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Monthly steel products exports rise 60% yr/yr

TEHRAN — Iran exported 584,000 tons of steel products during the sixth Iranian calendar month of Shahrivar (August 23-September 22), which was 60 percent more than the figure of the same month in the past year, IRIB reported on Wednesday citing the data released by Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO).
The data provided by IMIDRO also

indicate that the country exported 3.4 million tons of steel products during the first half of this year (March 21-September 22), with three percent growth compared to the first half of the previous year.

In a press conference on June 8, Iranian deputy industry, mining and trade minister said the ministry has taken necessary measures to maintain the country's metal exports despite the U.S. sanctions. ➔ 4

Iran ready to mediate in Yemen issue if Saudis accept political solution

TEHRAN — Iranian Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani said on Tuesday that Iran will be ready to act as mediator in the issue of Yemen if Saudi Arabia accepts a political solution.

"If Saudis accept political solution, Iran will mediate on the Yemen issue. However, the United States imagines that the time to stop milking Saudi Arabia

has not come yet," Larijani said during a meeting with Bundestag Vice President Claudia Roth on the sidelines of 41st summit of the Inter-Parliamentary Union in Belgrade.

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said on Sunday that ending war in Yemen will have positive effects on the Middle East region. ➔ 2

Barham Salih emphasizes opposition to ISIL transfer to Iraq

TEHRAN — Iraqi president's adviser said Barham Salih had said in a telephone interview with the U.S. secretary of state that Baghdad would not allow the transfer of ISIL terrorists from Syria into Iraqi territory under any pretext.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo called Iraqi President Barham Salih to discuss the Turkish military incursion into

Syria and the U.S. desire for the offensive to end immediately, according to a State Department summary of the phone call released on Tuesday. The summary said Pompeo "also condemned the recent violence in Iraq and noted that those who violate human rights and commit acts of violence and intimidation against the media should be held accountable." ➔ 13

Trump impeachment: Nancy Pelosi decides not to call vote authorising probe

TEHRAN — Nancy Pelosi has decided to put off holding a vote in the House to back the impeachment probe of Donald Trump being carried out by Democrats.

Trump and the White House have claimed, contrary to what many independent legal experts had said, that Democrats were required to hold a so-called floor vote to approve the impeachment investigation her party announced last month.

It suggested the absence of a vote was one of the reasons the administration had decided not to cooperate with the probe, and had declined to provide either documents or else permit witnesses testify.

Yet, Pelosi had insisted there was no constitutional requirement for her to do, and said on Thursday she did currently intend to hold one.

"There is no requirement that we have a vote. So at this time we will not be having a vote," she said on Capitol Hill, shortly before the party's fifth debate to help select a challenger to Mr Trump got underway in Ohio.

The decision by Ms Pelosi saves her having to force her members to hold an unnecessary vote on a sensitive and potentially issue. The plan she outlined last month when she declared the party was moving forward formally with its impeachment probe, was that six committees currently looking into the president would do so under an impeachment umbrella.

The party would then consider the strongest evidence and most likely place it before the House judiciary committee for a vote on whether to impeach the president.

If the committee did do, the matter would move to the floor of the House, which is made up of 435 voting members and who would be asked to vote on whether to impeach the president.

Only a simple majority it required. According to Independent, Trump recently acknowledged his opponents had sufficient numbers to impeach him in the House, though he hoped Republicans in the Senate, where a two-thirds majority is required, would protect him, just as Democratic senators did for Bill Clinton in 1998 after he was censured by the lower chamber.

Lavrov says Russia will push for agreements between Syria, Kurds

TEHRAN — Russia will encourage Syria's government and Kurdish forces to reach agreements and implement them following a Turkish operation in Syria's northeast, the RIA news agency cited Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov as saying on Wednesday.

Speaking in Russia's Black Sea city of Sochi, Lavrov said the Turkish operation had allowed captured Islamic State fighters to escape. He added that Moscow would support security cooperation between Turkish and Syrian forces along their border.

Russia says its military police units are patrolling along contact line areas between Turkish and Syrian armies near Syria's flash-point northern city of Manbij to help avert a possible confrontation following the withdrawal of American troops and the subsequent launch of a Turkish offensive against Kurdish militants in the area.

In a statement released on Tuesday, Russia's Defense Ministry said the patrols were taking place around Manbij, where Syrian government forces have now been deployed under a deal with authority-seeking Kurdish militants who controlled the area.

"The Syrian government army has full control over the city of Manbij and nearby settlements," read the statement.

"Russian military police continue to patrol the northwestern border area of Manbij district along the line of contact between the Syrian Arab Republic and Turkish armed forces," it added. "Cooperation is organized with the Turkish side."



EDITORIAL

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Turkey and the time bomb in Syria

Covert groups seeking ISIS resurgence

The Turkish attack on northern Syria has provided conditions for ISIS militants held in camps in the region to escape and revitalize themselves.

Turkey launched "Operation Peace Spring" on Wednesday October 9, claiming to end the presence of terrorists near its borders in northern Syria. Some countries condemned this illegal action of violation of the Syrian sovereignty.

The military attack has exacerbated the Syrian people's living condition who live in these areas. On the other hand, it has also allowed ISIS forces to escape and prepare themselves to resume their actions in Syria. Before Turkish incursion into northern Syria. There were many warnings that the incursion would prepare the ground for ISIS resurgence. But ignoring the warning, Turkey launched its military attacks.

Currently, about 11,000 ISIS prisoners are held in Syria. ISIS has claimed the responsibility for two attacks on Qamishli and Hasakah since the beginning of Turkish attacks.

Meanwhile, Donald Trump said that Turkey and the Kurds must stop ISIS prisoners from fleeing. He urged European countries to take back their citizens who have joined ISIS.

It should be noted that the U.S. is trying to prove that ISIS has become stronger since the U.S. troops pulled out before the Turkish invasion, and to show that Syria is not able to manage the situation. But this fact cannot be ignored that ISIS militants' escape and revival were an important consequence of the Turkish attack.

Turkish troops has approached an important city in the northeast and clashed with Syrian forces. These events provided the chance for hundreds of ISIS members to escape from a camp in Ayn Issa near a U.S.-led coalition base.

The camp is located 35 kilometers on the south of Syria-Turkey border, and about 12,000 ISIS members, including children and women, are settled there. The Kurdish forces are said to be in charge of controlling these prisoners. ➔ 13



PERSPECTIVE

M.A. Saki
Deputy editor-in-chief

Unwise and huge subsidy for an unnecessary thing

Continuing to greatly subsidize gasoline is detrimental to economy at the cost of national resources and clean air.

Though return of illegal sanctions and a sudden change in prices have made any decision to at least partially free up gasoline prices more difficult, the current situation is not tenable.

The rising consumption of gasoline, which has hit 100 million liters per day, is alarming. Simply speaking, subsidy for gasoline is neither wise nor expedient.

The chief reason behind the current situation surrounding gasoline price is a mix of advices by the so-called economic experts and populist policies by the successive parliaments and governments in varying degrees.

Opponents have always been arguing that freeing gasoline prices, even gradually, will hurt low-income and poor classes. However, the main motive by some parliamentarians and presidents in opposing a rise in gasoline prices has been to get reelected.

In fact, it is the rich classes which have been profiting more from subsidized fuel, especially gasoline. Some poor classes even do not have a car to benefit from this subsidy.

In a story on its website on October 6, the ISNA news agency said studies show that the rich's share from gasoline subsidy is 23 times more than other classes of the society.

According to officials from the Budget and Planning Organization in the last calendar year (March 2018-March 2019), ➔ 2



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Arbæen march reaching its height

The march toward Karbala to mark the Arbæen ritual is reaching its climax. Arbæen comes 40 days after Ashura. Millions of people, especially from Iraq and Iran, defy all difficulties to walk tens of kilometers to reach Karbala, where the shrine of Imam Hussein (AS) is located. Imam Hussein, the grandson of Prophet Muhammad (S), was martyred in the battle of Karbala against the forces of the Caliph in 680 AD.

Dear readers,
The next issue of the Tehran Times will be published on Sunday, October 20.

Linking universities to industrial sectors is essential: Rouhani

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — President Rouhani said on Wednesday that it is essential to link universities with manufacturing and industrial centers.

“In this regard, good steps have been taken and such actions should be accelerated,” Rouhani said in a speech at the University of Tehran as Iran marked the beginning of academic year.



Rouhani went on to say that university must become skill-based. He also suggested that “we don’t favor quantity at the expense of quality” at the academic centers.

“Science is the basis for skill, advancement and development, and students have to learn skills and the future needs of the society alongside science,” Rouhani said, according to the president.ir.

The president added, “It was said in the past that science was doubling after several years, today we have to say that different sciences are doubling after a few days, and the opportunity may be reduced again in the future”.

The president also said Iranians should get prepared for the coming elections.

“The future of our country is determined and approved by the elections and with all the shortcomings and deficiencies, the best way to defeat extremism and reform the society and meritocracy is the ballot box”.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the president said some inside the country put emphasis on constructive interaction in settling disputes while others prefer confrontation with the foes.

“Some people believe that problems can only be resolved by displaying power and destroying the enemy, while others believe that many problems can be resolved through dialogue,” he pointed out.

Zarif: EU unable to fulfill JCPOA commitments

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif underlined on Wednesday that the European signatories of the 2015 nuclear deal have thus far been unable to fulfill their obligations under the pact, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Zarif’s remarks came in a meeting with Grace Naledi Mandisa Pandor, the South African minister of international relations and cooperation, as Tehran hosted the 14th session of Iran-South Africa Joint Economic Cooperation Commission in Tehran.

Zarif said Iran will take new steps to reduce its nuclear commitments.

Under the JCPOA, Iran agreed to put limits on its nuclear program in exchange for termination of financial and economic sanctions.

“In case of lack of balance in fulfillment of obligations of both sides of the nuclear deal, Iran will embark on materializing necessary measures within the framework of next steps,” Zarif stated.

He said the U.S. decision to quit the JCPOA was a blatant violation of the UN Security Council resolution 2231, contrary to the UN member states’ will and intention as well as the weakening of Non-Proliferation Treaty and the multilateral diplomacy approach.

Zarif pointed to Iran’s commitment to its obligations under the JCPOA even a year after Washington’s illegal withdrawal from the deal, saying, “Iran’s strategic patience ended and exactly based on the deal’s context and according to paragraph 26 and 36 of the deal it scaled down its undertakings in three different steps.”

He separately said both Iran and South Africa share common views towards a variety of regional and international issues including Palestine, human rights, necessity to reform the UN Security Council structure, campaign on terrorism and extremism, peaceful uses of nuclear energy, South-South cooperation and international organizations’ cooperation.

Zarif further hoped for reinvigoration of economic, trade, technological and scientific ties between the two nations’ state-run and private sectors.

He further briefed the South African official about Tehran’s view regarding security in the Persian Gulf and President Hassan Rouhani’s security plan named Hormuz Peace Initiative (HOPE) and Tehran’s call on other regional nations to join it.

Pandor, for her part, admired Iran’s valuable supports for the South Africans’ campaign against the Apartheid regime and underlined her country’s stance against unilateralism, recognizing nations’ right to peaceful uses of nuclear energy, opposing the U.S. unilateral sanctions against Iran and continuation of cooperation between the two nations in different areas.

Both officials stressed the need for pursuing mutual cooperation within the framework of Non-Aligned Movement, countering terrorism and violence and keep continuing non-stop efforts for restoration and reinvigoration of peace and stability worldwide via diplomatic paths.

Iran ready to mediate in Yemen issue if Saudis accept political solution: Larijani

1 → “The Islamic Republic of Iran presented a four-point plan to end war in Yemen a long time ago and if this war ends in a right way, it can have positive effects in the region,” Leader said during a meeting with visiting Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan who is trying to deescalate tension between Tehran and Riyadh.

In April 2015, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif submitted a letter to Ban Ki-moon, then UN secretary general, outlining Iran’s four-point peace plan for Yemen.

The plan calls for an immediate ceasefire and end of all foreign military attacks, humanitarian assistance, a resumption of broad national dialogue and establishment of an inclusive national unity government.

Saudi Arabia launched military campaign against Yemen in March 2015 with the aim of eliminating the Yemeni opposition groups who had toppled the government of President Mansour Hadi.

Failing to achieve either of its goals, Riyadh has not yet stopped bombing Yemeni targets, creating a protracted conflict which has so far led to the killings of over 16,000 Yemeni civilians, starvation of 14 million people, and the destruction of the country’s infrastructure.

Shamkhani: U.S. trying to give new life to Daesh

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Ali Shamkhani, secretary of Iran’s Supreme National Security Council (SNSC), on Wednesday voiced regret over Turkish military aggression on northern Syria, calling the move a U.S.-orchestrated plot aimed at reviving Daesh in the Middle East.

Shamkhani’s remarks came in a meeting with Alexander Lavrentiev, the special envoy of the Russian president, during which the sides discussed regional and international issues.

Pointing to the U.S. plot to revive Daesh and create insecurity in the Middle East, Shamkhani called on regional nations to be more vigilant about such plots and embark on close coordination to counter the ill-wishers’ destabilizing measures.

Shamkhani further condemned double-standard approach towards the issue of terrorism, including in the northwestern Syrian province of Idlib.

Officials and analysts have warned that the Turkish invasion of Syria will lead to reemergence of Daesh.

Turkey launched an offensive on the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) last week. This happened despite warnings by many countries including Iran, Russia, Egypt, China, India and European states.

The Syrian Kurdish fighters commonly referred to as the SDF, were instrumental in defeating Daesh.

Iran’s Judiciary Chief Ebrahim Raisi on Monday expressed deep concern that Turkey’s incursion into Syria would bring Daesh back to the stage.

There is a danger that Daesh which “has



committed the biggest crimes in the region and their hands are stained with the regional people’s blood to respire and commit crimes again”, Fars quoted Raisi as saying.

Raisi expressed the hope that the Turkish government would pull back to international borders immediately.

Aid groups operating in northeastern Syria have raised the alarm about civilian casualties and an impending humanitarian crisis.

■ Shamkhani says Tehran will make assaults on Iranian oil tanker regretful

Elsewhere in his talks with the Russian president’s envoy, Shamkhani underscored

that Tehran’s response to orchestrators and operators of the Friday missile attack on Iran’s SABITI oil tanker will be so harsh that will cause the assailants to feel regret.

Noting that insecurity in the international waterways is one of the most blatant causes of creating crisis in the region, Shamkhani said, “We will give crushing and regretful response to those who launched missile attack on the Iranian oil tanker in the Red Sea, which was aimed at escalating a fresh wave of tensions in the region.”

On Tuesday, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif announced that “one or

UN chief welcomes Pakistan’s initiative to ease Iran-Saudi tension

By staff and agency

UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric has said that Antonio Guterres, the UN secretary-general, welcomes Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan’s initiative to de-escalate tensions between Iran and Saudi Arabia.

Dujarric told reporters at the regular noon briefing in New York that the UN chief welcomes any such effort “as a matter of principle”, Associated Press of Pakistan reported on Tuesday.

Khan visited Tehran on Sunday to “facilitate” possible dialogue between Iran and Saudi Arabia which have been at loggerheads over a number of issues including the Saudi war on Yemen and Riyadh’s support for anti-Iran moves.

He met with Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and President Hassan Rouhani.

Khan also visited Saudi Arabia on Tuesday. The Pakistani prime minister visited Iran as the tension in the region is getting more complicated. On October 11, an Iranian oil tanker was struck by two missiles in the Red Sea, 60 miles away from Saudi coastlines.

Khan has said that he is making an effort to reduce tension between Tehran and Riyadh. Prior to the Sunday visit to Tehran, he held talks with Saudi Arabia’s leaders in Riyadh



as well as Rouhani at the United Nations in September.

Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi has said that Iran and Saudi Arabia should bridge differences.

In an interview with Aaj News, Qureshi said that Pakistan will continue efforts in line with reducing tension in Iran-Saudi Arabia relations, ISNA reported on Tuesday.

On Saturday, the Iranian Foreign Ministry said Tehran is ready for a talk with Saudi Arabia with or without a mediator.

During a joint press conference with Khan in Tehran on Sunday, Rouhani, without mentioning Saudi Arabia, suggested

Government reiterates Iran won’t negotiate with U.S. under sanctions

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iran will not talk with the U.S. as long as Washington keeps the sanctions in place, government spokesman Ali Rabiei said on Wednesday.

Rabiei touched upon the French president’s plan to revive the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and said, “We will not enter talks with the U.S. under sanctions. Our conditions have not changed.”

“Of course, we have no problem with any plan that guarantees our rights in any framework it might be. We have no problem with participation of Japan or any other new country (in the talks). Our right to sell the country’s crude and return of oil exports’ revenues to the country must be

guaranteed. Sanctions must be lifted (by the U.S.),” the spokesman stated.

In early October, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani ruled out any chance for the success of the mediation efforts underway by his French counterpart in view of Washington’s policy, underlining that removal of the sanctions is a prerequisite for Emmanuel Macron’s success.

“The French president’s efforts will only be effective if sanctions imposed by Trump against Iran are lifted, and it is only at that time that the negotiations (with the U.S.) within the 5+1 group will be possible,” Rouhani said in a meeting with a number of American media directors and senior figures at the United Nations Headquarters in New York in late September.

Turkish raid on northern Syria contrary to interests of Islamic states: MP

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Alaeddin Boroujerdi, a member of the Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, has said that Turkey’s military attack on northeast Syria is contrary to the interests of the Islamic countries.

In an interview with ISNA published on Wednesday, Boroujerdi said he hopes Turkey would end offensive on Kurdish populated

areas in northern Syria.

“Syria is an independent Islamic country which was dealing with a crisis imposed by the United States for 6-7 years. This country settled its crisis through efforts made by the Syrian Army and government and also countries such as Iran and Russia. It was not right to impose another security crisis on Syria,” the veteran MP remarked.

