to Reuters, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's decision to support the peace plan previously rejected by Kiev has triggered protests in Ukraine, with some opponents accusing him of capitulation. Zelenskyy has said he would "never betray Ukraine".

"No one is questioning Ukraine's sovereignty, this is Ukraine's domestic issue and Ukraine is dealing with its sovereignty issues on its own," Peskov said.

U.S. air attacks in May on Afghan drug labs killed 30 civilians: UN

TEHRAN — U.S. air attacks on alleged Taliban drug labs in Afghanistan killed or wounded dozens of civilians in May, says a United Nations report, which has been rejected by the U.S. military.

The UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) conducted a four-month investigation into the May 5 air attacks that hit more than 60 sites the U.S. and Afghan forces identified as drug-production facilities in the western provinces of Farah and Nimroz.

UNAMA and the UN human rights office said in a joint report released on Wednesday that there were at least 30 deaths among the 39 civilian casualties.

The number included 14 children and five women killed or wounded in the air raids, which the UN said violated international humanitarian law as the victims were non-combatants.

"UNAMA has assessed that the personnel working inside

the drug production facilities were not performing combat functions. They were therefore entitled to protection from attack, and could only have lost this protection if, and for such time, as they had been directly participating in hostilities," the report said.

The U.S. Forces-Afghanistan (USFOR-A) issued a statement, rejecting the UN report and claiming there were no casualties.

"USFOR-A is fighting in a complex environment against those who intentionally kill and hide behind civilians, as well as use dishonest claims of non-combatant casualties as propaganda weapons," the statement said.

"USFOR-A took extraordinary measures to avoid the deaths or injuries of non-combatants."

Since late 2017, U.S. forces have attacked sites believed to be used for processing drugs as part of efforts to cut off funds to the Taliban group, Al Jazeera reported.



China plans to restrict visas for U.S. visitors with 'anti-China' links

TEHRAN — China is planning tighter visa restrictions for U.S. nationals with ties to anti-China groups, people with knowledge of the proposed curbs said, following similar U.S. restrictions on Chinese nationals, as relations between the countries sour.

China's Ministry of Public Security has for months been working on rules to limit the ability of anyone employed, or sponsored, by U.S. intelligence services and human rights

groups to travel to China.

The proposed changes follow the introduction by the United States of tighter rules for visas for Chinese scholars in May.

New U.S. visa restrictions announced on Tuesday, on Chinese government and Communist Party officials the United States believes responsible for the detention or abuse of Muslim minorities, had bolstered the case for

the new Chinese restrictions, one of the sources said.

"This is not something we want to do but we don't seem to have any choice," the source said.

The Chinese rules would mandate the drafting of a list of U.S. military and CIA-linked institutions and rights groups, and the addition of their employees to a visa blacklist, according to the sources,

who declined to be identified, Reuters reported.

The tighter restrictions come amid heightened concern in Beijing that the United States and other governments are using such organizations to incite anti-government protests in both mainland China and Hong Kong, and would also be in retaliation for the U.S. visa restrictions against Chinese researchers and officials, the first source said.

U.S. senator plans 'sanctions from hell' for Turkey over Syria operation

TEHRAN — A leading U.S. Republican senator said he plans to introduce a package of "devastating" sanctions to hit Turkey over its military operation in northeast Syria, expressing concerns over the fate of Kurds in the area.

Senator Lindsey Graham, usually a vocal ally to U.S. President Donald Trump, has repeatedly criticized Trump's decision to withdraw U.S. troops from northeastern Syria.

Graham told media outlet Axios in an interview published on Wednesday that the sanctions would strike the Turkish economy and military. He predicted the Senate could marshal the votes to override any potential presidential veto.

"Who the hell supports Erdogan over the Kurds?" Graham told Axios, referring to Turkey's president. He predicted "a devastating ripple effect" from Turkish action in Syria.

Graham warned that Trump's decision to withdraw the troops opened the way for a Turkish strike on Kurdish-led forces long allied with Washington.

"The president's doing this completely against everybody else's advice. He will get 100% of the credit if he knows something the rest of us don't. And he's going to get 100% of the blame. There'll be no middle ground," Graham said.

In a tweet on Tuesday, Graham warned Ankara of "sanctions from hell" if it moved into northern Syria. "Wide, deep, and devastating sanctions," he said.

Democratic U.S. Senator Chris Van Hollen said in a post on Twitter that a bipartisan sanctions bill was being finalized on Wednesday.