Zarif renews Iran’s call to Persian Gulf states to join Tehran’s peace plan

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — In a post on his Twitter account on Tuesday, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif renewed Iran’s call to all countries bordering the Persian Gulf to join Tehran’s initiative to “forge a blueprint for peace, security, stability, and prosperity” in the region.

At the UN summit in New York in late September, Iran officially unveiled its proposal. The proposal is known as the Hormuz Peace Endeavour (HOPE).

Zarif also thanked Pakistan’s Prime Minister Imran Khan for his efforts to deescalate tension in the Persian Gulf region.

Khan, leader of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party, visited Tehran on Sunday for talks with top Iranian leaders. He said the purpose behind his visit was to prevent



a new war in the region. He said he is trying to “facilitate” dialogue between Tehran and Riyadh, which their relations have deteriorated badly in recent years over a number of issues including the war on Yemen and also Riyadh’s unwavering support for Trump’s anti-Iran policies.

Khan also visited Saudi Arabia on Tuesday.

tomans per day, must be used for projects which are of high priority. It must be used for developing public transport, education, environment, water conservation, designing and manufacturing electric cars, research projects, etc.

Not only it is not advisable to subsidize gasoline, its consumption should also be a subject for tax. This approach is the only solution to cut down its consumption, counter air pollution and motivate knowledge-based enterprises, not the current companies which act like a mafia, to develop energy efficient cars, including electric ones.

However, the more delays by the parliament and government to reform gasoline prices, the more painful its costs will be.

Unwise and huge subsidy for an unnecessary thing

1 → about 600,000,000,000,000 tomans (\$140 billion and \$52 billion based the official and unofficial rate dollar of 4,200 tomans and 11,400 tomans respectively) subsidy was spent for electricity, water, and oil products; however, more than a third of the figure was spent on gasoline.

According to the report, even the rich classes’ benefit from electricity subsidy is 3.6 times more than others.

There may be justification for subsidizing water and electricity but not for gasoline. No wise mind accepts this.

This mindset by the public that Iran sits on large reserves of oil and gas and there is no need to sell them at their real price must be rectified. Future generations also have a share from

these natural resources.

In a press conference on Monday, President Rouhani, though too late, acknowledged that the current price for gasoline, which is 1,000 tomans per liter, is “unfair”. After more than six years of his presidency, the gasoline price has just increased 300 tomans.

Labor and Social Welfare Minister Mohammad Shariatmadari has said that even a government manager has protested that why his cash subsidy, which is just 45,500 tomans, has been cut. Government spokesman Ali Rabiei has also said those who complain about the cut of their cash subsidy mostly live in rich neighborhoods in northern Tehran.

This huge sum of gasoline subsidy, which is over 550 billion

Intelligence minister felicitates IRGC on capturing Ruhollah Zam

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iranian Intelligence Minister Mahmoud Alavi has congratulated Hossein Salami, the commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), and his forces on the arrest of a top anti-Islamic Republic figure.

In a statement on Wednesday, Alavi also wished for further success of the Guards in foiling the enemies' plots against the Iranian nation under the command of Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, IRNA reported.

On October 14, the IRGC announced it had lured Ruhollah Zam, who ran the anti-Iranian Amad News website and Telegram channel, back to Iran and arrested him.

The Guards posted the news of his arrest on Zam's Telegram channel with a following of over a million users, effectively taking over the administration of the popular channel.

Alavi described Zam as a "traitor" and a "mercenary" who was supported by foreign intelligence services.

Zam's arrest received widespread support from across the political spectrum.

■ 'Iran had laid trap to catch Zam long ago'

Interior Minister Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli said on Wednesday the Islamic Republic had laid the trap to catch the operator of Amad News a long time ago and was waiting for the right moment to arrest him.

"This should be a lesson for all [spy] services and individuals who take measures against our country's national security," said Rahmani



Fazli, according to Mehr.

"The tough line must be taken with anyone who harms the country through infiltration and espionage," he added.

■ General Baqeri hails IRGC forces for 'great achievement'

Major General Mohammad Hossein Baqeri, the Armed Forces Chief of Staff, said on Tuesday the arrest attested to the dreadful fate that

awaits anyone who threatens Iran's security.

In a message, General Baqeri congratulated Major General Salami for the "great achievement", saying the successful operation showed the Guards' "cleverness, sincerity, tactfulness, reliance [on God], patience and wisdom."

He added that the achievement on the one hand caused happiness and national pride

in Iran, and on the other caused fear and astonishment among the Islamic Republic's enemies and ill-wishers.

Zam launched Amad News in 2015. The channel frequently posted fake news stories and called for violence with the aim of overthrowing the Islamic Republic system.

During the protest rallies in December 2018, he urged the people to take arms against the government.

In its Monday statement, the IRGC also said the French intelligence service was behind Zam's activities, which were also backed by the U.S. and Zionist regime's spy services.

Back in December 2017, Telegram blocked the channel of Amad News for encouraging people to violence after a request by Iranian Minister of Communications and Information Technology Mohammad Javad Azari Jahromi.

"A Telegram channel is urging people to incite insecurity and use home-made bombs and arms. Isn't it time to stop promoting violence?" said Azari Jahromi in his Twitter account, mentioning the Telegram founder Pavel Durov.

Durov, in return, tweeted, "Calls for violence are prohibited by the Telegram rules. If confirmed, we'll have to block such a channel, regardless of its size and political affiliation."

The tweet was followed by the closure of Amad News channel, which had over 1.3 million followers at the time.

However, Zam resumed his activities by launching a new channel called Seday-e Mardom, which is translated as "voice of the people".

Trump asked me to be go-between with Iran: Imran Khan

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan says U.S. President Donald Trump has asked him to mediate between Tehran and Washington during his visit to New York.

"You should try and go between Iran and the United States," Khan quoted Trump as saying, in an interview with CNN on Tuesday night.



He also expressed optimism about possible improvements in the Iran-U.S. ties.

The Pakistani prime minister said that during his recent visit to Iran, he also spoke to Iranian President Hassan Rouhani about the U.S. offer.

He added that the situation was evolving and he would not go into details.

"Let's see, it gets anywhere. I did not go into too much detail, until there is response from both sides," Khan remarked.

Commenting on President Trump, he said that the people often criticize him but "I think, what I like in him that he does not believe in wars."

Trump ditched a UN-backed nuclear deal with Iran more than a year ago. Since then, he has slapped harsh economic sanctions on Iran while at the same time asking for talks with the country.

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

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

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

However, Ayatollah Khamenei said if the U.S. "repents" and returns to the nuclear deal that it has violated it can participate in the negotiations with Iran along with other parties to the nuclear agreement.

Pakistan's Imran Khan visited Iran on Sunday, accompanied by a senior political team.

Khan said his visit was aimed to "facilitate" possible dialogue between Iran and Saudi Arabia whose relations have been cut and caught in a kind of conflict over a series of issues, mainly the Saudi war on Yemen and Riyadh's support for Trump's anti-Iran moves.

"Iran welcomes good intention and efforts by the Pakistani prime minister to settle tension in the region to restore peace and stability to the region," Rouhani said during a joint press conference with Khan.

Rouhani also said Iran has informed Pakistan about Tehran's position on the 2015 nuclear deal and elaborated on the ways that the United States can return to the deal and lift sanctions.

Following his trip to Iran, Khan paid an official visit to Riyadh as part of his mediation efforts between Tehran and Riyadh.

Tensions in the Persian Gulf spiked last month after attacks on Saudi oil facilities that halved the kingdom's crude output and set oil markets alight.

Yemen's Houthi movement claimed responsibility. But Saudi Arabia and some Western countries, including the U.S., blamed Tehran.

Tehran has denied involvement and warned of "all-out war" in the event of any attack on its territory.

On Friday morning, two separate explosions, possibly caused by missile attacks, also hit an Iranian-owned oil tanker off the Saudi coast in the Red Sea.

The explosions hit the vessel's hull, causing heavy damages to the ship's two main tanks, which resulted in an oil spill in the Red Sea.

Saudi Arabia later said it was not involved in the incident.

Iran urges Bahrain to change 'non-constructive' policies in region

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — MP Fatemeh Hosseini, Iranian representative at the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Assembly in Belgrade, has slammed Bahrain's anti-Iran remarks, urging the Arab country to reconsider its "non-constructive" policies in the Middle East.

Hosseini made the remarks in reaction to claims by the Bahraini side on Iran's involvement in proxy wars in region and the recent attack on Saudi Arabia's oil facilities, Mehr reported on Wednesday.

"It is shocking to hear such hostile remarks against a neighboring country by those who support and sponsor terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda and Daesh," she stated.

"Contrary to the principles and remarks by such countries, the Islamic Republic of Iran has always played a constructive role in fighting terrorism in the region," Hosseini added.

She said Iran invites such regimes to take note of the realities of the region so that "we can all witness the establishment of peace and stability."

Hosseini also said while Iran rejects all accusations on its involvement in Yemen, "we express our full support for a peaceful solution to the Yemeni crisis and an end to this humanitarian catastrophe caused by foreign aggressors."



Jalali: Iran has developed 200 new cyber defense products

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — About 200 new cyber defense products have been produced inside Iran, Civil Defense Organization chief Gholam Reza Jalali has said.

Highlighting the country's major scientific progress, Jalali said the necessary cyber defense products are made by the country's knowledge-based companies, Tasnim reported on Wednesday.

Jalali referred to the constructive interaction between the Civil Defense Organization and knowledge-based companies, saying some threats facing Iran now are technological and related to cutting-edge sciences, including nanotechnology and biotechnology.

He argued that fending off such threats in cyberspace and other areas is carried out via Iran's scientific and research capacities.

"Fortunately, with implementation of policies adopted by the country's Civil Defense Organization in this area, we



have managed to make about 200 serious cyber defense products," he added.

The remarks came against the backdrop of reports that the U.S. has carried out a secret cyber-attack against Iran in the week after Yemen's strikes on key Saudi oil facilities, which Washington blamed on Tehran.

Two American officials, who were speaking on condition of anonymity, told Reuters on Wednesday that the operation took place in late September and targeted what they called Tehran's ability to spread "propaganda."

One of the officials claimed that the cyber-attack had affected physical hardware, without elaborating.

The Pentagon declined to comment about the reported cyber strike, with spokeswoman Elissa Smith saying, "As a matter of policy and for operational security, we do not discuss cyberspace operations, intelligence, or planning." Tehran has not reacted to the report so far.

On September 14, Yemeni armed forces conducted a large-scale operation against two Aramco installations, knocking out half of Saudi Arabia's oil production.

Larijani: Iran chief beneficiary of developed, safe Iraq



POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iranian Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani said on Tuesday that durable security and all-out development in Iraq will benefit Iran too, condemning ill-wishers who tried to destabilize Iraq in recent days.

Larijani made the remarks during a meeting with Shirko Miro, head of the Iraqi Parliament's foreign policy committee, and some other Iraqi lawmakers on the sidelines of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) conference in Belgrade, Serbia.

"I am sure that the wise Iraqi people are capable enough to solve recent problems," Larijani said in the meeting, adding, "But important issue is realizing the root causes of the incident."

"Some countries do not accept a secure and calm Iraq and tried to oppose Baghdad's policies and launched terrorist operations in the country as soon as the new government took office, but Iran's stance towards Iraq has always been clear," he further said.

Larijani added, "Some of Iran's problems with neighboring countries were for sake of Iraq, because Tehran wants Iraq to be democratic (but those neighboring countries do not want)."

The parliament speaker also refuted claims that Iran forces in Iraq, saying, "Only when Daesh invaded Iraq, Baghdad called on Tehran for further assistance and we accepted."

Iraq was rocked by a new wave of protests over economic hardships and joblessness in early October. In stark contrast to claims that demonstrations were popular and spontaneous, new analyses revealed that 79% of hashtags about protests in Iraq on Twitter had originated from Saudi Arabia and only 6% were from inside Iraq.

However, the timing of the start of the protests with the great march of Arbreen aroused suspicions.

Even the volume of hashtags sent from Kuwait was bigger than Iraq. 7% of pro-protest Tweets were from the tiny Arab country.

The UAE, Egypt, the U.S., and Yemen were the other countries where Tweets originated, promoting anti-government protests.

Earlier this month, a senior member of the Iranian Parliament National Security and Foreign Policy Committee said that joint plots orchestrated by Washington and Riyadh were root causes of the recent riots in Iraq.

Ala'eddin Boroujerdi said that Riyadh tried to push Iraq into anarchy on the threshold of the Arbreen march to cover Saudi forces' disgusting failures in Yemen.

"Recent developments in Iraq are definitely a result of provocations manufactured out of Iraq in which the U.S. played a pivotal role," he underscored.

He went on to emphasize that "Iraq's recent incidents are controllable and will fade soon without any influence on the largest world gathering of Arbreen."

Zarif says it is imperative to end incursion into Syria



POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has said it is "imperative" to end Turkey's incursion into northern Syria.

"The imperative now is to end the incursion into #Syria & address all concerns through #ADANA," Zarif wrote on his Twitter on Tuesday.

Zarif also suggested that "it is essential that the core principles of JUS IN BELLO are fully observed: distinction between civilians and combatant, & prohibition on inflicting unnecessary suffering."

(International humanitarian law, or jus in bello, is the law that governs the way in which warfare is conducted.)

Turkey launched military operation against Syrian Kurdish fighters, known as the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), in northeast Syria on October 9.

In an interview with Turkey's TRT World aired on October 10, Zarif said that the Syrian Army together with Turkey can guard the border. "That's a better way to achieve security," he suggested.

"We do not believe that security can be achieved by invading Syria, by incursion into Syria. We have better options. We have offered better options to our Turkish friends like the Adana agreement. There is an Adana agreement between Turkey and Syria which is still valid. We can help bring together the Syrian Kurds, the Syrian government and Turkey so that the Syrian

Army together with Turkey can guard the border with Turkey, together with Turkey," Zarif explained.

Also in a post on his Twitter page on October 12, Zarif also said, "The Adana Agreement between Turkey and Syria—still valid—can be the better path to achieve security. #Iran can help bring together the Syrian Kurds, the Syrian Govt, and Turkey so that the Syrian Army together with Turkey can guard the border."

Iranian MPs issued a statement on Monday condemning Turkey's military attack on northeastern Syria.

"We, the representatives of Iran's parliament, support the oppressed Syrian Kurds and expect the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, which supports the oppressed, to announce its support for the oppressed Syrian Kurds in various ways," read the statement.

The statement also said, "Speaker of the parliament [Ali Larijani] will cancel his trip to Turkey in protest to the military attack."

The MPs also condemned the international bodies' silence over the attack.

The Iranian Foreign Ministry issued a statement on October 10 urging Turkey to immediately stop offensive and withdraw its forces from the region.

The statement said, "As it has been announced earlier, the Islamic Republic of Iran considers the current regional situation a consequence of extra-regional interferences, especially by the United States."

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	309640.2
IFX	3868.45

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	46,327 rials
GBP	53,571 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$58.80/b
WTI	\$53.02/b
OPEC Basket	\$59.95/b
Gold	\$1,481.70/oz
Silver	\$ \$17.30/oz
Platinum	\$880.20/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

Eurozone September inflation unexpectedly revised down to 0.8%

Eurozone inflation slowed in September by more than previously estimated to its slowest pace in nearly three years, the European Union statistics agency said on Wednesday, in a new warning on the state of the bloc's economy.

As per wionews.com, Eurostat said prices in the 19-country currency area grew by 0.8 percent on the year, revising down its earlier estimate of a 0.9 percent rate. That also defied the market consensus of a 0.9 percent growth.

In a separate release, Eurostat said on Wednesday that the bloc's trade surplus with the rest of the world rose to \$16.2 billion in August, from 11.9 billion the previous year, as eurozone's imports dropped more than its declining exports.

The revised inflation reading marked a more pronounced slowdown from the 1.0 percent growth in August and was the lowest rate since November 2016 when prices grew by 0.6 percent in the bloc.

The new drop is likely to raise new concerns on the state of the eurozone economy and could reignite the debate within the European Central Bank on how to pursue its goal of keeping inflation below, but close to 2 percent over the medium term.

The revision was due to lower-than-expected inflation for industrial products, in a fresh worrying sign for the bloc's manufacturing sector which faces drops in output and a fall in confidence.

Prices for industrial goods, excluding energy, went up by a mere 0.2 percent on the year in September, Eurostat said, revising its earlier estimate of a 0.3 percent increase.

Energy prices were confirmed falling by 1.8 percent, while inflation in the service sector, the largest in the bloc, rose by 1.5 percent in line with previous estimates.

A narrower inflation indicator which strips out volatile energy and unprocessed food prices, and is monitored closely by the ECB for its policy decisions, rose to 1.2 percent in September from 1.1 percent in August, in line with Eurostat's earlier estimates released on October 1.

Excluding energy, food, alcohol and tobacco, inflation grew 1.0 percent in September, Eurostat said, confirming its previous figures.

On the month, headline inflation grew 0.2 percent in the bloc, also in line with earlier estimates.

China injects billions as economy slows, will investors turn to Bitcoin?

America is not the only country manipulating its money in order to prop up a flagging economy. Today China unexpectedly injected billions in cash to prevent a fall in interest rates as the economy flounders following months of trading tensions. Savvy investors turned to Bitcoin before, will they do it again?

As per newsbtc.com, the premature cash injection comes amid a prolonged trade dispute with the U.S. and a slowing domestic economy. The report added that data released this week showed China's factory deflation deepening and a fall in imports and exports last month.

According to Bloomberg the People's Bank of China injected 200 billion yuan (around \$28 billion) into the financial system today. The move caught markets off guard and the flood of money flowed through the medium-term lending facility which is essentially loans for banks.

China's third quarter GDP figures are due for release on Friday and they are expected to show the lowest growth since 1992.

The PBoC has been forced to take action to ease monetary policy by injecting more liquidity into the financial system. More than 400 billion yuan of the medium-term lending facility will come next month providing a window for the central bank to lower interest rates.

Other reports indicate that the U.S. and China are intent on 'decoupling' as high level talks between the two leaders continue to wrangle over trade agreements. This would be bad news economically for both nations and the rest of the world.

What is clear is that both economies are suffering as a result of the trade spat and the global financial system is slowing down, almost ten years after the last crisis.

Bitcoin has yet to establish itself as an alternative borderless currency so it is still only really a store of value at the moment. Central banks flooding financial markets with billions also serves to devalue their own currencies, so the store of value narrative for BTC may strengthen.

Additionally, Chinese investors and traders are savvier than their U.S. counterparts and have subverted the system countless times before to buy up Bitcoin in times of economic adversity. Tether has also been acquired in large quantities by the Chinese looking to hedge against their own currency with a dollar pegged stablecoin, and to circumvent a ban by banks on buying crypto with fiat.

As central banks continue to manipulate money markets, those with the funds will be looking at alternatives such as Bitcoin.

Monthly steel products exports rise 60% yr/yr

1 → “We have established a special working group in the ministry which is closely assessing the situation and making necessary arrangements to mitigate the impact of the U.S. sanctions,” Jafar Sarqini told the Tehran Times in the press conference.

The official noted that it is expected for the exports from the country's mining sector to, at least, reach the last year's \$8.5 billion by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 2020).

Also, during a meeting with the members of Iran Steel Association on August 25, Iranian Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Reza Rahmani said the country

has achieved a proper self-reliance in steel industry.

Steel industry is one of the industries in which some good investment has been made and today it has become a production advantage, the minister further underscored.

Iran's annual steel production is planned to reach 45 million tons by the Iranian calendar year 1400 (March 2021-March 2022), according to Sarqini.

On June 15, the official had announced that the country's annual crude steel production is planned to reach 30 million tons in the current Iranian calendar year.

He put Iran's crude steel production at 25 million tons in the past year.



Meanwhile, on Saturday, Rahmani announced that industry and mining sectors of the country have experienced a growth of 18 percent during the first half of the current year.

Making the remarks during a ceremony to inaugurate a copper concentrate plant in

the northeastern city of Ahar, the minister said that the country has witnessed a growth of 6.5 percent in crude steel output, 9.1 percent rise in production of steel products, six percent increase in cement output, and 13 percent rise in glass production during the first six-month of this year.

TEDPIX gains 668 points in a day

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), rose 668 points to 309,647 on Wednesday, Mehr news agency reported.

Some 3,371 billion securities worth 11.825 trillion rials (about \$281.5 million) were traded through 290,805 deals at TSE.

While lagging the parallel markets of foreign currency, gold coin, and real estate behind, Iran's stock market hit a new record during the first half of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-September 22), as TEDPIX, the main index of TSE, closed at an all-time high of 302,103 points.

It is while the index had stood at 178,000 points at the end of the previous calendar year.

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



Also as reported, Iran's over-the-counter (OTC) market, known as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB), has experienced a noticeable positive performance during the first half, as its main index, IFX, gained 78 percent during the mentioned period of time.

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

CGT bill to be submitted to cabinet in a week

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Capital gains tax (CGT) bill will be submitted to the cabinet by the end

of the current Iranian calendar month of Mehr (October 22), or at most in the first half of the next calendar month of Aban, Iranian deputy finance and economic affairs minister told Mehr news agency on Wednesday.

Mohammad-Ali Dehqan Dehnavi said, “National Tax Administration has delayed preparing the mentioned bill for two weeks; and now we are trying in the ministry to finalize it as soon as possible so that it could be submitted to the cabinet by the end of the current month”.

In order to reduce intention for investment making in non-productive sectors, many countries impose capital gains tax (CGT) which is a tax on capital gains with different rates of taxation for individuals and corporations.

While CGT prevents from the wealth to be owned just by a few people, it leads the liquidity toward production, and help re-distribution of wealth and income in the society.

CGT has come under the spotlight in Iran during the current Iranian calendar year (began on March 21), as the country is investigating different ways for a budget plan



Iranian Deputy Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Mohammad-Ali Dehqan Dehnavi

with no reliance on the oil income, and collecting taxes is one of the major ones.

The 17.03 quadrillion rials (\$405 billion) budget bill for this Iranian year has envisaged 1.53 quadrillion rials (about \$36.5 billion) of tax income.

Iranian Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs Farhad Dejpasand has said that reducing the current year's budget

ISIPO revives 600 idle production units

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iran Small Industries and Industrial Parks Organization (ISIPO) has revived 600 idle production units since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2019), IRNA reported on Wednesday.

According to the Deputy Head of ISIPO Ali Asqar Mosaheb, Industry, Mining and Trade Ministry plans to revive 2,000 idle production units by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2020) of which 1400 units are Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SME).

“Considering the project's progress, we are expected to reach the target set in this sector by the end of the year,” Mosaheb told reporters.

Elaborating on ISIPO's programs for reviving idle SMEs, the official said “Last year, a successful plan for reviving production units was implemented, in which, despite targeting 1,000 units for reactivation, ISIPO was able to bring 1,726 small industrial units back into production.”

Back in August, Deputy Industry Minister Saied Zarandi had announced that the ministry allocated 15 trillion rials (about \$357 million) for reviving 2000 idle production units across the country.

“Of the mentioned 2000 units, 1,338 are based in the industrial parks across the country and currently 400 of them are back into operation,” Zarandi had



said.

The official also said the ministry plans to support increasing the production capacity of 4,200 production units across the country.

Earlier that month, ISIPO head had also announced that the organization was following major programs in order to revive idle units and to help them to get back into business.

Speaking in a press conference Mohsen Salehinia mentioned some of his organization's plans for supporting SMEs, noting that the industry ministry was also fully supporting ISIPO's efforts in these regards.

“Although the SMEs have the potential to provide nearly 900,000 job opportunities across the country, but currently 22 percent of the SMEs are idle and there are only 710,000 people working in active units,” Salehinia said.

ISIPO plans to help revive 1300 idle SMEs by the end of the current Iranian calendar year, Salehinia said.

Iran plans to hand over major auto makers to private sector

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iranian Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Reza Rahmani said his ministry is planning on handing over the country's major auto makers to the private sector, IRIB reported.

“Automobile manufacturing companies are not going to be awarded to any real entity, but we are considering handing them over to the private sector,” the minister told reporters on the sidelines of a cabinet meeting on Wednesday.

Pointing out that the country's auto makers are going to suspend production of two passenger car brands in the near future, the minister noted “Of course, an appropriate passenger car will replace them.”

He further noted that automotive companies are pursuing the mentioned program, adding “We're also pursuing and supporting this program, and in the first phase, the production of Pride will be halted.”

Earlier in August, Rahmani had said that the production of Pride car will be discontinued as from 2020. Pride has been Iran's best-selling brand of car.

He added that in order not to repeat the past mistakes in privatizations, the government is working to downsize both companies and then to hand over them to the private sector.

He reiterated that the government is not interested in running businesses and it backs privatization.

Earlier this week, Rahmani criticized



French giant auto-makers Peugeot and Renault for breaching their contracts after the U.S. sanctions, adding that the country is now seeking to find new foreign partners.

Since the U.S. reimposed sanctions on Iran to pressure the country's economy, most of the European automakers active in the country has left under U.S. pressures, however Iran has been taking necessary measures to mitigate the impact of the sanctions and counter the U.S. actions.

Improving and boosting domestic production has been one of the major strategies that Iran has been following in the past two years in order to increase its economy's independence.

In mid-May, Rahmani issued a directive on “strengthening domestic manufacturing of imported auto parts”.

He said the policy of domestic manufacturing of auto parts should be seriously followed up, and in this due the capable manufacturers should be seriously supported.

Iran, Iraq to synchronize power grids by yearend

ENERGY

TEHRAN — Deputy Head of Iran Electricity Industry Syndicate said power grids of Iran and Iraq will be interconnected by the end of 2019, Mehr news agency reported.

“Also, based on a deal between Iran and Iraq, Iraq’s electricity grid losses, which is currently over 50 percent, will be reduced to 30 percent by the end of 2020,” Payam Baqeri told Mehr.

Pointing to Iraq as a strategic market for all Iranian industries including the energy sector, Baqeri said “In recent months, we have undertaken serious work for defining new

projects under the protocols of cooperation between the Iranian Ministry of Energy and Iraq’s Electricity Ministry.”

“According to the agreement between the two ministries, the two countries are going to execute joint projects in the electricity sector over three years (or three stages) of 2019, 2020 and 2021,” he added.

The official noted that, Iran is also going to collaborate with Iraq to increase the efficiency of Iraqi power plants and power generation by the end of the year.

“We have had several meetings in this regards and an agreement we had, became



an official contract based on which we are moving forward with the project,” Baqeri said.

He further emphasized Iran’s favorable position in Iraq’s competitive market, saying Iran has a competitive advantage in operat-

ing the Iraqi electricity industry, since it has great potential and experience in this area.

“Since Iraq has serious plans to modernize its electricity industry, Iran could be the best option to work in this area,” he added.

Intl. Iran Downstream Show slated for Feb. 2020

ENERGY

TEHRAN — The first international exhibition of Iranian oil, gas and petrochemical industries downstream sector (Intl. Iran Downstream Show) is going to be held during February 2-4, 2020 at Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds, Shana reported.

As reported, the first meeting of the

exhibition’s policy-making council was held on Tuesday in which representatives of private oil, gas and petrochemical companies, Iran and Tehran chambers of commerce, public relation office of National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC), Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) and representative of Iran International

Exhibitions Company discussed organizing and managing the exhibition.

The major goals of the exhibition and the process of obtaining the event’s required licenses, as well as the list of commodity groups that are going to be presented at the exhibition were also discussed in the meeting.

Forming committees for B2B specialized meetings, knowledge-based companies and start-ups, public relations and information and international affairs, exports, communication with government agencies and related business environments such as banks, stock exchanges and insurance were also among the discussed issues.

Oil slips further below \$59 on weaker economic outlook

Oil slipped further below \$59 a barrel on Wednesday, pressured by concerns about weaker demand for fuel due to slower economic growth and forecasts of a further rise in U.S. crude inventories.

According to reuters.com, signs from the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries that further curbs to oil supply could come in December lent support, as did wider market optimism about a potential Brexit deal.

Brent crude LCOc1, the global benchmark, slipped 16 cents to \$58.58 a barrel by 0850 GMT. U.S. crude CLc1 gained 2 cents to \$52.83.

“Prices are under pressure from increasing pessimism about the global economy and subsequent demand-side concerns,” Stephen Brennock of oil broker PVM said.

In a bearish signal for demand, the International Monetary Fund said on Tuesday the U.S.-China trade war would cut 2019 global growth to its slowest since the 2008-2009 financial crisis.



“Prices remain under pressure,” said Craig Erlam, analyst at OANDA. “Oil inventory today from API may be notable albeit unlikely to have any major impact on the broader trend.”

The American Petroleum Institute (API) reports its weekly

U.S. inventory numbers at 2030 GMT, ahead of Wednesday’s government stocks data. Analysts estimate U.S. crude inventories rose by around 2.8 million barrels last week.

British and European Union officials resumed talks to clinch a Brexit deal on Wednesday just a few hours after late-night negotiations wound up, but it was far from clear they would reach an agreement before a leaders’ summit today.

Analysts have said any agreement that avoids a no-deal Brexit should boost economic growth and, in turn, oil demand. Providing more price support, OPEC Secretary-General Mohammad Barkindo has said an option for OPEC and its allies is to implement deeper cuts in oil production.

OPEC, Russia and other producers have a deal to cut oil output by 1.2 million barrels per day until March 2020. They meet on December 5-6 in Vienna to review the decision.

On Tuesday, Barkindo said OPEC would do what it could with allied producers to sustain oil market stability beyond 2020, in a signal the producers would continue to cooperate.

China’s Yantai LNG group aims to start up import terminal by 2022

China’s Yantai LNG Group is aiming to start up a liquefied natural gas (LNG) import terminal by 2022 and expects government approval for it over the next few weeks, two sources familiar with the matter and a director with one of the partners said.

As per nasdaq.com, Shandong Province, where Yantai port is located, is an industrial and petrochemical hub in eastern China. It has one quarter of China’s steel capacity and is a big coal-consuming region, although it has yet to house a gas-fired power plant.

Yantai LNG Group is building the terminal in two phases, the first phase with a capacity of 5 million tons per year and the second with 6.5 million tons per year.

Yantai LNG Group is majority owned by Poly-GCL Petroleum Group Holdings Ltd. Shandong Pan-Asia International Energy

Distribution Center and Yantai Port Group hold the balance.

Land reclamation for the project has started, one of the sources told Reuters.

Phase 1 of the import terminal will cost \$1.1 billion and comprise an LNG-dedicated port area, a berth that can receive LNG tankers of up to 266,000 cubic meters in capacity, a 50,000 cubic-meter transshipment berth, and five 200,000 cubic-meter storage tanks, a second official said.

Phase 1, expected to start up in 2022, will receive 5 million tons of LNG a year and regasify 40 million cubic meters a day, he said.

Phase 2, to launch by 2025, will have two LNG berths receiving up to 266,000 cubic-meter carriers and five more 200,000 cubic-meter storage tanks, expanding Yantai LNG’s receiving capacity to a total 11.5 million

tons per year.

Project holders in the terminal are in talks with several suppliers to import LNG through long-term contracts, Eric Wang, executive director at Poly-GCL Pan Asia International Energy Co, told Reuters on the sidelines of an industry conference.

The partners may also be looking at investing in some liquefaction projects to source gas for the terminal, Wang said, adding that his company has scheduled a visit to Houston later this month or in early November to meet with producers in the United States.

“We don’t care too much about (the U.S.-China) trade war. It will (likely) be solved in one or two years,” he said. A bigger concern was the long transportation distance between the countries, he said.

Yantai Port Group is also investing in a



separate 5 million-ton storage project at Yantai port that China National Petroleum Corp (CNPC) aims to build by 2022. Yantai will take a 49% stake in that project, and CNPC will hold a 51% share, one of the sources said.

Separately, Yantai Port will also build a 300,000-tonne crude oil berth for a new petrochemical project in Yantai, the source said.

What’s really driving oil prices?

By Osama Rizvi

The recent attack on the Abqaiq oil refinery saw Brent prices jump 20 percent in a matter of minutes, the largest spike in oil prices since 1982. Ultimately, the sharp increase proved to be temporary as oil dropped 6 percent on the back of reassurances from Aramco’s CEO that supply would return. Prices then continued to slide as concerns over world economic growth and long-term oversupply kicked in. The pattern of geopolitical price spikes followed by a continued slide has repeated itself since then and we can expect that trend to continue in the coming year.

The Middle East’s unpredictable diplomatic-security conditions will continue to play off against the economic impact of various trade wars around the globe.

Ever since William d’Arcy’s discovery of oil in the Middle East in 1908, the region has always held significant geopolitical value. That value, as well as several historical variables, has been central to the instability and conflict in the region. There are two dimensions to these conflicts: internal and external. In particular, the tensions between Saudi Arabia and Iran have been a constant driver of conflict in the region – tensions that are once again flaring today.

The region is also home to two of the most important straits and more than 60 percent of world oil reserves. The quantity of oil and level of instability in this region makes it easily the most important geopolitical factor for oil analysts and traders to study.

While it is very difficult to predict the course



of events in the Middle East, the New Iran Deal remains the most pressing issue. Until or unless the Trump administration and its European allies are able to forge a new settlement, the likelihood of an escalation in the region will remain high.

■ To avoid U.S. sanctions

While European countries are trying to form a Special Purpose Vehicle to avoid U.S. sanctions and continue purchasing oil from Iran, sanctions are undeniably having an effect though with exports from the country continuing to drop. While the chances of an all-out war remain slim, the recent spike in incidents between Saudi Arabia and Iran as well as the Turkish invasion of Syria show that the geopolitical risk factor in the Middle East is very much alive and kicking for oil markets.

The second overarching factor that will continue to influence oil prices is the economic impact of trade wars. There are three separate trade wars that are currently threatening global

oil demand – the first between the U.S. and China, the second between South Korea and Japan and, more recently, the transatlantic one between Europe and U.S. While these trade wars may not directly impact oil prices, the integrated nature of the global economy means that a weak global economy has a well-established relationship to weaker oil demand.

Currently, each of these trade wars appear to be at an impasse and have analysts believing that long-term oil demand is set to suffer. The World Trade Organization has recently revised down trade volumes for this year to 1.2 percent from 2.6 percent predicted in April 2019. Estimates for global economic growth were also slashed from 2.6 percent to 2.3 percent.

■ Double-digit decline

Manufacturing activity in Germany, the U.S. and China has seen a considerable decline. The Institute of Supply Management’s purchasing manager index (PMI) in the U.S.

dropped to 47.8 percent, the lowest since 2009. Auto-makers, meanwhile, have been experiencing double-digit declines.

According to Mr. Mark Rossano, CEO and founder of C6 Capital Holdings, the “geopolitical landscape is very fluid at the moment with issues ranging from BREXIT to Middle East upheaval to the U.S.-China trade war and the little talked about South Korea-Japan trade war.

The current political upheaval in the Middle East (outside of KSA) remains regional and sporadic that won’t have a lasting impact on supply at the moment. This is why demand is a big focal point, because even if the trade wars go away tomorrow – the bigger issue of economic slowdown outweighs any benefits.

This being said, the Iran situation will continue to impact oil pricing.

The current sanctions aren’t going away anytime soon as President Trump wants to appear tough on trade. Finally, The growing divide between Iran and Saudi Arabia will continue to expand, and will result in additional attacks on both a military and economic level.”