The White House did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The Turkish military and Syrian rebel allies launched

an operation in Syria on Wednesday with air strikes. It will be supported by artillery and howitzer fire.

Turkey's president said the operation aimed to eliminate a "terror corridor" along the Turkish border.

Ankara has branded the Syrian Kurdish YPG militia as terrorists because of their ties to militants who have waged an insurgency in Turkey.

Erdogan said the offensive would aim to eliminate threats from the YPG and ISIL terrorists, and pave the way for Syrian refugees in Turkey to return after the formation of a "safe zone" in the area.

"Erdogan is not our friend and Congress will push back. We're not giving Turkey a green light in Congress and we're not going to abandon the Kurds. If the president does so, we won't," Graham said in an interview on Wednesday with Fox News Channel.

Erdogan says operation to Northeast Syria has started

Turkey summons U.S. envoy for Syria offensive briefing

➤ Several large explosions rocked Ras al Ain, just across the border across from the Turkish town of Ceylanpinar, a CNN Turk reporter said, adding that the sound of planes could be heard above. Smoke was rising from buildings in Ras al Ain, he said.

World powers fear the action could open a new chapter in Syria's war and worsen regional turmoil. Ankara has said it intends to create a "safe zone" in order to return millions of refugees to Syrian soil.

Erdogan earlier told Russia's President Vladimir Putin in a phone call that the operation would help peace and stability in Syria.

But Syria said it was determined to confront any Turkish aggression by all legitimate means.

Turkey views Kurdish YPG fighters in northeast Syria as terrorists because of their ties to militants waging an insurgency inside Turkey, an influx of non-Kurdish Syrians would help it secure a buffer against its main security threat.

Amid deepening humanitarian concerns, U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres urged all parties in northeast Syria to exercise maximum restraint and protect civilians.

Kurdish-led forces denounced the U.S. policy shift as a "stab in the back". Trump denied he had abandoned the forces, the most capable U.S. partners in fighting Islamic State in Syria.

■ Turkey summons U.S. envoy

Meanwhile, the U.S. ambassador to Ankara was summoned to the foreign ministry Wednesday to be briefed on Turkey's military offensive into northeastern Syria, broadcaster CNN Turk said, minutes after Ankara launched its cross-border operation.

Turkey had been poised to advance into northeast Syria since U.S. troops began vacating the area in an abrupt policy shift by President Donald Trump. Earlier, President Tayyip Erdogan said Turkey and its Syrian rebel allies had started the offensive.

UK court delays key Brexit ruling until after EU summit

TEHRAN — Scottish judges will not rule on a bid to compel UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson to obey a law designed to block a "no-deal" Brexit until after a key European Union summit.

They have delayed their ruling until October 22, days after the parliament's deadline to reach a Brexit divorce deal, and days before the United Kingdom is due to crash out of the EU by automatic operation of law on October 31.

Under legislation known as the Benn Act, passed with the assistance of a "rebel alliance" of Conservative MPs - who were subsequently sacked from the governing party - the prime minister is obliged to request a delay if no withdrawal deal is agreed between the UK and the EU by October 19.

The European Council of the heads of EU nations is set to meet on October 17 and 18.

The prime minister and his aides have repeatedly implied they would not comply with the law, leading to fears among those seeking to avoid a "no-deal" Brexit - which many economists, healthcare administrators, infrastructure leaders and other experts say would be disastrous for the UK economy and global standing - as well as those concerned for the rule of law in one of the world's oldest parliamentary democracies.

"This is a state of affairs which seems to us to be highly likely," read a statement from the campaigners who brought the legal case in Scotland.

"Only last night, for example, the president of the European Parliament stated that Boris Johnson had told him he would not be asking for an extension. If Boris Johnson was telling the truth, this would be a breach of his obligations to send the letter under the Benn Act. And if Boris Johnson was not telling the truth, this would, it seems to us, be a breach of his obligations not to frustrate the Benn Act."

But in a submission to the court in a previous case last week, the government formally pledged to abide by the Benn Act - the total reverse of what cabinet ministers have been saying in public.

According to Al Jazeera, campaigners had therefore lodged a bid at the Court of Session in Edinburgh to use the Nobile Officium - or "Nob-Off" - power, which would allow a court official to send a letter to the EU requesting a delay on Johnson's behalf if he were to refuse.

Ecuador unrest: Protests erupt for 6th day over fuel subsidy cuts

TEHRAN— Paralyzing protests in Ecuador continued over a series of labor and tax reforms and President Lenin Moreno's decision to scrap decades-old fuel subsidies.