As long as geopolitical factors and trade war factors are counterbalancing one another, traders and analysts should be hyper-focused on developments in the Middle East and trade talk developments. Amidst the noise of inventory reports, rig counts and other seasonal, ephemeral factors, the long-term trend for oil prices will likely be downward alongside the global economy until a geopolitical flare-up in the Middle East threatens otherwise.

(Source: oilprice.com)

Inside India’s small-scale renewable revolution

By JP Casey

India has the fifth-highest renewable capacity in the world, with potential power resources of 118GW. The national government is targeting a capacity of 500GW by 2030, and with investment in the country’s renewables sector reaching \$20b last year, there is every chance that India could develop into a renewable energy powerhouse. Blessed with ample sunlight and over 8,000km of coastline, there is significant potential for new renewable projects in the country; JP Casey profiles five of the most promising start-ups that could lead India’s small-scale renewable revolution.

India’s largest renewable energy producer, ReNew generates around 5GW through more than 100 wind and solar plants, covering roughly 1% of the country’s total electricity needs.

Founded in 2011 with a relatively low sum of \$60m in funding, in eight years the company has constructed facilities in 20 Indian states, and manages both utility-scale wind and solar plants. It also has a rooftop solar scheme where consumers can pay for a solar installation once the panels have started to generate electricity. This latter program has helped open up the rooftop solar market to customers who may lack the funds to purchase their own panels outright.

The company also shows no signs of slowing down, having raised \$300m in additional funding from backers such as Goldman Sachs by the end of June this year, pushing its valuation to more than \$1bn according to CB Insights. ReNew plans to nearly double its power capacity to 8GW, with new projects currently under construction.

The company, with its financial successes and wide-ranging solutions, has been held up as an example of the potential for Indian renewable start-ups to rapidly develop and reach utility-scale production.



■ Optimizing energy production

A second start-up whose business is based on solar power is ZTRIC; while the company operates on a smaller scale than ReNew, it aims to use AI to support its solar installation projects to optimize energy production for a range of customers. The company, founded in 2016, offers three models of solar ownership, ranging from individual panels for customers to purchase to 20-year power purchase agreements designed for industrial applications, as it attempts to introduce distributed solar power to both people and companies across India.

ZTRIC has also invested heavily in smart technology, offering a range of services for customers that take advantage of artificial intelligence to improve the performance of their panels. Individual customers can use an app and an online portal to monitor the effectiveness of their panels, and this information is fed into what the company calls an “energy intelligence platform”, a system of energy management tailored for individual consumers. This platform also enables the company to predict mechanical and hardware problems ahead of time so they can be fixed promptly, further optimising customers’ solutions.

A similarly technology-driven company, Quenext uses AI solutions to optimize the energy usage of agricultural companies, helping them save money and reduce their environmental footprint. Since its founding in 2015, the company has developed a number of solutions, including software to optimize a company’s buying and selling and predict and alert human managers of potential environmental hazards ahead of time, which it claims has been largely effective. For example, the solutions have been in place at the Uttarakhand Power Corporation, and have saved the distributor around \$30m by optimizing operations.

The firm is taking advantage of a small explosion in technology start-ups in India, with the total funding received by new tech companies ballooning from \$4.3b in 2016 to \$10.5bn in 2018, the most in the country’s history. In this climate, and with technological services becoming more widely available, such as the decades of satellite data Quenext uses to track the movement of goods and make many of its predictions, the agri-tech firm could be set for significant growth.

Founded in 2013, ArSta Eco has developed a biomass facility, which opened in 2015 with a production capacity of one ton per hour. The company aims to capitalize on the 500 million tons of agricultural waste produced annually in India, and turn this waste into a product that can be used to further develop the country’s farming sector, which was responsible for close to 16% of all gross value added to the Indian economy between 2018 and 2019, according to the Statistics Times.

■ Clean power generation

ArSta also produces biochar, a charcoal-enriched compound that can also be used in agricultural work, and the company claims that the use of the compound can reduce water usage at farms by up to 70%. The firm also offers consultancy services for other companies interested in installing solar and biomass power generation facilities at their operations; as a result, ArSta is involved in both clean power generation and the reduction of waste and optimization of existing industrial processes, and could have a significant impact on the environmental performance of Indian industry across its services.

The company’s work has been recognized by the Global Cleantech Innovation Programme, a project backed by the UN and Global Environment Facility to encourage low-carbon industrial growth in seven countries, including India.

Another solar project is Enertia Sun Power, which provides more bespoke solar solutions to customers, from solar water heaters for individual consumers to solar-powered street lights for local governments. The company has worked closely with a number of government organizations, including the country’s ministry of new and renewable energy and the directorate general of supplies and disposals, reflecting the shifting attitudes towards renewables in the country, with branches of government now eager to work closely with clean energy start-ups.

However, the firm has struggled to attract the financial backing of other solar providers such as ReNew, and as such has ended up striking partnerships with companies with dubious environmental credentials. Enertia works with the Indian Oil Corporation, the country’s state-owned oil and gas company, which has converted over 6,000 of its power stations to operate on solar power. While this shift will improve the company’s environmental performance in the short term, and reflects Enertia’s ability to grow quickly, it serves as a reminder of the dominance of traditional fuel sources in India, and the precarious nature of renewable power in the country.

(Source: power-technology.com)

By Saeed Sobhani

TEHRAN — The former Vice President of the United States, at the start of his official run for the presidency, never imagined that he would be so attacked by Donald Trump and even some Democratic candidates! But now this has happened! Nowadays, Biden comes face-to-face with news, claims and questions about Ukraine Gate every day. Biden still lacks the power to answer many of the claims and questions. Here are some of the points:

As Max Blumenthal wrote in Consortiumnews With its relentless focus on corruption in Russia and Ukraine, the Atlantic Council has distinguished itself from other top-flight think tanks in Washington. Over the past several years, it has held innumerable conferences and panel discussions, issued a string of reports, and published literally hundreds of essays on Russia's "kleptocracy" and the scourge of Kremlin disinformation.

At the same time, this institution has posed as a faithful partner to Ukraine's imperiled democracy, organizing countless programs on the urgency of economic reforms to tamp down on corruption in the country.

But behind the curtain, the Atlantic Council has initiated a lucrative relationship with a corruption-tainted Ukrainian gas company, the Burisma Group, that is worth as much as \$250,000 a year. The partnership has paid for lavish conferences in Monaco and helped bring Burisma's oligarchic founder out of the cold. This alliance has remained stable even as official Washington goes to war over allegations by President Donald Trump and his allies that former Vice President Joseph Biden fired a Ukrainian prosecutor to defend his son's handsomely compensated position on Burisma's board.

As Biden parries Trump's accusations, some of the former vice president's most ardent defenders are emerging from the halls of the Atlantic Council, which featured Biden as a star speaker at its awards ceremonies over the years. These advocates include Michael Carpenter, Biden's longtime foreign policy advisor and specialist on Ukraine, who has taken to the national media to support his embattled boss. Even as Burisma's trail of influence-buying finds its way into front page headlines, the Atlantic Council's partnership with the company is scarcely mentioned. Homing in on the partisan theater of "Ukrainegate" and tuning out the wider landscape of corruption, the Beltway press routinely runs quotes from Atlantic Council experts on the scandal without acknowledging their employer's relationship with Hunter Biden's former employer.

This case of obvious cronyism has not been overlooked because the Atlantic Council is a bit player, but because of its success in leveraging millions from foreign governments, the arms and energy industries, and Western-friendly oligarchs to bring its influence to bear in the nation's capital.

■ NATO's Think Tank in Washington

The Atlantic Council functions as the semi-official think tank of NATO in Washington. As such, it cultivates relationships with well-established policymakers who take a hard line against Russia and support the treaty organization's perpetual expansion.

Biden has been among the think tank's most enthusiastic and well-placed allies.

In 2011, then-Vice President Biden delivered the keynote address at the Atlantic Council's distinguished leadership awards. He returned to the think tank again in 2014 for another keynote at its "Toward A Europe Whole and Free" conference, which was dedicated to expanding NATO's influence and countering "Russian aggression." Throughout the event, speakers like Zbigniew Brzezinski, a former U.S. national security adviser, sniped at President Barack Obama for his insufficiently bellicose posture toward Russia, while former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright fretted over polls showing low public support for U.S. interventionism overseas.

In his own comments, Biden emphasized the need to power Europe with non-Russian sources of natural gas. This provided a prime opportunity to Ukrainian suppliers like Burisma and U.S. energy titans. Many of these energy companies, from Chevron to Noble Energy, also happen to be top donors to the Atlantic Council.

"This would be a game-changer for Europe, in my view, and we're ready to do everything in our power to help it happen," Biden promised his audience.

Joe Biden, second from right, while U.S. vice president, at 2011 Atlantic Council distinguished leadership awards ceremony. At the time, the Atlantic Council was pushing to ramp up the proxy war against pro-Russian forces in Ukraine. In 2015, for instance, the think tank helped prepare a proposal for arming the Ukrainian military with offensive weaponry like Javelin anti-tank missiles.

Given that the Atlantic Council has been funded by the two manufacturers of the Javelin system, Raytheon and Lockheed Martin, this created at least the appearance of a conflict of interest. In fact, the think tank presented its Distinguished Business Leadership Award to Lockheed CEO Marillyn Hewson that same year.

Dubious arrangements like these are not limited to arms manufacturers. Anders Aslund, a neoliberal economist who helps oversee the Atlantic Council's programming on Russia and Eastern Europe, was quietly paid by a consortium of Latvian banks to write an October 2017 paper highlighting the supposed progress they had made in battling corruption.

Aslund was asked to write the piece by Sally Painter, a longtime lobbyist for Latvian financial institutions who was appointed to the Atlantic Council board in 2017. At the time, one of those banks was seeking access to the U.S. market and facing allegations that it had engaged in money laundering.

Pay-for-play collaborations have helped grow the Atlantic Council's annual revenue from \$2

Ukraine Gate, a nightmare for both American parties

Joe Biden has no quiet days

million to over \$20 million in the past decade. In almost every case, the think tank has churned out policy prescriptions that seem suited to its donors' interests.

In May 2017, Turkish President Recep Erdogan was filmed watching as his personal guards brutalized Kurdish protesters in Washington, D.C.; lost in the headlines was the fact that he was on his way into an event at the Turkish ambassador's residence hosted by the Atlantic Council.

Among the think tank's top individual contributors is Victor Pinchuk, one of the wealthiest people in Ukraine and a prolific donor to the Clinton Foundation. Pinchuk donated \$8.6 million to the Clintons' non-profit throughout Hillary Clinton's tenure as secretary of state. Asked if Pinchuk was lobbying the State Department on Ukraine, his personal foundation told The Wall Street Journal, "this cannot be seen as anything but a good thing."

■ Obama's 'Point Person' on Ukraine

In mainstream media reports about the Bidens, scarcely any attention is given to the critical role that Joe Biden and other Obama administration officials played in the 2013-2014 Maidan revolt that replaced a fairly elected, Russian-oriented government with a Western vassal. In a relatively sympathetic New Yorker profile of Hunter Biden, for example, the regime change operation was described by reporter Adam Entous as merely "public protests."

During the height of the "Revolution of Dignity" that played out in Kiev's Maidan Square, then-Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nuland boasted that the U.S. had "invested \$5 billion" since 1991 into Ukrainian civil society. On a December 2013 tour of the Maidan, Nuland personally handed out cookies to protesters alongside Geoffrey Pyatt, U.S. ambassador to Ukraine at the time.

In a phone conversation that leaked two months later, the two U.S. diplomats could be heard plotting out the future government of the country, discussing Ukrainian politicians as though they were chess pieces. "I think Yats is the guy who's got the economic experience," Nuland said, essentially declaring Arseniy Yatsenyuk the next prime minister. Frustrated with the European Union's reluctance to inflame tensions with Moscow, Nuland exclaimed, "Fuck the EU."

By February 2014, the Maidan revolt had succeeded in overthrowing President Viktor Yanukovich with the help of far-right ultra-nationalist street muscle. With a new, U.S.-approved government in power, Biden assumed a personal role in dictating Ukraine's day-to-day affairs.

"No one in the U.S. government has wielded more influence over Ukraine than Vice President Joe Biden," Foreign Policy noted. The Atlantic Council also described Biden as "the point person on Ukraine in the Obama administration."

"Ukraine was the top, or one of the top three, foreign policy issues we were concentrating on," said Carpenter, Biden's foreign policy adviser. "[Biden] was front and center."

Biden made his first visit to the post-Maidan government of Ukraine in April 2014, just as Kiev was launching its "anti-terrorist operation" against separatists who broke off from the new, NATO-oriented Ukraine and its nationalist government and formed so-called people's republics in the Rus-sophone Donbass region. The fragmentation of the country and its grinding proxy war flowed directly from the regime-change operation that Biden helped oversee.

Addressing the parliament in Kiev, Biden declared that "corruption can have no place in the new Ukraine," stating that the "United States has also been a driving force behind the IMF, working to provide a multi-billion package to help Ukraine."

That same month, Hunter Biden was appointed to the board of Burisma. Hunter Biden starred at one of Burisma's energy conferences in Monaco, which are today sponsored by the Atlantic Council.

■ Burisma Recruits Hunter Biden

The ouster of Yanukovich put the founder and president of Burisma, Mykola Zlochevsky, in a delicate spot. Zlochevsky had served as the environment minister under Yanukovich, handing out gas licenses to cronies. Having watched the president flee Ukraine for his life, currying favor with the Obama administration was paramount for Zlochevsky. He was also desperate to get out of legal trouble. At the time, a corruption investigation in the U.K. had resulted in the freezing of \$23 million of Zlochevsky's assets. Then, in August 2014, the oligarch was forced to follow Yanukovich into exile after being accused of illegally enriching himself.

The need to refurbish Burisma's tattered image, as well as his own, prompted Zlochevsky to resort to a tried and true tactic for shadowy foreign entities: forking over large sums of money to win friends in Washington. Hunter Biden and the Atlantic Council were soon to become two of his best friends.

Hunter Biden was no stranger to trading on his father's name for influence. He had served on the board of Amtrak, the train line his father famously rode more than 8,000 times, earning himself the nickname "Amtrak Joe." Somehow, he also rose to senior vice president at MBNA, the bank that was the top contributor to Joe Biden's Senate campaigns.

Moreover, the vice president's son reaped a board position at the National Democratic Institute, a U.S.-funded "democracy promotion" organization that was heavily involved in pushing regime change in Ukraine. And then there was Burisma, which handed him a position on its board despite his total lack of experience in the energy industry and in Ukrainian affairs. Hunter Biden tried to repay the \$50,000-a-month gig Zlochevsky had handed him



by enlisting a top D.C. law firm, Boies, Schiller, and Flexner, where he served as co-counsel, to help "improve [Burisma's] corporate governance." By the following January, Zlochevsky's assets were unfrozen by the U.K.

Back in Washington, the arrangement between the son of the vice president and a less than scrupulous Ukrainian oligarch was raising eyebrows. During a May 13, 2014, press conference, Matt Lee of the Associated Press grilled State Department spokesperson Jen Psaki about Hunter Biden's role on Burisma's board.

"Does this building diplomatically have any concerns about potential perceptions of conflict or cronyism — which is what you've often accused the Russians of doing?" Lee asked Psaki. "No, he's a private citizen," Psaki responded, referring to Hunter Biden.

In a December 2015 op-ed, the editorial board of The New York Times took both Bidens to task for the unseemly business arrangement: "It should be plain to Hunter Biden that any connection with a Ukrainian oligarch damages his father's efforts to help Ukraine. This is not a board he should be sitting on."

For a paper that had firmly supported the installation of a U.S.-aligned government in Kiev, this was a striking statement.

Hunter Biden maintained that he had only a brief conversation with his father about his work at Burisma. "Dad said, 'I hope you know what you are doing,' and I said, 'I do,'" Hunter recalled to The New Yorker.

Despite his constant focus on Ukraine, the elder Biden claimed this September that he never spoke to his son about his business dealings in the country.

Disaster for Ukrainians, Boon for the Bidens On Jan. 12, 2017, the criminal probes of Zlochevsky and Burisma were officially closed under the watch of a new Ukrainian prosecutor. Less than a week later, Biden returned to Ukraine to make his final speech as vice president. By this point, three years after the Maidan uprising overthrew Yanukovich, it was clear that the national project the vice president personally had presided over was a calamitous failure.

As even the Atlantic Council's Aslund was willing to admit, Ukraine had become the poorest country in Europe. The country had also become the top recipient of remittances in Europe, with a staggering percentage of its population migrating abroad in search of work.

Meanwhile, Amnesty International stated: "Ukraine is descending into chaos of uncontrolled use of force by radical [far-right] groups. Under these conditions, no person in Ukraine may feel safe." As the country's proxy conflict with pro-Russian separatists dragged on, it transformed into a supermarket for the international arms trade.

Meanwhile, Biden's son Hunter was making a small fortune by simply warming a seat on Burisma's board of directors.

During his 2017 press conference in Kiev, Biden seemed oblivious to the trends that were driving Ukraine into ruin. He encouraged Ukraine's leadership to continue on an IMF-led path of privatization and austerity.

He then urged Kiev to "press forward with energy reforms that are eliminating Ukraine's dependence on Russian gas," once again advancing policy that would serve as a boon to the energy firms plowing their cash into the Atlantic Council. Mykola Zlochevsky, former employer of Hunter Biden and current partner of the Atlantic Council.

Even with Hunter Biden on his company's board, Zlochevsky was still seeking influential allies in Washington. He found them at the Atlantic Council in 2017, literally hours after he was cleared of corruption charges in Ukraine.

On Jan. 19, 2017 — just two days after the investigation of Zlochevsky ended — Burisma announced a major "cooperative agreement" with the Atlantic Council. "It became possible to sign a cooperative agreement between Burisma and the Atlantic Council after all charges against Burisma Group companies and its owner [Mykola] Zlochevskiy were withdrawn," the Kyiv Post reported at the time.