Thousands of indigenous people who had been marching towards the capital, Quito, descended on the city on Tuesday. Protesters were reportedly able to briefly cross security lines into the National Assembly, before being moved out by police. Late on Tuesday, Moreno issued a decree that restricted movement from 8pm to 5am local time around government buildings.

Tuesday's demonstrations came less than 24 hours after President Moreno moved his administration out of Quito following nearly a week of anti-austerity protests that paralyzed public transportation and brought hundreds of arrests.

"We are rejecting the economic package implemented for the government of Moreno," said Maria Boada, 56, who was at Monday's protest representing the women's rights collective, Women for Change. She spoke to Al Jazeera through a face mask doused in vinegar to help filter tear gas used by police on protesters.

"We are demanding that he lift the state of emergency and end the repression, and stop the labor reforms," she said, referring to the state of emergency declared by Moreno last week, Al Jazeera reported.

Chinese organizers cancel NBA fan event amid free speech row

Chinese organizers on Wednesday cancelled a fan event on the eve of an National Basketball Association (NBA) exhibition game in Shanghai, the latest fallout in a row over comments by a team official supporting protests in Hong Kong.

Chinese sponsors and partners have been cutting ties with the NBA after a tweet by Houston Rockets general manager Daryl Morey last week supporting anti-government protests in the Chinese-ruled city.

The Shanghai Sports Federation said the cancellation of the fan event ahead of Thursday's game between the Brooklyn Nets and Los Angeles Lakers was due to the "inappropriate attitude" of Morey and NBA Commissioner Adam Silver.

A Wednesday afternoon press conference with both teams was indefinitely delayed, organizers said. Outside the team hotel, workers tore down massive banners advertising the game, according to a Reuters witness.

Silver said on Tuesday the league supported Morey's right to exercise his freedom of expression, further angering authorities and some fans in China and threatening the NBA's business there, said to be worth more than \$4 billion.

Morey deleted the tweet and apologized on Monday, but Chinese broadcasters, sportswear companies and sponsors have said they are reviewing their ties with the NBA, which has had a presence in China since 1992.

The NBA initially described the anger over Morey's post as "regrettable," drawing criticism from U.S. politicians, who accused the league of putting its China business ahead of free speech.

Silver, speaking on Tuesday in Japan before a preseason game between the Rockets and Toronto Raptors, said it was not up to the league to regulate what players, employees and team owners said.

On Wednesday, an editorial in the official English-language China Daily accused Silver of "brazenly endorsing Morey's secessionist-supporting tweet" and giving "a shot to the arms of the rioters of Hong Kong."

(Source: Reuters)

'Dizzy' Zverev loses racquet into crowd on way to Shanghai last 16

Alexander Zverev said he suffered a dizzy spell during an entertaining 7-6 (15/13), 7-6 (7/3) win over French underdog Jeremy Chardy on Wednesday at the Shanghai Masters.

In an incident-packed match, Zverev apologized to a television cameraman after the young German accidentally hit a ball flush into his jaw in winning a point.

The 22-year-old was also seen by a doctor in the first set and in another colorful moment Zverev smashed his racquet on the floor during the mammoth first-set tie break.

Zverev, ranked sixth in the world but suffering a poor season, was pushed all the way by the 71st-ranked Chardy before finally emerging in one hour and 48 minutes.

"I felt a little dizzy and my head was spinning a little bit," he said, explaining why he asked to see a doctor.

"But the doctor didn't speak a lot of English and all he wanted to do was give me pills for everything possible so I said I'd rather not take any pills and see if I feel better."

The second-set tie break had a lighter moment -- Zverev losing his grip while hitting a shot, his racquet whizzing into the crowd.

"It was definitely interesting," the German smiled, referencing his flying racquet and his smash which hit the cameraman -- neither intentional, he stressed.

"The racquet accelerated too fast and flew about 10 rows up so I hope I did not hurt or hit anybody, but it was definitely not on purpose."

Zverev has long been talked about as the next big thing in men's tennis, but only one of his 11 career titles has come this year. He is yet to win a Grand Slam.

The fifth seed will play Andrey Rublev of Russia in the last 16.

(Source: AFP)

Ex-Liverpool star Alonso in Madrid court for fraud

Former Liverpool midfielder Xabi Alonso appeared in a Madrid court on Wednesday, facing charges of tax fraud to the tune of two million euros, a court spokesman said.

At the two-day hearing, the 37-year-old was quizzed over allegations he used a company based on the Portuguese island of Madeira to avoid paying taxes on his image rights to the Spanish authorities.

If convicted, the former Spain international risks up to five years behind bars for the alleged fraud which prosecutors say took place between 2010 and 2012 when he was playing for Real Madrid.

They are also asking that Alonso, his tax advisor Ivan Zaldúa and the Portuguese company manager Ignasi Maestre pay a fine of 4.0 million euros (\$4.4 million), and that the outstanding tax to be paid, with interest.

The investigation was initially opened in 2015 but shelved, only to be reopened at the end of 2017 after a court found the allegations against the player were "sufficiently substantiated".

Alonso, who retired from playing in 2017 after a stint at Bayern Munich, is one of a string of high-profile footballers to face scrutiny by the Spanish tax authorities over the declaration of income from image rights.

Some have admitted fraud as part of a deal to avoid jail time, including Atletico Madrid striker Diego Costa and Barcelona's Gerard Pique, both of whom paid out after being convicted over the summer.

And earlier this year, the tax authorities caught up with Juventus star Cristiano Ronaldo and former Manchester United manager Jose Mourinho, both over the management and declaration of image rights.

(Source: Marca)

Ibrahimovic statue unveiled

A statue of former Manchester United striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic has been built in his hometown in Sweden.

The bronze structure, commissioned by the Swedish FA, was unveiled in front of hundreds of fans outside Malmo's stadium on Tuesday.

"No matter where you come from, where you are, no matter what you look like, the statue is the symbol that anything is possible," said Ibrahimovic. The 38-year-old scored 62 goals in 116 games for Sweden between 2001 and 2016.

The statue, created by Swedish artist Peter Linde, is 8ft 9in tall and weighs almost 500kg.

Ibrahimovic started his career with Malmo before going on to play for Ajax, Juventus, Inter Milan, Barcelona, AC Milan, Paris St-Germain and United.

He moved to the United States to play in the MLS in 2018.

Former England captain David Beckham, Portugal and Juventus forward Cristiano Ronaldo and Liverpool's Egypt striker Mohamed Salah have been honoured with statues.

(Source: BBC)

Fallen giants AC Milan gamble on Pioli



Fallen Italian giants AC Milan on Wednesday appointed Stefano Pioli as their new coach a day after his predecessor Marco Giampaolo was sacked after just seven games in charge.

The 53-year-old former Inter Milan boss arrives on a two-year deal, reported to be worth in the region of two million euros (\$2.2 million) a season.

Giampaolo was fired after just 111 days in the job as the former seven-time European champions slipped to 13th place in Serie A, following a run of four defeats in seven games.

The appointment of Pioli, an experienced coach but one who has never won a trophy in his 16-year managerial career, was a surprise one for the 18-time Serie A champions, who won their last league title in 2011.

"It's a choice that has been weighed up," Milan technical director Paolo Maldini told a press conference in the city.

"Being the seventh round it can be seen as a gamble, but we want to be protagonists this season.

"This is why we decided to change with an experienced coach. For a young team we wanted a coach with strong ideas."

Pioli managed city rivals Inter Milan in the 2016-2017 season, but has been without a team since resigning from Fiorentina last April.

He has solid experience coaching top Italian clubs including Bologna, Lazio, Inter and Fiorentina, but has never won any trophies as a coach.

The #PioliOut hashtag quickly trended worldwide on Twitter thanks to the angry

reaction from Milan fans unhappy at his lack of trophies.

"I'm preparing for this adventure with great enthusiasm," said Pioli.

"This is one of the most prestigious clubs in the world. I'm taking over a good team with serious potential and therefore think I can do a good job.

"The fans have the right to criticise, but for me this is a further stimulus to make my work even better."

Pioli's first game in charge will be against Lecce on October 20 in the San Siro.

Messi says tax problems made him want to leave Barcelona



Lionel Messi has admitted he wanted to leave Barcelona when he was under investigation from the Spanish tax authorities but insists now he intends to finish his career at the club.

In an interview with Catalan radio station RAC1, Messi also said he had expected Neymar to sign for Real Madrid last summer after Barca failed to strike an agreement with Paris Saint-Germain.

Messi and his father Jorge were found guilty of defrauding Spain of 4.1 million euros in taxes between 2007 and 2009, for which they paid close to 10 million euros and Messi was handed a 21-month suspended prison sentence.