The deal was inked by the director of the Atlantic Council's Eurasia program, a former U.S. ambassador to Ukraine named John Herbst. Since then, Burisma helped bankroll Atlantic Council programming, including an energy security conference held this May in Monaco, where Zlochevsky

currently lives. "[Zlochevsky] invited them purely for whitewashing purposes, to put them on the façade and make this company look nice," Daria Kaleniuk, executive director of Ukraine's Anti-Corruption Action Center, said of the Monaco event to The Financial Times.

At one such conference in Monaco, then-Burisma board member Hunter Biden declared, "One of the reasons that I am proud to be a member of the board at Burisma is that I believe we are trying to figure out the way to create a radical change in the way we look at energy." (Hunter Biden left Burisma with \$850,000 in earnings when his father launched his presidential campaign this year).

While the Atlantic Council was bringing Burisma in from the cold, the company was still too toxic for much of the business world to touch.

As The Financial Times noted, the American Chamber of Commerce in Ukraine had rejected Burisma's application for membership. "We've never worked with them for integrity reasons. Never passed our due diligence," a Western financial institution told the newspaper.

"The company just does not pass the smell test," a businessman in Ukraine told The Financial Times. "Their reputation is far from squeaky clean because of their baggage, the background and attempts to whitewash by bringing in recognizable Western names on to the board."

In fact, a year before the Atlantic Council initiated its partnership with Burisma, the think tank published a paper describing Zlochevsky as "openly on the take" and deriding board members Hunter Biden and former Polish President Aleksander Kwasniewski as his "trophy foreigners." (Kwasniewski is today a member of the Atlantic Council's international advisory board). For Herbst, however, Burisma's generosity seemed too hard to resist.

"If there are companies that want to support my work, if those companies are not doing anything that I know to be illegal or unethical, I'll consider their support," Herbst stated in reply to questions about the Burisma partnership from the Ukrainian news site, Hromadske.

"They've been good partners," he added.

The Atlantic Council has provided more than just a web of influence for figures like Biden and Zlochevsky. It extended into the Trump administration, through a former employee who served as the president's lead envoy to Ukraine. On the sidelines of a September 2018 Atlantic Council event in New York City, Burisma adviser Vadym Pozharskyi held a meeting with Kurt Volker, then the State Department's special liaison to Ukraine. A former senior adviser to the Atlantic Council and national security hardliner, Volker had earned praise from Biden as a "solid guy."

At the time, Volker also served as the executive director of the McCain Institute, named for the senator, John McCain, who authored the congressional legislation requiring the U.S. to budget 20 percent of all aid to Ukraine for offensive weapons. As I reported in 2017, the McCain Institute's financial backers included the BGR group, whose designated lobbyist, Ed Rogers, was a lobbyist for Raytheon — the company that produced the Javelin missiles that both Volker and the Atlantic Council wanted sold to Ukraine.

Following his abrupt resignation this September, Volker was called to testify before the House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs on the so-called Ukraine gate affair. There, he defended Biden as "a man of integrity and dedication to our country" who would never be "influenced in his duties as Vice President by money for his son..."

Throughout Biden's tenure as the "point person" on Ukraine, one figure was constantly by his side: Michael Carpenter, a former Pentagon specialist on Eastern Europe who became a key adviser to Biden on the National Security Council. When Carpenter traveled with Biden to Ukraine in 2015, he helped provide the vice president with talking points throughout his trip.

Once Trump was inaugurated, Carpenter followed fellow members of the Democratic foreign policy apparatus into the think tank world. He accepted a fellowship at the Atlantic Council, and assumed a position as senior director of newly founded Penn Biden Center for Diplomacy and Global Engagement, which provided office space to Biden when he was in Washington.

At the Jan. 23, 2018 Council on Foreign Relations event where Biden made his now-notorious comments about threatening the Ukrainian

government with the withdrawal of a one billion dollar loan if it did not fire Ukrainian Prosecutor General Viktor Shokin — "well son of a bitch, he got fired!" Biden exclaimed — Carpenter was by his side, rattling off tough talking points about Russian interference. [Shokin testified under oath that Biden had him fired because he was investigating Burisma.]

Since then, Carpenter has remained engaged in Ukrainian politics, throwing his weight behind some of the country's most hardline elements. In July 2018, for instance, he helped welcome Andriy Parubiy, the speaker of the Rada (the Ukrainian parliament), to a series of meetings on Capitol Hill.

Parubiy is the founder of the Social-National Party, which The Washington Post's Eugene Robinson described as "openly neo-fascist." In fact, Parubiy appeared in a Nazi-style uniform, packing a pistol beneath a Wolfsangel symbol on the cover of his Mein Kampf-style memoir, "A View From The Right."

After the Senate meeting with Parubiy, I challenged Carpenter over bringing the far-right politician to Capitol Hill. "Andriy Parubiy is a conservative nationalist who is also a patriot who cares about his country," Carpenter told me. "I don't think he has any neo-Nazi inclinations, nor background." He went on to dismiss the basis of my question as "mostly Russian propaganda."

Months later, Carpenter staged a meltdown on Twitter over the incident, fabricating quotes by me, branding me as a "sleeze" [sic] and "pro-Asad and pro-Putin scumbag," while falsely and baselessly claiming I "enlist[ed] RT," the Russian-backed news network, "to do an exposé on him."

Asked by The Grayzone about Carpenter's work for a think tank funded by Burisma while simultaneously involving himself in Biden's political machine, Atlantic Council media relations deputy director Alex Kisling stated, "Council staff and fellows are free to participate in election activity as individuals and on their own time, provided they do so in a way that could not be seen as acting as a representative of the Council or implying Council endorsement of their activity or views. Michael's affiliations and previous service are on our website. (He is not part of our full time staff)."

The Penn Biden Center did not respond to a question on whether it supported Carpenter's work at the Burisma-backed Atlantic Council.

As the scrutiny of Biden's dealings in Ukraine intensifies, Carpenter has thrust himself into the media limelight to defend his longtime boss.

In an Oct. 7 Washington Post op-ed denouncing Trump's "smear campaign" against Biden, Carpenter insisted that Biden had gone to great lengths to remove the Ukrainian prosecutor, Shokin, for his failure to take action against Burisma. That evening, Carpenter took to Rachel Maddow's show on MSNBC to reinforce the message that Biden moved against "corrupt players" in Ukraine, presumably referring to Burisma.

At no point did he mention that Burisma was funding the think tank that hosted him as a senior fellow. In publishing an "explainer" purporting to debunk the charges against Biden, the Atlantic Council also failed to mention its ongoing relationship with Burisma. Atlantic Council media relations deputy director Kisling dismissed the non-disclosure, telling The Grayzone, "The Council discloses its funding from Burisma on its website and whenever asked." (Ironically, the Atlantic Council has pushed for greater transparency in political advertising on Facebook, one of the top donors to the think tank).

Perhaps the most absurd omission took place in a GQ article about Ukraine gate by reporter and Russia-watcher Julia Ioffe. In painting Ukraine — the largest nation entirely located in Europe — as a "small country" drowning in corruption, Ioffe noted, "the best way to launder one's shady reputation and shine for international investors is to hire big-name Western consultants — as Burisma did."

In the very next paragraph, Ioffe quoted Daniel Fried, a former State Department official now serving as a senior fellow at the Atlantic Council. "It's a country where there's a lot of freelance money and a lot of competing interests," Fried remarked. Revealingly, Ioffe failed to acknowledge that Fried was one of those "big-named Western consultants" helping to launder Zlochevsky and Burisma's "shady reputation" through the Atlantic Council.

In fact, Fried was photographed in a one-on-one meeting with Burisma advisor Vadim Pozharskyi at a September 2018 Atlantic Council conference in New York City.

■ Controversial debate in the Democratic Party

As The Intercept reported, Joe Biden, 76, came out of the gate relatively strong and lucid, not devolving into the kind of gibberish that makes for viral supercuts until the second or third hour of the debate. The vice president took a shortcut in the Democratic Party's October debate on Tuesday night, skipping his typical strong first hour and heading straight for the looping, elliptical discussions his campaign has become known for. He punctuated it with perhaps the most patronizing barb the Democratic debates have seen this cycle.

It was Biden's first debate that he didn't come into as the frontrunner, having been eclipsed in the polls by Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., and the first question, a softball on impeachment, came to her. He stumbled through his response on impeachment, then was pressed on his son Hunter Biden's role on the board of a Ukrainian natural gas company while Biden, as vice president, was leading Ukraine policy. It was a question that had no good answer — "On Sunday," CNN's Anderson Cooper said, "you announced that if you're president, no one in your family or associated with you will be involved in any foreign businesses. My question is, if it's not OK for a president's family to be involved in foreign businesses, why was it OK for your son when you were vice president?" — and Biden didn't give one.

East Asia at the glance

American politicians' separatist designs on Hong Kong will fail

GLOBALTIMES - Over the weekend, US senators Ted Cruz of Texas and Josh Hawley of Florida visited China's Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and showed their support for activists on the ground, vowing to fight for the passage of the so-called Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act in the US Congress (the lower house on Tuesday backed the bill, taking it closer to a law.) As they visited, the city descended into yet another weekend of violence and disorder as activists destroyed shops, property and threw Molotov cocktails. A policeman was also slashed in the neck with a knife.

The position and words of these senators should be taken with a pinch of salt. Claims of police brutality in the city, as well as the so-called control by Beijing, have been persistently and constantly exaggerated for political ends, failing to incorporate a bigger picture of events on the ground. This mass hysteria has long constituted an element of Hong Kong's political culture. Given this, the real goal of American politicians is to consolidate the city as an exclusive "hostile periphery" of China which is subsequently antagonistic to it. Nevertheless, Beijing's consistent emphasis on the country's territorial integrity and sovereignty ensures that not an inch can be given.

In recent weeks, radical protests led to all pervasive violence against businesses, institutions and organizations deemed associated with "Chinese mainland." Properties have been destroyed, individuals have been attacked, flags have been burnt and so on. Very few of these events have been highlighted by mainstream Western media, which largely contend that the protesters are justified and can do "no wrong."

The US knows this and in turn is seeking opportunities out of the chaos than sincere concerns for the city's wellbeing. Despite the fact that Hong Kong police have not killed, either directly or indirectly, a single protester, American politicians continue to perpetuate the misleading narrative, conjured by activists who are skilled in deception, that the police force is brutal and that Hongkongers are being "oppressed."

These events are in tandem with Washington ignoring far more violent crackdowns in other countries around the world. They illustrate Washington's selectivity and lack of sincerity. In doing so, they also willingly ignore the growing violence on behalf of the activists. As a result, it is not surprising that their narratives have formed the base position of Congress, who now may seek to pass an act which will have implications for the city's special status as a financial center. If this is selective and opportunistic, then what is the broader goal of the politicians backing it? In supporting these activists, which include an NGO funded in Washington DC and regular exchanges between Congress and leaders, the goal of many congressmen is not to simply uphold Hong Kong's autonomy but instead pursue the permanent differentiation of the city from the Chinese mainland. The long-term goal is to divide China and create a "hostile periphery." If the activists win, the city effectively becomes a unit which will never accept that it is part of China. It will not pursue unity or reconciliation with the mainland, but open antagonism and hostility toward it, aligning itself with the West.

In light of these intentions, Beijing's own position on the matter remains clear. The legacy of the century of humiliation, whereby China was subjugated and divided by external forces, has led to a strong emphasis being placed on the protection of sovereignty and territorial integrity against perceived foreign aggressors, as well as envisioning the



broader unity of China. Since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, this stance has been applied extremely consistently with red lines which have not shifted. As a result, Beijing perceives the movement in Hong Kong as a de facto separatist cause which is encouraged by American support.

Given this, China will not under any circumstances cede an inch on the matter of Hong Kong to the protesters and their Washington patrons. While Beijing remains committed to upholding the special privileges granted to Hong Kong as set out in the Sino-British Joint Declaration, nevertheless the statement that the city remains a part of the People's Republic of China and in turn ought to identify with such, is not up for negotiation.

Whether US Congress out of sheer political opportunism passes an act regarding the city or not, the outcome concerning this city's sense of belonging cannot be changed.

■ US 'hegemonic tariff' will not make America great again

Sustaining hegemony is selfish in nature, especially when hegemony is in decline. The nature of the US wielding the tariff baton, sanctioning other countries' officials and companies is a "hegemonic tariff."

This can be defined by a series of its behaviors, including cracking down on Chinese tech giant Huawei and lobbying its allies to reject Huawei's 5G technology without solid proof; blacklisting Chinese companies for their alleged connections with so-called human rights issues in China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region; declaring trade wars against the world; frequent military interventions in other countries' domestic affairs, claiming human rights are superior to sovereignty, and overthrowing governments of other countries.

Take trade wars. China is not the only target of the US. Washington has not even cut its allies some slack. Since 2018, not only Venezuela, Cuba, Ukraine, Turkey have been hit by US sanctions. Quite a few of traditional US allies, including Canada, Japan and South Korea, have also been sanctioned by the hegemonic power. Washington's goal is simple: To protect its domestic market and expand foreign markets to maximize global trade. This philosophy is also called "America First," and the US believes it is able to seek more interests through hegemonic means.

While the US is busy charging its "hegemonic tariff," it is putting the blame on China. The Atlantic published an article on Saturday entitled "The NBA-China Disaster Is a Stress Test for Capitalism," claiming "Chinese companies, furious over [US] public sympathy for Hong Kong, were swift in their vengeance. They suspended licensing agreements with

the NBA." It then concluded that firms with business in China pay "values tariff."

This is deliberately confusing right from wrong. It shows the US does not respect Chinese sovereignty, while even wishing to impose its own values and political views on the Middle Kingdom. Hegemonic measures are no longer effective. Trade lasts only when based on mutual respect, equality and mutual benefit. When US companies make money from around the world, they can achieve their goals smoothly only by complying with others' laws and respecting their public opinion.

However, Washington is now becoming increasingly narrow-minded and selfish, regarding mutual benefit as US losses. Worse, it is asking the world to compensate for its losses, urging others to make contributions to "America First" through political, financial and military means.

The Atlantic article noted "the partnership between the NBA and China, which is worth billions of dollars over the next decade, is now in jeopardy." This is exactly the consequence of the US obsessing over hegemony as well as the US obsessing with its so-called moral high ground.

China will not pay a penny for the US "hegemonic tariff," and will take counter-measures to take back what the US has seized from it. The chances of the US profiting from its hegemony are dwindling.

The key to making America great again is to boost the country's competitiveness and innovation, rather than slapping "hegemonic tariffs."

■ China, South Korea cross paths in industry

South Korean tech giant Samsung reportedly shut down its last mobile phone factory in China in early October, signaling the chaebol's complete withdrawal from the burgeoning smartphone industry in the world's second-largest economy.

This is an obvious result of industrial competition between China and South Korea, prompting the warning that intensifying competition between the two countries' industries can't be ignored. Current problems in China-South Korea cooperation are determined by multiple factors in both countries, including domestic politics, economy, security, industrial structure, social trends, historical traditions, and geopolitics. It is these factors that lead to a natural coexistence of cooperation with competition between the two neighbors. There is an increasing overlap between the two economies' paths in industry.

In the early stages of China's industrialization, the two economies complemented each other. But as China builds a complete

industrial system and is expanding into high-end industries, competition between the neighbors is unfolding. Meanwhile, contest between South Korean enterprises and foreign companies from Japan, Germany, and the US in China has also heightened.

The situation now is paradoxical. Chinese and South Korean economies are witnessing deeper integration as well as more intense competition. In many domains, fiercer competition is replacing previous complementarity. Such a phenomenon can be observed not only in mid-end manufacturing, but also in the advanced industries. It is foreseeable that competition and cooperation between the two countries will continue to coexist and become the norm for a long time to come.

Trade statistics for the first half of 2019 suggest that such a "normal state" has already impeded China-South Korea trade volume. According to South Korean customs data, imports and exports of goods between the two countries reached \$119.83 billion from January to June, down 8.6 percent. But South Korea still had a surplus of \$11.64 billion with China.

Among the top three commodities that China and South Korea export to each other, two are the same: mechanical and electrical products, and chemical products. In these two fields, the two countries can to some extent complement each other. In particular, both sides need to import certain raw materials and accessories from the other country to complete the manufacture of their final products. However, it's worth noting that it is precisely in these industries that competition is growing. This can be demonstrated by the increasing capability of China to produce alternative goods as well as the transfer of South Korean manufacturing and processing industry out of China. Chips, tablet screens and mobile phones are examples.

This has had a direct impact on exports from both economies to third parties. In addition, with the influence of the US-launched trade war against China as well as the ongoing South Korea-Japan trade disputes, an increasing number of Chinese and South Korean products will substitute each other. Furthermore, as the global economy is losing steam and countries are competing for markets, competition between China and South Korea is not likely to reduce in the short term.

Under such circumstances, the development of China-South Korea economic and trade relations will rely on how to expand and enhance cooperation, rather than how to curb or control competition.

In this regard, the two governments have a lot to do. For instance, they can create conditions for enterprises from both sides to cooperate by opening up and expanding services, consumption, and capital markets.

The China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative has provided a huge platform for third-party market cooperation between companies from both sides. Enterprises are able to find plenty of opportunities through improved communication. As competition grows intense, it will be tough for the two governments to control it through administrative or economic measures, which is determined by the market. China and South Korea's economies will see fiercer competition in the long run.

Therefore, whether the two economies can find new cooperative approaches, expand areas of cooperation, and tap cooperation potential will have a direct bearing on China-South Korea ties and further economic and trade cooperation in the entire East Asia. This is also an issue that we should pay attention to for improving political and diplomatic ties.