Asked on Tuesday night if he had ever wanted to leave Barcelona, Messi said: "In 2013-14, when I started having the tax problems, it was very difficult for me and my family."

"My children were young and we had a very bad time. At that time, I had it in mind to leave, not because I wanted to leave Barca but because I wanted to leave Spain. I felt mistreated and I didn't want

to be here anymore."

The 32-year-old's current contract expires in 2021 and Messi believes extending his deal "will not be a problem".

"Today it is clearer that my idea is to finish here," Messi said. "For how I am at the club, for what I feel, and for the family and the children and how settled we are in this city. I would not like to disrupt that."

"Of course anything can happen but in principle, the idea is to stay here."

Messi began playing football aged six for Newell's Old Boys, the Rosario club he supports in Argentina.

"I always dreamed of being able to play again for Newell's and to have the experience of playing football in Argentina," he said.

Messi was keen to be reunited with Neymar last summer but Barcelona were unable to agree a fee with PSG.

"I honestly thought at one time, especially in this market, that if he did not come here, he would go to Real Madrid Madrid because I thought he wanted to leave," Messi said.

(Source: France 24)

History-maker Biles wins 21st world medal



Simone Biles broke the record for World Gymnastics Championships medals won by a woman with her 21st medal as the USA took their fifth straight team title.

The Americans' total of 172.33 was almost six full marks ahead of Russia in second, with Italy beating China to a surprise bronze in Stuttgart.

Great Britain finished sixth in Germany, with Olympic qualification for Tokyo 2020 already confirmed.

Biles finished with a personal total of 59.733 in winning her 15th world title.

The 22-year-old was the outstanding performer in a team that included Jade Carey, 19, and 16-year-olds Sunisa Lee, Kara Eaker and Grace McCallum.

"I never think of records - I just go out there and do what I came to do," said Biles.

"Every year it feels better and better, just because we're adding to the legacy."

Victory sees her overtake Russia's Svetlana Khorkina as the most decorated woman in the competition's history.

Biles has three silvers and three bronzes in addition to her 15 golds while Khorkina

Serie A titles with Juventus.

The club have tried everything since from Sinisa Mihajlovic, to former club icons such as Gennaro Gattuso, Clarence Seedorf and Filippo Inzaghi, and most recently Giampaolo.

But nothing has managed to get a former European powerhouse back on the path to emulate past glories, with their last Champions League campaign in the 2013-2014 season.

The cash-strapped outfit finished fifth last season under Gattuso but surrendered their Europa League berth this season after breaching UEFA's financial fair play rules.

Giampaolo's run of defeats, including a 2-0 derby loss to Inter, leaves the club struggling just three points above the relegation zone.

However they are also only four points away from the Champions league places and it is hoped Pioli, a former defender who won the Serie A title as a player with Juventus in 1986, can bring stability to the club that has experienced its share of backroom drama after being sold twice in the last two years.

He lead Lazio to the Champions League in 2015 and was praised with how he guided a Fiorentina in turmoil after captain Davide Astori died in his sleep ahead of a match last year.

Italian media mogul and former prime minister Silvio Berlusconi, who oversaw Milan's glory years during his 31-year ownership, sold the club to Chinese businessman Li Yonghong in 2017 with US hedge fund Elliot Management assuming control in July 2018.

(Source: AFP)

Hamilton can land KO blow at typhoon-threatened Japanese GP

Lewis Hamilton may not be able to clinch a sixth world championship at the typhoon-threatened Japanese Grand Prix this weekend, but knows he can knock all but teammate Valtteri Bottas out of the title race.

There are only 104 points to be won after Japan and a victory for Hamilton to follow his triumph in Russia will leave only Finland's Bottas able to pass the Englishman.

However, a wild weekend of weather is promised at Suzuka which could mean disrupted practice, chaotic qualifying and a wet race punctuated by safety cars.

Japan's weather bureau said Wednesday that Super Typhoon Hagibis was projected to hit Tokyo, some 300 kilometers (185 miles) east of Suzuka, on Saturday.

"The Honshu main islands will see heavy rains from as early as Friday, and the peak of the bad weather will be on Saturday and Sunday," Japan Meteorological Agency official Yoshinori Muira told AFP.

French driver Jules Bianchi crashed in the 2014 Japanese Grand Prix after a typhoon brought wet conditions and reduced visibility to the Suzuka circuit.

He died of his injuries the following year, becoming the first and only driver killed as a result of a Formula One racing accident since 1994.