Joe Biden has no quiet days

6 → After assuring viewers that, "Look, my son did nothing wrong," he eventually veered into the first president's famous farewell address on avoiding foreign entanglements, but got entangled himself: "On the — look, the fact that George Washington worried on the first time he spoke after being elected president that what we had to worry about is foreign interference in our elections, it was the greatest threat to America..."

Biden's most aggressive moment in the debate was his most cringeworthy. After he claimed that he was the only person on the stage who'd gotten big things done, Warren noted that she had ushered in the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, the first regulatory agency built in a generation, and did so over the fierce objections of Wall Street. Biden responded by claiming loudly that he had gone to the Senate and secured votes for it. That claim is dubious at best; Biden had no public presence in the debate over the CFPB and people involved with the fight over it say he did little to nothing behind the scenes, either.

In shouting and pointing at Warren and attempting to take credit for her signature achievement, he finished with a verbal pat-on-the-head: "You did a hell of a job at your job," he told her. Then later telling her, "You did a hell of a job in your job."

Warren deadpans, "Thank you."

BIDEN'S SUNSETTING INCOHERENCE was made all the more apparent by the contrast with the surprisingly robust return of Sen. Bernie Sanders, 78, making his first appearance since his heart attack in Las Vegas. Sanders was looser and livelier than in previous debates, perhaps buoyed by expected endorsements from Reps. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Ilhan Omar, and Rashida Tlaib; he has said that he feels stronger and healthier with two stents having cleared an artery blockage, and it certainly appeared that way on stage.

Biden, by contrast, was relatively absent from all the high-profile exchanges of the night — on the initial Medicare for All question, on the wealth tax, on assault weapons buybacks. On Syria, Biden called Trump's withdrawal of U.S. forces from Syria "the most shameful thing any president has done in modern history in terms of foreign policy" but the word salad returned as he confused Afghanistan with Iraq — the disastrous invasion of which Biden himself supported.

On Medicare for All, debate moderators throughout the campaign have been fixated on two questions, and two only, when it comes to health care reform: Should private insurance be banned, and will taxes go up for middle class families?

Sanders acknowledged that in his view, taxes would go up modestly for the middle class, but the burden would be borne by the rich and major corporations. Moderators and her fellow stage mates pressed Warren repeatedly to acknowledge the same, but Warren stuck firmly to her framing of "costs," insisting that costs will go down for middle class families and pledging not to sign any bill in which costs would not go down. The pundit class was critical of her refusal, though it mirrored her strategy in the past two debates, and she rose in the polls after both. This suggests that people understand that premiums are already deducted from paychecks, so if whatever tax is involved is less than that, as promised, Democratic primary voters may be willing to forgive Warren's resistance to feeding Republicans video to use in the general election.

South Bend Mayor Pete Buttigieg jumped on the moment to plug his newly branded "Medicare for All Who Want it" plan, attacking Warren for not giving a straight answer to the question.

"We heard it tonight. A yes-or-no question that didn't get a yes-or-no answer. This is why people here in the Midwest are so frustrated with Washington in general and Capitol Hill in particular. Your signature, senator, is to have a plan for everything — except this," Buttigieg said.

Warren hit back. "So let's be clear, whenever someone hears the term 'Medicare for All who want it,' understand what that really means: It's Medicare for all who can afford it. And that's the problem we've got. Medicare for All is the gold standard," she said.

After the exchange, Warren's political director tweeted at Buttigieg that "instead of going after others for being 'evasive,'" a criticism the mayor levied against Warren last month, he should "look at his own 'plan.'" She later deleted the tweet.

When, near the close of the debate, Biden weighed in on Medicare for All and touted himself as a candidate who gets things done, Sanders came back with one of his strongest moments:

Joe, you talked about working with Republicans and getting things done. But you know what you also got done ... you got the disastrous war in Iraq done. You got the bankruptcy bill which is hurting middle class families all over this country. You got trade agreements like NAFTA and PNTR with China done which have cost us 4 million jobs.

When asked whether Sanders and Warren's wealth tax plans demonize rich people, Biden again gave a meandering response, saying he'd raise the capital gains tax. "This is one of the reasons why these debates are crazy," he said at one point, before deferring to the difficulty of the format. "Because everybody tries to squeeze everything into every answer." Former Rep. Beto O'Rourke called Warren "punitive," referring to her wealth tax plan, and accused her of "pitting some part of the country against each other." Warren shot back. "I'm really shocked at the notion that anyone thinks I'm being punitive," she said.

"My question is not why do Bernie and I support a wealth tax," Warren said, "it's why does everyone else on the stage think it is more important to protect billionaires than it is to invest in an entire generation of Americans?"

Asked how he would reassure voters of his health following a heart attack, Sanders pitched his upcoming rally in New York City — and teased a special guest (Ocasio-Cortez, according to the Washington Post). But more convincing was his willingness to jump in on several key moments in the debate.

Biden, in an effort to address the age question, appeared to have a response in the can. Asked how he could handle the rigors of the presidency when he would turn 80 in his first term, he replied, "Because I've watched it, I know what the job is, I've been engaged — one of the reasons I'm running is because of my age, my experience. With it comes wisdom." The comment likely drew inspiration from Ronald Reagan's famous rebuttal. But Biden's lacked the zing.

Biden's collapse leaves two clear frontrunners, Sanders and Warren. The party establishment, on the hunt for an alternative, could feasibly turn to Buttigieg, who was widely praised for his debate performance. The question over the next couple months is whether it's too late for him to rise. Biden's voters, according to surveys, are the least likely to be following the news closely, leaving little room for Buttigieg to rise quickly enough. Instead, Biden's poll numbers may fade, slowly, to black, bringing the establishment down with them.

Who turned Syria into another Quagmire?

TEHRAN (FNA) — Syrian ground troops are moving North to confront invading Turkish forces. The decision comes in the aftermath of a deal that was reached by the Kurds and the Syrian government after the former were left alone by their so-called American allies.

The deal sees the Kurds unilaterally handing over Kurdish-held territories, including two important cities, Ein Al-Arab (Kobani) and Manbij, both in Aleppo province, to the central government to rule. This means Turkey's invasion of these regions would be a direct attack on the Syrian army. This would make any Turkish attack on such lands more controversial, and also raises the possibility of Russia intervening in support of the Damascus government.

At any rate, any move to destabilize these cities and other areas would lead to yet another humanitarian crisis in the Middle East. Syria has come a long way to be where it is now. There is no need for Turkey to change the rules of the game, at a time when the country needs humanitarian aid and reconstruction efforts, not another quagmire for foreign forces to roam.

As Turkey's operation in North Syria wages on, Trump proclaims on Twitter that he wants to end "needless wars!" On the other hand, the broader American political system and foreign policy order continues to criticize him as the crisis in the country unfolds, with Ankara having already shelled US positions allegedly by accident, with civilians displaced and reports circulating concerning the attempted escape of the ISIL prisoners.

This builds into a wider point concerning American foreign policy that the Middle East is an endless quagmire and distraction to its broader agenda which drains its focus, resources and manpower. In some ways, it is self-defeating, because the aftermath of many US interventions have in fact merely laid the foundations for a new crisis.

Whilst Trump green lighted Turkey's invasion as a distraction from his own political struggles, in doing so, he has deliberated a death kneel to his own foreign policy agenda. Washington has fallen into the Middle East hole again. In the past 30 years alone, the US has undertaken the following pursuits in

the Middle East:

In 1991, it joined a UN coalition of forces in the Persian Gulf War to liberate Kuwait from Saddam Hussein's annexation. Throughout the 1990s, it then sought to maintain a no-fly zone and maximum sanctions against Iraq which involved continuous air missions. Then in 2001, the war on terror became a new turning point laying the premise for a new war in Iraq whereby Saddam's regime was forcibly deposed.

This was where the real detrimental consequences began: The removal of Saddam's statist Arab nationalist regime unleashed an undercurrent of Sunni radicalism which led to the rise of Al-Qaeda in Iraq. This would not only ensure the US military presence in the country, but eventually such would evolve into the group ISIL, thriving from instability in neighboring Syria, where the US sought to support anti-government rebels. The result paved way for the illegal intervention of the US and its allies yet again, thus leading the US to where it is today.

The history is extensive. However,

there is one clear message: that is, repeated military interventions have not been the antidote for infections within the Middle East. Instead they have been the virus and infection. Repeatedly and excessively, Washington has rendered itself incapable of understanding regional sensitivities, including complex ethnic and sectarian divisions within state structures, which have only been further empowered by chaos, instability and opting for conflict.

Which is why the Middle East vicious cycle of crisis and chaos induced at the hands of Washington continues to spin. It is not yet clear if Trump has sought to fully recalibrate US foreign policy or ordered the retreat to simply distract attention from his own impeachment at home in light of the Turkish invasion of Northern Syria. But if his claim about "ending needless wars" proves to be true, then he should be given credit for being smart and realistic since unlike the deep state, Trump has in effect come to vividly see and realize the increasing vulnerabilities and shrinking limits of the US power.

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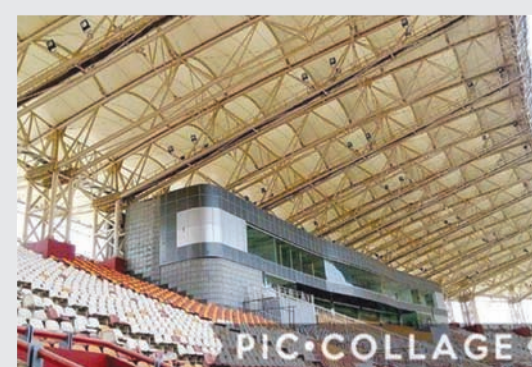
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New spacesuit prototypes for missions unveiled

NASA on Tuesday showed off two new spacesuits tailored for future moonwalking astronauts, signaling development of a crucial component to the space agency’s accelerated drive to return to the moon by 2024.

Two NASA engineers strutted on a stage inside the agency’s Washington, D.C. headquarters, donning the new spacesuits, modeling and doing squats and crunches in front of a crowd of students and reporters to reveal what the first zero-gravity space-wear under NASA’s Artemis moon program would look like.

“This is the first suit we’ve designed in about 40 years,” Chris Hansen, a manager at NASA’s spacesuit design office, said.

“What you saw today was a prototype of the pressure garment. The life support system is back in a lab in Houston,” he said. “We want systems that allow our astronauts to be scientists on the surface of the moon”

The Trump administration in March directed NASA to land humans on the moon by 2024, accelerating a goal to colonize the



moon as a staging ground for eventual missions to Mars.

One suit of orange fabric will be worn by astronauts when inside the spacecraft. Astronauts will wear a much bigger mostly white suit on the lunar surface.

The new suits make it much easier to walk, bend and squat when walking on the lunar surface, Amy Ross, NASA’s lead spacesuit engineer, said.

“Basically, my job is to take a basketball, shape it like a human, keep them alive in a harsh environment, and give them the mobility to do their job,” she said.

The new suits come as a much-needed upgrade to NASA’s astronaut wardrobe. Astronauts Christina Koch and Anne McClain were slated in March to conduct the first ever all-female spacewalk outside the International Space Station, but the mission was called off because there weren’t enough spacesuits available on the station for both of them.

(Source: Reuters)

Mitochondria work more like a Tesla car battery than a household Duracell

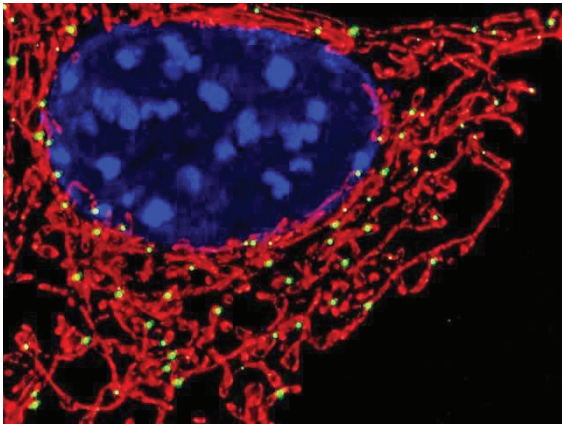
By Brooks Hays

Until now, scientists assumed mitochondria, the cellular organelles responsible for energy production, behaved more like a single-cell battery — the kind one might find at the end of the grocery aisle.

However, new research suggests mitochondria work more like a multicell Tesla electric car battery, with dozens of bioelectric units working as a complex but cohesive unit.

“Nobody had looked at this before because we were so locked into this way of thinking; the assumption was that one mitochondrion meant one battery,” Orian Shirihai, a professor of medicine in endocrinology and pharmacology at the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA, said in a news release.

Mitochondria feature two membranes: a smoother, outer membrane and an inner membrane with wrinkles called cristae. Previously, scientists estimated the folds served to increase the inner membrane’s surface area and boost energy production.



“Electric vehicle engineers told me about advantages of having many small battery cells instead of one large one; if something happens to one cell, the system can keep working, and multiple small batteries can provide

a very high current when you need it,” Shirihai said.

Tesla’s electric cars are powered by 5,000 to 7,000 small battery cells. The multi-cell array can provide the engine with large amounts of power, while also allowing the array to rapidly charge and efficiently cool.

To better understand if mitochondria function similarly, two students working in Shirihai’s lab, Dane Wolf and Mayuko Segawa, developed a new high-resolution microscopic technique to track energy production and voltage distribution inside each mitochondria organelle.

“What the images told us was that each of these cristae is electrically independent, functioning as an autonomous battery,” Shirihai said. “One cristae can get damaged and stop functioning while the others maintain their membrane potential.”

The new research — published this week in the EMBO Journal — also confirmed the importance of the proteins found clustered in between each fold, where the inner membrane loops back away from the organelle center. The proteins work as insulation, maintaining the electronic autonomy of each cristae.

Orionids, among ‘top 5 meteor showers of the year,’ to peak next week



One of the best meteor showers of the year will peak early next week and will treat onlookers with nearly two dozen meteors per hour, as long as clouds do not interfere.

People planning to view the Orionid meteor shower should mark their calendar now for the night of Monday into the early morning of Oct. 22 as the shower reaches its peak.

“I would rank the Orionids in the top five meteor showers of the year,” AccuWeather astronomy blogger Dave Samuhel said. “It will be the strongest shower since the Perseids of August.”

“Sparked by Halley’s Comet, the Orionids provide 20 to 25 meteors per hour on the peak night,” Samuhel said.

However, there have been several years in recent memory where the Orionids have exceeded expectations. “In exceptional years, such as 2006-2009, the peak rates were on par with the Perseids (50-75 per hour),” the American Meteor Society said.

Onlookers may spot shooting stars streaking across the sky beginning late Monday evening, but they will come in much greater numbers later in the night. “This shower will be best viewed after midnight,” Samuhel said. “If you can spot Orion, then get ready for some meteors.”

This is because the shower’s radiant point, or point of origin, is located near the constellation Orion, which doesn’t rise until after 11 p.m. The higher the radiant point is in the sky, the higher the hourly rates of meteors per hour.

However, onlookers do not need to look at the radiant point to see meteors as they will appear in all areas of the sky.

Unfortunately, the moon will be a bit of an issue this year as it will rise just after midnight on the peak night, and will be around 50 percent illuminated, Samuhel

said. This added light in the sky will make it more difficult to see some of the dimmer meteors, so late-night stargazers should look for meteors in parts of the sky away from the bright moon.

This year, the best viewing conditions are expected across the central and southwestern United States as cloud-free conditions are in the forecast during the peak of the Orionids.

Meanwhile, a large, far-reaching storm system will spread clouds across much of the eastern United States and into Ontario and Quebec, making it difficult to spot meteors on Monday night.

Disruptive clouds will also lead to poor viewing conditions across the Pacific Northwest and across the Canadian Rockies.

Clouds could also disrupt stargazers across Alaska with patchy clouds in the forecast over Hawaii.

Meteor showers occur when the Earth passes through a field of debris left behind by a comet or asteroid. Much of this debris is very small, ranging from the size of a grain of sand to a small pebble.

Despite their small size, they glow brightly as they burn up while entering Earth’s atmosphere. “The Orionid meteor shower is actually the second meteor shower of the year caused by Halley’s Comet,” Samuhel said.

“The Eta Aquariids in May are also triggered by tiny particles from the famous comet. But the Orionids are the more active of the two showers,” he said.

Folks that miss the peak of the Orionids will have plenty of opportunities to look for shooting stars before 2019 comes to a close.

Four more meteor showers will reach their peak in the coming months, including the Geminids in mid-December. This shower regularly features over 100 meteors per hour. (Source: UPI)

‘Mole’ is digging below the surface of Mars again



NASA and the DLR are making some progress with the Mole. The Mole has been stuck for months now, and NASA/DLR have been working to get it unstuck. After removing the mole’s housing to get a better look at it with InSight’s cameras, the team came up with a plan.

The team is using the scoop on the end of the lander’s instrument arm to exert sideways pressure on the Mole. That pressure is pushing the Mole against the side of its hole, supplying the friction the instrument needs to continue hammering its way below ground.

There aren’t a lot of details on the progress right now. All NASA has given us is a tweet. In the gif, you can see the Mole working its way a little deeper.

The Mole is the short name for the Heat and Physical Properties Package (HP3) instrument. Its role is to hammer its way to a maximum depth of five meters (16 feet) and to measure the interior temperature of Mars.

It’s a key part of InSight’s overall mission to learn about the Martian interior and how it and other rocky planets formed.

But the Mole’s mission has suffered setbacks. After being carefully deployed, the Mole began hammering into the surface only to strike a rock (Or so it’s thought. There was no way of seeing in the hole.)

For a while, it looked like the Mole might work its way around the rock, but unfortunately it became stuck and made no further progress.

The Mole was provided by the DLR, the German Aerospace Center. The DLR team operating the Mole ruled out a rock, and thought that the Mole might be stuck because of the nature of the Martian soil itself.

The Mole relies on friction between itself and the sides of the hole its creating to hammer itself further into the ground.