■ **Ferrari resurgent**

Ferrari's resurgence since the summer break rattled Mercedes and Hamilton as the Italian marque sped to a hat-trick of grands prix wins.

But the Maranello outfit's failure to turn Charles Leclerc's pole position into another win at Sochi gave Mercedes a surprise one-two.

It also handed Hamilton a 107-point advantage over the Monegasque with Red Bull's Max Verstappen a further three adrift. Sebastian Vettel is all but out of the hunt, 128 points behind the Englishman.

Hamilton knows a solid result will put him in pole position to wrap up the title in Mexico on October 27, but he insists he is not yet dreaming of his sixth title -- a total matched only by Michael Schumacher.

"I just don't try to think about it," Hamilton said after winning in Russia, aware of Ferrari's performance edge. "It's getting harder and harder as the season goes on."



"Of course the races are counting down but we are just trying to take things one race at a time, put one foot in front of the other and not stumble."

■ **'Suzuka is incredible'**

Rain or shine, Suzuka has the ingredients to be a classic -- a rejuvenated Red Bull team pressing the top two, plus a circuit renowned for exciting racing with sweeping bends and dramatic elevation changes.

"It's going to be awesome," said Hamilton of the race which will draw fans in huge

number despite being staged during a Rugby World Cup which has captivated Japan.

"Suzuka is incredible, it's one of the most exciting parts of the year and now so more than ever before because you've got three solid, incredibly fast teams pushing each other."

Leclerc was denied a potential third win of his rookie season in Russia because of the team's botched tactics but sees Japan as another great chance.

"We've been quick in Singapore, we've been quick in Monza and both of them are the complete opposites so there are no reasons for us to be slow in Japan. But it doesn't mean that we will have an easy life," said Leclerc.

"I've only been to Suzuka once but it's a track I loved. It was just a really great experience, so I'm really looking forward to going back."

The Silver Arrows' unexpected one-two in Sochi means Mercedes can seal a record-equaling sixth successive constructors' championship this weekend if they manage to increase their lead over Ferrari by 14 points or more.

(Source: Eurosport)

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GUIDE TO
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

If you are not patient, appear to be so, for, there are few people who do not get accustomed to the way of a group.

Imam Ali (AS)

Turkish star Hande Erçel joins cast, “Drunk on Love” filming begins

A R T TEHRAN — Iranian director Hassan Fat’hi has started shooting “Drunk on Love” in Konya as Turkish TV star Hande Erçel joined the cast for the movie, which



Turkish star Hande Erçel joined the for Iranian director Hassan Fat’hi’s movie “Drunk on Love” “Drunk on Love” on Persian poet Rumi.

will portray part of Persian poet Molana Jalal ad-Din Rumi’s life story, a public relations team for the movie announced on Tuesday.

The Iranian actors Parsa Piruzfar and Shahab Hosseini will star as Rumi and Shams, Rumi’s mentor, respectively while Erçel will play the role of Kimia, Rumi’s stepdaughter and Shams’ lover.

Turkish actor Ibrahim Çelikkol and Iranian actor Hesam Manzur are the other members of the cast.

“Drunk on Love” is written by Fat’hi himself and his fellow Iranian writer Farhad Tohidi in consultation with Mohammad-Ali Movahhed, a top Iranian expert on Rumi.

However, Shia clerics Ayatollah Nasser Makarem Shirazi and Ayatollah Hossein Nuri Hamedani viewed the movie as a promotion for Sufism and banned it.

Rumi undertook journeys to Syria, during one of which he met the dervish, Shams.

He was deeply influenced by Shams during their second visit in Konya and for months, the two men constantly interacted, and as a result, Rumi neglected his disciples and family, who could not tolerate the close relationship.

One night in 1247, Shams disappeared forever. This experience turned Rumi into a poet. The Divan of Shams is a true translation of his experiences into poetry.

The ENG Yapım Medya Organization from Istanbul is one of the sponsors of the project.

Producer Mehran Borumand, cinematographer Morteza Pursamadi and makeup artist Iman Omidvari, all from Iran, and Sahin Karakus, Aytekin Yalçın, Tolga Tosun and Fatih Koca, all from Turkey, are collaborating in the project.

Iranian photographers win awards at Romanian contest

A R T TEHRAN — Four Iranian photographers have won awards at the 3rd International Art Photographic Salon Varadinum in Oradea, Romania, the organizers have announced.



“Colorful Village” by Babak Mehrafshar the FIAP Gold Medal at the 3rd International Art Photographic Salon Varadinum in Oradea, Romania.

“Colorful Village” by Babak Mehrafshar won the FIAP Gold Medal in the Travel Section, while the Varadinum Silver Medal in this category went to Mohammadreza Masumi for his single photo “Cold Road”. Seyyed Ehsan Mortazavi won the PSA Bronze Medal for his photo “Sar Aqa Seyyed” and Behnam Nasri received the Varadinum Ribbon for “Furnace”.

Nasri also won the MAFOSZ Silver Medal for his single photo “Enthusiasm” in the Open Monochrome Section.

An exhibition of the winning works will be held on October 30 in Oradea and several other Romanian cities.

“Castle of Dreams” director Reza Mirkarimi named best at Slemani festival

A R T TEHRAN — Iranian filmmaker Reza Mirkarimi was crowned best director for his drama “Castle of Dreams” at the 4th Slemani International Film Festival in the Iraqi city of Sulaymaniyah, the organizers announced on Wednesday.

He received the award from the jury, which included his fellow filmmaker, Puran Derakhshandeh.

The film is about two young children whose mother has just died, and their father, Jalal, after long years of absence, returns to sort things out, but he does not want to take the children with him.

“A Tale of Three Sisters” by Emin Alper from Turkey won the award for best film and the film’s star Cemre Ebüzziya was named best actress.

“Screwdriver” by Bassam Jarbawi from Palestine received the special jury award, and Victor Zhusti won the best actor award for his role in Albanian director Bujar Alimani’s “The Delegation”.

The Korean Palme d’Or-winning film “Parasite” co-written by Joon-ho Bong and Jin-Won Han won the award for best screenplay.

The international jury was also composed of Berlin International Short Film Festival director Heinz Hermanns, film director Adrian Belic from the U.S., Tampere International Film Festival executive director Juhani Alanen from Finland and media manager Zulfiye Akkulak from Germany.

“Terra” by Julia Kushnarenko from Russia was picked as best documentary,



Reza Mirkarimi attends a photocall after accepting the award for best director for his Iranian drama “Castle of Dreams” during the Slemani International Film Festival in Sulaymaniyah, Iraq on October 7, 2019.

while Iranian director Yasser Talebi’s acclaimed documentary “Beloved” received an honorable mention.

Mehrdad Oskui, the Iranian director

of the acclaimed documentary “Starless Dreams”, was a member of the jury in the documentary competition.

Iranian shorts “Umbra” by Saeid

Jafarian and “Dreams in the Depths” by Reza Mohammadi were also screened at the festival, which was held from October 1 to 7.

Iran to display Turkish translations of Persian writers’ books at Frankfurt fair



This combination photo shows some Turkish translations of Iranian writers’ books, which will be showcased at the 2019 Frankfurt Book Fair.

CULTURE TEHRAN — Iranian publishers will showcase Turkish translations of 14 books by Iranian writers during the Frankfurt Book Fair, which will open on October 16.

Anahita Taimurian’s “Ay Hepimizin” published by Turkish publisher Damla will be put on view by the publisher of the original book in Iran, the Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (IIDCYA).

Iran’s Ofoq publishing house will display “Elif, Dal, Mim” by Mehdi Hajvani and “Çocukların Sultanı” by Mehdi Mirkiai, both published by Demavend.

From Demavend, Tahereh Ibod’s “Liya-Sim-Maris’in Deniz Masalları” published

by the IIDCYA is also among the books.

Also included are “Yasemin” by M. Moaddabpur, “Eesriz Koy” by Nasim Marashi and “Berzah Ama Cennet” by Nazi Safavi from the Muhenna publishing house, and “Soganin Efsanesi” by Zahra Emami, “Karanlık Koridorun Ortasında” by Mehdi Rajabi, “Evim Nerede” by Reza Dalvand and “Bay Pembe” by Mojgan Kalhor, all from the Mevsimler publishing company.

Independent Iranian publishers Shabaviz, Sarir, Nazar and Behnegar will also showcase their latest offerings at the Frankfurt Book Fair, the world’s largest trade fair for books that will take place in the German city from October 16 until October 20.

Yemen Resistance Cartoon Exhibition opens in Tehran



People visit the Yemen Resistance Cartoon Exhibition at the Osveh Art and Cultural Center on October 8, 2019.