But the soil where it’s operating is too crusty and isn’t falling into the hole. NASA describes it as a kind of duricrust, a cemented soil that’s different than other soil on Mars, and a type they didn’t expect to encounter. The duricrust is about 5 to 10 centimeters (2 to 4 inches) thick, hidden by the loose surface material above it.

When they deployed the Mole, they had no way of knowing the duricrust would be there. Rather than flowing into the Mole’s cavity and filling up space and providing the necessary friction, the duricrust is stubbornly refusing to help the Mole penetrate.

The first attempt to counter the duricrust was to push down on the soil around the hole with the scoop on the end of the instrument arm, to try to compact it against the Mole.

That, the InSight team thought, would restore the required friction. But that didn’t work. The Mole was positioned near the furthest reach of the arm and the scoop, and the mechanics meant the scoop couldn’t push down very hard.

Then they decided to try something else. With the HP3’s support structure removed, they used the scoop to push directly on the Mole sideways, to force it into contact with the hole.

According to NASA’s tweet, this might be working. But we can’t be certain yet.

The Mole has a maximum operating depth of 5 meters (16 feet) but it can work at a shallower depth. At 2 meters (7 feet) it can do useful science, but at its current depth it can’t measure anything. (Source: sciencealert.com)

Scientists might have finally found the origin of this surreal jagged crystal cave

If you travel to the outskirts of a town called Pulpí in Spain, you’ll find an abandoned silver mine. Descend about 50 meters (164 feet) into it, and you’ll enter a strange, shimmering room quite unlike anywhere else on Earth.

This incredible natural space is the Geode of Pulpí, the closest thing in real life to Superman’s Fortress of Solitude: an amazing egg-shaped cavern where jagged shards of brilliant, clear crystal jut from the walls like teeth in a dragon’s mouth.

As far as geodes go, Pulpí’s is a giant — one of the largest known geodes in the world in fact.

In terms of cavernous chambers, though, it’s actually tiny, but is large enough that multiple people can fit inside it at once, which isn’t something you can say about most geode cavities.

Just make sure you’re careful and trust whoever you go inside with: the hollow space at the heart of the geode only measures about 11 meters cubed in total, and with all those pointy crystalline deposits protruding from the walls, there’s definitely no room for pushing.

Other spectacular crystal caves are known to exist around the world — most notably the famous, towering Naica crystals of Mexico — but how do these remarkable formations come to be?

In the case of Pulpí — which was only discovered 20 years ago — the geochemical origins of the geode’s crystals have remained largely unknown, with a background seemingly even more mysterious than its cavernous counterparts.

“To reveal their formation has been a very tough task because unlike in the case of Naica, where the hydrothermal system is still active, the large geode of Pulpí is a fossilized environment,” explains geologist and crystallography expert Juan Manuel García-Ruiz from the University of Granada, the senior author of a new study on the geode.

In the new research, García-Ruiz and his team sought to reconstruct the geological history of the Geode of Pulpí, analyzing samples from the mineral and geochemical environment, as well as mapping in detail the geological structures of the mine that surrounds the crystal chamber.

According to the researchers, the geode’s gypsum (selenite) crystals grew through a “self-feeding mechanism”, due to a continuous supply of salt, provided from the dissolution of anhydrite (the anhydrous form of calcium sulphate).

This process, occurring at a temperature of about 20°C (68°F), was amplified by a thermodynamic phenomenon called Ostwald maturation (or Ostwald ripening), along with temperature oscillations that the geode was exposed to at its relatively shallow depth in the mine.

One remaining mystery, though, is exactly when all this crystal formation took place.

Due to the extreme purity of the crystals inside the geode — which are so perfectly clear you can see straight through them — it’s difficult to date the shards, although the team has a few ideas.

“They grew for sure after the desiccation of the Mediterranean Sea that occurred 5.6 million years ago,” García-Ruiz says.

“They are most probably younger than 2 million years but older than 60,000 years, because this is the age of the carbonate crust coating one of the large gypsum [crystals].”

That’s a pretty long gap in time, raising the possibility that other researchers in the future might try to narrow the gap further.

Until they do, you can check out the Geode of Pulpí yourself, with Spanish authorities opening the site to visitors earlier this year — giving anyone now the chance to enter this very strange and special sanctuary of sorts.

“Bending your body between the huge crystals is an incredible sensation,” researcher Javier García-Guinea, who discovered the formation, explained to the BBC in 2000.

“When I was young I dreamt of flying, but never to go into a geode internally covered with transparent crystals.” (Source: sciencealert.com)

NASA moves up 1st all-female spacewalk to fix power unit

NASA is moving up the first all-female spacewalk to this week because of a power system failure at the International Space Station.

Astronauts Christina Koch and Jessica Meir will now venture out Thursday or Friday, instead of next Monday, to deal with the problem. It will be the first spacewalk by only women in more than a half-century of spacewalking.

A critical battery charger failed over the weekend, prompting the change, NASA officials said Monday. The women will replace the broken component, rather than install new batteries, which was their original job.

Last week, astronauts conducted the first two of five spacewalks to replace old batteries that make up the station’s solar power network. The remaining spacewalks — originally scheduled for this week and next — have been delayed for at least another few weeks so engineers can determine why the battery charger failed. It’s the second such failure this year.

The devices regulate the amount of charge going to and from each battery. One didn’t kick in Friday night, preventing one of the three newly installed lithium-ion batteries from working. The balky charger is 19 years old; the one that failed in the spring was almost as old. Only three spares remain available.

“It’s absolutely a concern at this point when you don’t know what’s going on,” said Kenny Todd, a space station manager. “We’re still scratching our heads looking at the data. Hopefully, we can clear that up in relatively short order.”

Despite the slight loss of power, the orbiting lab and its six occupants are safe, according to NASA, and science operations are unaffected. The current situation is “manageable, but again not something that we would want to live with in the long term,” Todd told reporters.

NASA originally planned an all-female spacewalk last spring, but had to cancel it because of a shortage of readily available medium-size suits. Koch helped assemble an extra medium suit over the summer.

“Very good that we have 4 expert spacewalkers on board to shoulder this tough task. They are the A-team!” tweeted astronaut Anne McClain, who would have gone spacewalking with Koch in March if not for the suit-sizing issue.

While all four — two men and two women — are equally trained for the repair job, Koch and Meir are the right choices given the future spacewalking workload, officials noted.

Since the first spacewalk in 1965, there have been 227 spacewalkers, only 14 of them women. Meir will be making her first spacewalk and become No. 15. All but one of these women has been American. (Source: AP News)

Cave bearing ancient human skeletons discovered near Tehran

HERITAGE **TEHRAN** — Iranian archaeologists have recently discovered remains of human skeletons reportedly dating back to ancient era in a cave in Lavasan region near Tehran.

“An archeological examination project has led to the discovery of 38 areas, including an ancient cave with historical human skeletons,” IRNA quoted Mohammad-Sepehr Sepehri, the head of the archaeological team, as saying on Monday.



The archaeologist described the discovery as “very important”. Six roofed caravanserais, traces of ancient roads were among discoveries of the team, which bears witness to the fact that those areas were frequented by people, the archaeologist added.

“The cave lies 3,100 on the height of meters from the sea level,” Sepehri said.

“There is a pile of human skeletons inside the cave. Initial examinations of the clay pots [unearthed in the area] show the skeletons date back to ancient times.”

He noted that the new findings suggest that the area was once a significant linking route that connected the central Iranian plateau to Tabarestan (a historic region of northern Iran, bordering the Caspian Sea on the north).

Schengen visa holders now eligible for Saudi Arabia’s Tourist e-Visa

If you have a Schengen visa, you can now apply for Saudi Arabia’s new Tourist e-Visa.

Last month, Saudi Arabia launched a Tourist e-Visa, a first for the Kingdom which so far did not allow foreigners to enter simply for tourism purposes. Those eligible for Saudi Arabia’s new Tourist e-Visa included all Schengen Area nationals as well as the USA, Australia, Japan, South Korea, South Africa, Malaysia, Singapore, and Brunei.

However, according to new regulations that were announced last week, the list of who can apply for the new Tourist e-Visa has been extended to include all visa holders of the original eligible countries. This means, if you have a Schengen visa and want to visit Saudi Arabia, you can simply get the new e-Visa, rather than apply through the longer and more complicated route at Saudi Arabian diplomatic missions.

The new Tourist e-Visa allows the holder multiple entries into the kingdom and is valid for one year. The maximum duration that one can stay in Saudi Arabia consecutively is 90 days, but no more than 180 days overall.

You can apply for the visa online and pay a fee of about \$120, including health insurance. You only need your passport and visa.

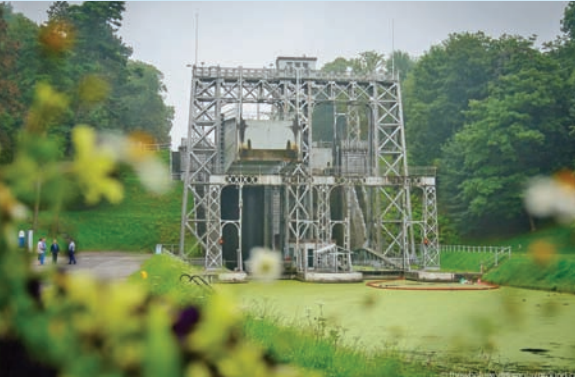
(Source: schengenvisainfo.com)



ROUND THE GLOBE

Four lifts on the Canal du Centre and their environs

The four hydraulic boat-lifts on the short stretch of the historic Canal du Centre in Belgium are industrial monuments of the highest quality. Together with the Canal itself and its associated structures, they constitute a remarkably well preserved and complete example of a highly technical industrial landscape at the end of the 19th century.



The construction of the Canal du Centre to ensure the liaison between the Meuse and the Escaut basins was part of the opening-up program of Hainaut, a rich industrial region, notably coal, but with very few natural navigable waterways for coal export. Digging work began in 1884 and the opening to navigation took place in 1917.

At the very beginning of the project, the architects were confronted with a two-fold problem: the large distance in height over a short distance and the small quantity of water available. The most adapted technique to overcome these constraints was that of boat lifts, developed by English engineers using only hydraulic power.

Over a distance of 7 km, a series of 4 boat lifts, unique worldwide, were built, each one covering a change in level of 15 to 16 meters. The stretch is bordered by a series of art works including two fixed bridges and two lift or swing bridges. The property also comprises the ancient lock No.1 of Thieu, today disaffected, as well as three buildings housing the necessary hydraulic machinery for the good functioning of the lifts.

(Source: UNESCO)

Iran is a perfect destination to travel to, Dutch filmmaker says

TOURISM **TEHRAN** — “Whenever Iran is in the news, it is about something negative. That made me skeptical — can a country be as bad as the media depicts it? I wanted to investigate for myself if Iran is open to foreigners and if it is a safe place to visit, and also share my travel experiences with the world,” Reinier van Oorsouw, a Dutch photographer and filmmaker has said.

“I found people on the street to be warm, friendly and interested, rather than the “angry Western-hating” stereotype people might have in mind. We were invited into people’s houses on almost a daily basis. Overall, Iran was one of my best travel experiences,” he told the Fair Observer in an interview released on October 15.

The interview was conducted by Iranian journalist and writer Kourosh Ziabari earlier this year revolving around the filmmaker’s observations of the country.

In response to a question concerning how the filmmaker was inspired to make documentary about his trip to Iran and the feedbacks he had so far received from international audience as well as Iranians, van Oorsouw said:

“Whenever Iran is in the news, it is about something negative. That made me skeptical — can a country be as bad as the media depicts it as? I wanted to investigate for myself if Iran is open to foreigners and if it is a safe place to visit, and also share my travel experiences with the world.”

“From Iran, the majority of feedback is positive. People are happy that a different light is being shone on their country, though some say I don’t show enough from real life. From international audiences, I had a mixed response: Some people are genuinely surprised, while others think I’ve been hired by the Iranian government,” he explained.

Other excerpts from the interview are given below:

■ You might have received warnings about traveling to Iran from friends and family members before boarding the plane. What were the reactions of your relatives and colleagues when you first raised the idea of traveling to Iran?

Yes! The responses from my surroundings were quite negative. But their cautions were all based on what they had seen in the



A foreign couple (L) poses for a photo during a visit to the UNESCO-tagged Imam Square, Isfahan, central Iran.

media, rather than their own experiences. And that was exactly what I wanted to find out. Then again, I had obviously done some research by reading other travel experiences, which all seemed to say more positive things than the general media, hence my expectations were quite mild.

■ How strong are the stereotypes about Iran in your community and country? What are some of the most notable misconceptions that you think are not representative of the reality of Iran?

The general public thinks Iran is “unsafe,” a sandy country at war. But that’s just based on bias. The most notable misconception is that people think everyone is a religious fanatic. But I experienced that to be the other way around. Sure, there is a group of people who are very strict in their religion, but that happens in every country.

The difference in Iran is that these people have a big say, compared to other countries.

I found people on the street to be warm, friendly and interested, rather than the “angry Western-hating” stereotype people might have in mind. We were invited into people’s houses on almost a daily basis. Overall, Iran was one of my best travel experiences.

■ What is the most remarkable characteristic of Iranian people in your view? Why do you think they’re so keen to paint a better picture of their country in the eyes of foreign observers?

Whenever I said to people in Iran that I was on holiday, the response I got was a very surprised one. It’s a bit like people feel inferior due to the image that’s portrayed about the country. Some asked me, “Weren’t you afraid?” If you feel you are misunder-

stood, you try to correct the misconception. I feel that is what a lot of people want to do. The “most remarkable characteristic,” in my opinion, is hospitality — people tend to take that very seriously.

■ What’s your advice to your fellow citizens who either plan to travel to Iran or have thought about doing so? Do you recommend Iran as a must-see tourist destination?

Iran is a perfect destination to travel to. Travel is comfortable. Traveling between cities is well-organized and car rentals are also easy. Visas for a lot of European citizens can be arranged upon arrival, flight connections are plenty and the food is great. Iran is full of culture and history, nature comes in many shapes and sizes, and people are all very friendly and warm. There are plenty of reasons to visit.

Chabahar Free Zone seeks to attract more travelers

TOURISM **TEHRAN** — Chabahar Free Zone Organization plans to develop tourism infrastructure in order to attract more travelers to the port area, which is situated in Iran’s southeastern Sistan-Baluchestan province.

The private sector has invested 10 trillion rials (about \$240 million) to implement nine projects to boost tourism infrastructure, particularly for building hotels, recreational facilities, eateries and accommodation places across the region, an official with the organization said on Wednesday, IRNA reported.

The port area hosted 3,200 foreign nationals during the first nine months of the past Iranian calendar year (ended March 20, 2019), Chabahar Free Zone official website re-



ported in February, citing a significant growth of 147 percent compared with the same period a year earlier.

Boasting various natural and historical attractions, Chabahar could be named as one of the most underrated destinations in Iran. However, in recent years various measures have been taken to promote Iran’s sole oceanic port as a safe and hospitable choice for both domestic and foreign visitors.

The High Council of Free Trade Zones has announced that it is ready to start construction of a new airport inside the free trade zone. Currently, air travelers to Chabahar need to use airport of Konarak city, near Chabahar.

Currently, there are some 20 tourist resorts in Chabahar, including four hotels and eco-lodges.

Afghan museum restores Buddhist history, one broken piece at a time

KABUL (Reuters) — Restoring Afghanistan’s Buddhist artifacts that were destroyed by the Taliban 18 years ago is like working on a 1,500-year-old jigsaw puzzle, say conservators working on the latest restoration project.

The militant Islamic group in 2001 destroyed artifacts dating from the third century when many Afghans practiced Buddhism, including two towering Buddha statues in Bamyan province and scores of smaller ones excavated from monasteries and preserved at the national museum in Kabul.

After the Taliban government fell that same year, the museum began restoring remnants of the country’s Buddhist history. The latest U.S.-supported project aims to reassemble thousands of pieces into statues within the next three years.

“It is very important (work) because it is actually restoration of our heritage, our identity, our past,” said Mohammad Fahim Rahimi, director of the 100-year-old National Museum of Afghanistan.

“Buddhism was practiced here for more than 1,000 years. That’s a very large part of our history,” he added.

Forty years of war, from the 1980s Soviet occupation to internal fighting and the war against the Taliban, have destroyed much of Afghanistan’s art, artifacts and architecture.

Warlords stole other pieces and sold them abroad. Conservator Sherazuddin Saifi, 62, was working in the museum under the Taliban in 2001.

“They wanted us to tell them the number of antiquities and we ignored their request, but some days later they came and started breaking the antiquities,” said Saifi, who still works at the museum.

“These antiquities are the national treasure and the history of our country and show who lived in this country,” he added.

In a classroom at the museum, Afghan conservators work alongside experts from the University of Chicago’s Oriental Institute. U.S. assistance is invaluable because Afghan



Mohammad Fahim Rahimi, Director of National Museum inspects a pot for restoration at the National Museum in Kabul, Afghanistan October 13, 2019. (REUTERS/Omar Sobhani)

conservators lack experience and the necessary chemicals and glues for restoration work, Rahimi said.

Sometimes they can work from archived photos that show the statues intact. In other cases, 3-D imaging and imagination are re-

quired to sort and reassemble stucco shards of Buddha faces, hands and torsos.

A spokesman for the Taliban, which was until last month in peace talks with the United States, said the group has no plans to destroy antiquities.

All antique artifacts will be preserved in their place,” spokesman Suhail Shaheen told Reuters. “They should be preserved for the history and culture education of the upcoming generations.”

U.S. President Donald Trump told a rally on Thursday American soldiers have been in Afghanistan long enough, but talks with the Taliban on withdrawing U.S. troops, intended as a step toward peace, broke down in September.

The prospect of reintegrating the Taliban in a power-sharing deal troubles Rahimi, who is looking at options for moving the artifacts if they are threatened again.