A R T TEHRAN — The Yemen Resistance Cartoon Exhibition opened at the Osveh Art and Cultural Center in Tehran on Tuesday to represent Yemenis resistant against the atrocities perpetrated by the Saudis in their war.

Speaking at the opening ceremony, the director of the exhibition Masud Shojaei-Tabatabai said that the Yemenis are suffering from the repercussions of the Saudi-led war on Yemen, while the world media has remained silent.

“We organized this exhibit in a short time, because the Western media has remained silent against the Saudis’ violence. We actually wanted the world

to hear the voice of the oppressed people of Yemen,” he noted.

He added that the Yemeni forces’ attack on the Saudi oil installation indicates that the word resistance has great power.

About 40 cartoons by a number of Iranian artists, including Mohammad-Hossein Nirumand, Nasser Moqaddam, Maziar Bijani and Sarallah Jafari, and Jitet Kustana from Indonesia are on view at the exhibition.

The exhibit has been organized by the Revayat Cultural Foundation and will be running until October 22 at the Osveh Art and Cultural Center located at No. 453, South Bahar St. off Enqelab Ave.

Iran to observe European Arthouse Cinema Day

A R T TEHRAN — Iranian theaters will observe European Arthouse Cinema Day with a screening of German director Fatih Akin’s 2017 drama “In the Fade” on October 13.

The Art and Experience Cinema Institute from Iran in collaboration with the Embassy of Germany are the organizers of the event.

The Iranian Artists Forum in Tehran, City Center Cineplex in Isfahan, Golestan Cineplex in Shiraz, Pars Cinema of Kerman, Hoveizeh Cineplex in Mashhad, Ekomal Cineplex of Karaj, Setarebaran Cineplex of Tabriz and Labkhand Cinema on Kish Island will be the hosts of the event, the Art and Experience Cinema Institute has announced.

“In the Fade” stars Diane Kruger as a German woman whose husband and son are killed in a terrorist attack



A scene from German filmmaker Fatih Akin’s 2017 drama “In the Fade”.

“South Park” creators offer mocking ‘apology’ to China over episode

LOS ANGELES/SHANGHAI (Reuters) — The creators of satirical animated series “South Park” issued a mocking “apology” to China after media reports that episodes of the show were no longer available on some Chinese websites.

The “Band in China” episode released on Oct. 2 critiqued China’s policies on free speech as well as the efforts of Hollywood to shape its movie and television content in recent years to avoid angering censors in the vast Chinese market.

“Like the NBA, we welcome the Chinese censors into our homes and into our hearts. We too love money more than freedom,”

Trey Parker and Matt Stone, the creators of the irreverent Comedy Central show, wrote in a Twitter post titled “Official apology to China.”

“Long live the Great Communist Party of China! May this autumn’s sorghum harvest be bountiful! We good now China?,” Parker and Stone added.

A Reuters search online showed that iQiyi and Youku Tudou, two Chinese video streaming sites, both listed episodes of South Park available to view, but the actual episodes did not play when requested.

Searching for the show’s name on Baidu Tieba, a popular online forum, and on

Douban, a popular movie ratings site, did not yield any results.

Spokespersons for Youku Tudou, iQiyi and Baidu did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

The Cyberspace Administration of China, which oversees internet governance, did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The South Park statement followed an uproar in China and the United States over a weekend tweet, which was quickly withdrawn, by the general manager of the Houston Rockets basketball team that backed democracy protests in Hong Kong.

perpetrated by neo-Nazis.

Christian Bräuer, the president of the International Confederation of Art Cinemas (CICAE), along with several Iranian filmmakers will be attending a workshop titled “Art Film, From Production to Screening”.

The workshop will be held at the Iranian Artists Forum on October 13 and the City Center Cineplex in Isfahan the next day.

The European Arthouse Cinema Day will be celebrated at cinemas all over the world on October 13. The CICAE and Europa Cinemas have teamed up to celebrate the engagement of movie theaters in favor of a lively European cultural diversity through very rich, varied, curated and exclusive programs. In 2018, more than 650 cinemas in 39 countries participated.

The National Basketball Association (NBA) has built a large following and burgeoning business in China.

The long-running “South Park” series is one of cable channel Comedy Central’s biggest and most controversial hits, built around the misadventures of four foul-mouthed fourth graders.

The episode at the center of the latest dispute saw character Randy Marsh being arrested after trying to smuggle marijuana into China.

In jail, he meets two Chinese prisoners called Winnie the Pooh and Piglet, and is subjected to slave labor and re-education.