“We cannot let that happen again to our heritage,” he said.

Luxury travel company hiring one to stay in lavish homes for \$2,500 a week

A travel company is hiring five to 10 people to stay in some of the world’s most luxurious properties to make sure they’re up to scratch for the wealthiest buyers.

What’s more, the successful candidates will be paid a salary of £2,000 (\$2,550) for each home they stay it, with the chance to visit 10-15 per year.

Online marketplace HushHush.com, which calls itself “Amazon for millionaires,” is hiring the “luxury home testers” to stay in properties including a luxury chateau on the French Riviera, a 25-bedroom Spanish villa, an oceanfront home in Florida’s exclusive Ocean Reef Club, and a 14,000 sq. ft mansion in the Pacific Heights neighborhood of San Francisco.

The homes range in price from £462,250 (\$589,350) to £81,046,350 (\$103,330,850), and the successful

candidates will be required to stay in each one for a week at a time.

Although the luxury home testers will get to enjoy the millionaire lifestyle, they will have to submit an 800-word report to the company about each property afterwards, within five days of returning home.

They’ll have to assess the property’s location, accessibility, style, comfort, and suitability for the website.

Essentially, the job entails testing out homes to ensure they meet the standards of the company’s affluent customers before they’re listed on the market.

The work will be on an ad-hoc basis, and the successful candidates will be required to travel at short notice, but all travel expenses will be covered.

HushHush says that it’s looking for reliable people

with a keen eye for detail and demonstrable writing skills.

“Due to an influx of properties for listing on the website, we need a luxury home tester to get on top of the growing stack of approval requests,” Aaron Harpin, HushHush.com founder, said in a statement sent to Insider.

“The ideal candidate will have experience visiting or staying in luxury properties and will be able to demonstrate their ability to write compelling reviews.”

To apply, you simply need to fill out an online form and explain why you have what it takes to be one of the property testers.

HushHush told Insider there’s no hard deadline for applications, it’s simply looking for the right people.

(Source: MSN)

Female's presence in football stadium stirs controversies over women's rights

By Mehrdad Ferdows

TEHRAN — The presence of Iranian women in a national football match in Tehran has sparked controversies over women rights in Iran, with proponents cheering it as a victory in the path to restore rights of women in Iran and opponents censuring it as a move against women's dignity.

On October 10, Iranian women attended Team Melli's World Cup qualifier against Cambodia, which resulted in a shameful 14-0 defeat for the East Asian team at Iran Azadi stadium.

Given the unequal nature of the teams, the stadium was largely empty. The number of seats allocated to women was 3,500 initially but could have sold more since the stadium houses 80,000.

The match was the first time women could watch a men's match by buying tickets. Before that, Iranian women had rarely attended men's matches, though foreign women have often been allowed access.

Several women have been detained and charged for defying the ban and sneaking in stadiums disguised as men in recent years.

The move came following months of efforts and increased pressure from FIFA, world soccer's governing body, who had threatened with banning Iran's football federation.

The death of Sahar Khodayari, who died in an Iranian hospital last month after she set herself on fire after going to a court in Tehran, apparently played a big role in the decision.



Iranian women cheer during the football match between their national team and Cambodia in the 2022 World Cup qualifier at the Azadi Stadium in Tehran.

She has been named "blue girl" after the color of her favorite soccer team, Esteghlal FC.

The story grabbed international headlines and went viral on social media, sparking heated debates in political and media circles over women's rights.

The death has led to criticism of the country's judiciary and local rules banning women from entering stadiums to watch men's football.

Some women's right activists have cheered the decision, expressing satisfaction that the pressure forced by Iranian sports officials.

For months, they had censured the ban as a clear example of gender discrimination against women, who are also deprived of "equal rights" in divorce, child custody and inheritance.

Some reformist figures also supported the decision, describing the move as both

popular and a sign of social progress.

The Vice President for Women and Family Affairs Masoumeh Ebtekar tweeted that "restrictions on women's entrance have been lifted. This has led to a new era of hope and optimism."

But critics believe it was unsuitable for women to enter stadiums due to the mixing of sexes and men's improper uniforms revealing their bodies. They also believe the atmosphere inside stadiums could hurt the dignity of women.

The conservative daily Kayhan criticized the decision to allow women to attend male sporting events by suggesting it wasn't a priority for them and that women have more pressing problems that need to be addressed.

Kayhan, who previously had criticized public figures for criticizing Iran's judiciary in the death of the female football fan, wrote that 4,600 seats were available for women but were not sold because "most women are not keen to go to the stadium."

The daily described women who attended the stadium in a front-page headline as "victims of freedom" on Saturday, lamenting that such trends could drive women away of their motherhood and wifehood roles.

The segregation has its root in Islam, and came into effect in many public places such as schools early after the 1979 revolution.

FIFA has repeatedly called on Iran to lift the 40-year ban on female spectators, and currently insists women should be allowed into stadiums for all football matches.

Media hypocrisy is destroying America, but MEMES are the problem?

By Nebojsa Malic

RT — Mainstream media are outraged over a meme video depicting President Donald Trump shooting his critics — but they absolutely loved the movie it was based on, and think nothing of actual violence committed against Trump supporters.

All of this has happened before, and all of this will happen again, as the media mob pursues rage clickbait. This time, the hand-wringing and pearl-clutching is over a meme — excuse me, "fake" and "doctored" — video shown during the American Priority Conference at Trump Doral in Florida this weekend.

Reactions to the video go way beyond what cartoonist Scott Adams has described as seeing "two movies on the same screen." One liberal comedian — entirely seriously — zeroed in on Trump "killing powerful black people" to lament the "cancer that is Trumpism."

Actress Kathy Griffin — who once thought it was a great idea to do a photoshoot with a fake severed head of Trump — now claimed she was the real victim, as the video shows her "being murdered" by the president.

"Waiting for Donald Trump to condemn the video of him committing mass murder that was shown at his resort to his supporters, and to apologize to the families of those targeted," anti-gun crusader Shannon Watts tweeted unironically.

One possible explanation is that none of the people getting worked up over the video have ever watched 'Kingsman: The Secret Service,' that the meme was based on. The 2015 "action spy comedy" revolves entirely around over-the-top cartoonish violence juxtaposed with English gentility — such as the protagonist of that specific scene going berserk inside a church, along with everyone else, due to the effects of an electronic weapon.

Movie critics and audiences alike — 74 percent and 84



A still from 'Trumpman: The MAGA Service' meme video that generated media outrage

percent, respectively — loved the movie and had no problem with American churchgoers getting massacred in that scene, as journalist Lee Stranahan pointed out.

More to the point, the same people shrieking now have not bothered to notice the video since it came out in July 2018. So why now? Was there nothing else at the conference they could object to, so some outrage had to be manufactured, and memes were it?

Before long, Twitter was suspending Carpe Donktum, the pro-Trump memesmith who did not even make the video, but defended its display as part of a "meme exhibit."

"The Kingsman video is CLEARLY satirical and the violence depicted is metaphoric. No reasonable person would believe that this video was a call to action, or an endorsement of violence towards the media," he said in a statement on Monday.

Except that people who consider themselves special and above reproach or critique have stopped being reasonable long ago.

One does not have to be a conservative pundit to point out the obvious hypocrisy. The New York Times sponsoring a theatrical production of Shakespeare's 'Julius Caesar' depicting Trump getting assassinated; Griffin's ISIS stunt; music videos depicting Trump getting murdered — all fine in the media playbook, because free speech, First Amendment, and so on. But when some anonymous "peasant" in "flyover country" dares meme a video turning the tables? Red alert!

For all the media rhetoric about Trump "inciting violence" against journalists, actual political violence in the US has overwhelmingly consisted of Trump critics targeting his supporters — with the June 2017 shooting of Republicans training for the congressional baseball charity game being the deadliest example.

Throughout, the same media now shrieking about incitement have peddled conspiracy theories about Trump's "treason" and "Russian collusion" and imminent threat to "our democracy" that have actually done more to sow discontent and division among Americans than anything they've blamed alleged "Russian trolls" for.

Not to mention that they were perfectly fine smearing and demonizing American citizens, living and working in the US, as "Russian agents" just because they worked at outlets like RT or Sputnik. Wasn't that an attack on journalists, or is it different when they do it?

Honestly, I've had enough of this stone-throwing by inhabitants of glass houses — and I get a feeling a lot of my fellow Americans have as well. As Matt Taibbi observed just the other day, this country has been dragged into a state of perpetual coup, courtesy of the political establishment in Washington and their media enablers, out to get Bad Orange Man at any cost — even if it means destroying the country.

If you don't understand memes, maybe journalism is not for you, and it's time to find honest work.

Facebook deletes hundreds of accounts from Egypt and UAE over misinformation

By MEE staff

MEE — Facebook has removed hundreds of pages and accounts from its platforms that originated from countries including Egypt and the United Arab Emirates for engaging in "coordinated inauthentic behaviour", its head of cybersecurity policy said.

Three unconnected operations - one originated from the UAE, Egypt and Nigeria, and the others from Egypt and Indonesia - have been identified by the social media giant for displaying behaviours that "manipulate" its users on Facebook and Instagram, Nathaniel Gleicher said in a statement released on Thursday.

The campaigns have been taken down based on their behaviour, not the content they posted, Gleicher said. In a video published last year, he explained that coordinated inauthentic behaviour was one of the forms of "abuse" that Facebook was trying to eliminate. "In each of these cases, the people behind this activity coordinated with one another and used fake accounts to misrepresent themselves, and that was the basis for our action," he said.

Operations with motives

According to Facebook, 211 accounts, 107 pages, 43 groups and 87 Instagram accounts were removed in connection to the network that originated in the UAE, Egypt and Nigeria.

This operation used fake accounts to share local news in targeted countries and promoting content about UAE. Some of the offending posts identified by Facebook were critical of Qatar, Turkey and Iran, while others painted the UAE in a favourable light.

There were links between this operation



Facebook says it has removed hundreds of accounts originated from the UAE and Egypt for spreading misleading information

and three marketing firms - Charles Communications in the UAE, MintReach in Nigeria and Flexell in Egypt - a Facebook investigation revealed.

The investigation also linked the operation originated in Egypt to the the Egyptian newspaper El Fagr, despite attempts from those behind this activity to conceal their identity, Gleicher said.

This group used fake accounts to "manage pages posing as independent local news organisations, post in groups, amplify their content and drive people to off-platform do-

main," Facebook said.

The content in question included those "in support of the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt; criticism of Qatar, Iran, and Turkey; and Yemen's southern separatist movement," it said.

As a result, 163 Facebook accounts, 51 pages, 33 groups and four Instagram accounts were taken down by the social media network.

Facebook also removed 69 accounts and 34 Instagram accounts that were involved in disseminating inauthentic content that focused on domestic issues in Indonesia, such

as the independence movement.

This operation was found to have links to an Indonesia media firm InsightID, Facebook said.

Crackdown by social media giants

Facebook's announcement comes just two weeks after another social media giant, Twitter, suspended the account of former Saudi royal court adviser Saud al-Qahtani, nearly a year after he was sacked over his suspected role in the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

Twitter also separately removed more than 200 accounts linked to Saudi Arabia's "state-run media apparatus" and others in the UAE and Egypt, all of them amplifying pro-Saudi messages, according to a company blogpost.

"These accounts were interconnected in their goals and tactics: a multi-faceted information operation primarily targeting Qatar, and other countries such as Iran. It also amplified messaging supportive of the Saudi government," it said.

But Egyptians on Twitter are sounding the alarm after the accounts of several activists were suspended earlier this week, days after small-scale but significant protests against President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi were held.

Among those who have had their account suspended in the past 24 hours include human rights activist Hend Nafea, an outspoken artist known as Ganzeer, and journalist Ahmad Hasan al-Sharqawi, according to those who have been suspended and supporters who compiled lists.

All of those whose accounts were suspended have been publicly critical of the government.

Promoters of Saudi prince as feminist reformer are silent on his crackdown on women

By Adam Johnson

FAIR — During his US PR tour in March, Saudi prince and de facto ruler of the absolute monarchy Mohammed bin Salman (often referred to as "MBS") touted the progress the kingdom was making in the area of "women's rights"—namely letting women drive and combatting nebulous reactionary forces that were somehow separate from the regime.

Since then, at least seven major women's rights advocates—Eman al-Nafjan, Loujain al-Hathloul, Aziz al-Yousef, Aisha al-Manea, Madiha Al-Ajrourh, Walaa Al-Shubbar and Hasah Al-Sheikh—have been detained by Saudi authorities and, according to at least one report (Middle East Eye, 5/22/18), may face the death penalty.

Two of the biggest media corners that helped sell bin Salman as a feminist reformer during the trip and the months leading up to it—the New York Times opinion pages and CBS News' 60 Minutes—have not published any follow-up commentary on bin Salman's recent crackdown on women's rights campaigners (Independent, 5/22/18). Let's review their past coverage:



Thomas Friedman (New York Times, 11/23/17): "It blew my mind to learn...that Lebanese soprano Hiba Tawaji will be among the first woman singers to perform a women-only concert here."

* "In some ways, Prince Mohammed bin Salman, who serves as defense minister, is just what his country needs.... He would allow concerts, and would consider reforming laws tightly controlling the lives of women." —New York Times editorial board ("The Young and Brash Saudi Crown Prince," 6/23/17)

* "I never thought I'd live long enough to write this sentence: The most significant reform process underway anywhere in the Middle East today is in Saudi Arabia.... There was something a 30-year-old Saudi woman social entrepreneur said to me that stuck in my ear. 'We are privileged to be the generation that has seen the before and the after.' The previous generation of Saudi women, she explained, could never imagine a day when a woman could drive and the coming generation will never be able to imagine a day when a woman couldn't." —Thomas Friedman (New York Times, 11/23/17)

* "He is emancipating women.... He has curbed the powers of the country's so-called 'religious police,' who until recently were able to arrest women for not covering up." —Norah O'Donnell (60 Minutes, 3/19/18)

The 60 Minutes interview was panned by many commentators at the time. "A crime against journalism," The Intercept's Mehdi Hasan (3/19/18) called it. "Embarrassing to watch," insisted Omar H. Nouredin, VP of the the Muslim Public Affairs Council (Twitter, 3/20/18). "It was more of an Entertainment Tonight puff piece than a serious interview with journalistic standards."

The New York Times editorial, while not quite as overtly sycophantic as Friedman and O'Donnell, still broadly painted the ruler as a "bold" and "brash" "reformer."

Since the mass arrests of women's groups on Saturday, the Times news section has run several AP stories (5/18/18, 5/22/18) on the crackdown and one original report (5/18/18), but the typically scoldy editorial board hasn't issued a condemnation of the arrests. They did, however, take time to condemn in maximalist terms the "violent regime" of Venezuela (5/21/18), insisting on "getting rid" of recently re-elected president Nicolas Maduro, and ran a separate editorial cartoon (5/22/18) showing Maduro declaring victory over the corpses of suffering Venezuelans.

Nor did MBS's biggest court stenographer, Thomas Friedman, find room in his latest column in his latest column (5/22/18) to note the crackdown. Given Times opinion page editor James Bennet was clear his paper was axiomatically "pro-capitalism" (3/1/18), one wonders whether he views Latin American socialists as uniquely worthy of condemnation, whereas Middle East petrol dictatorships that invest in American corporations and hosts glossy tech conferences deserve nuance and mild "reform" childing. We have to "get rid of" the former, and the latter simply need "guidance" from the US—their respective human rights records a total non-factor.

CBS ran a 50-second story on the "emancipating" MBS's crackdown on its web-only news network, CBSN (5/21/18), and an AP story on its website (5/19/18), but CBS News has thus far aired nothing on the flagrant human rights violation on any of the news programs on its actual network, and certainly nothing in the ballpark of its most-watched prime time program, 60 Minutes.

If influential outlets like the Times opinion section and CBS News are going to help build up bin Salman's image as a "reformer" and a champion of women's rights, don't they have a unique obligation to inform their readers and viewers when the image they built up is so severely undermined? Shouldn't Bennet's editorial board and Friedman—who did so much to lend legitimacy to the Saudi ruler's PR strategy—be particularly outraged when he does a 180 and starts arresting prominent women's rights advocates? Will 60 Minutes do a comparable 27-minute segment detailing these arrests and their chilling effect on activism?

This is all unlikely, since US allies' crackdown on dissent is never in urgent need of clear moral condemnation; it's simply a hiccup on the never-ending road to "reform."

WFP launches a global movement to help fight food waste

The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) announced the launch of Stop the Waste, a global campaign to raise awareness about the huge amounts of edible food that is daily discarded – a habit that must be overcome if we are to make real progress in eradicating global hunger.

As part of this campaign, WFP has enlisted top restaurateurs and celebrity chefs from around the globe to join the movement by making their own pledge to #StopTheWaste

While there is enough food in the world to feed everyone, one third of the 4 billion metric tons of food we produce each year is lost or wasted, costing the global economy nearly US\$1 trillion annually. At the same time, war and unrest are forcing more people to flee their homes than at any time since the Second World War, making it difficult for millions of people to grow their own food or buy it at an affordable price.

A recent report by the World Resources Institute confirmed that halving the rate of food loss and waste is an important strategy that would contribute to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals, meeting the goals of the Paris Agreement on climate change, and sustainably feeding the planet by 2050. WFP's goal is a world with Zero Hunger. Part of achieving that goal is preventing food loss. WFP does this by helping smallholder farmers through the provision of new technologies for storage and transportation that prevent crops from spoiling prematurely and by connecting them with markets.

"#StopTheWaste is a campaign that appeals to everyone along the chain from farm to fork," said Corinne Woods, Chief Marketing Officer for the World Food Programme. "Food waste is a global issue but everyone can play their part in building a sustainable solution. Whether you are a farmer in Nigeria, losing your crops after harvest or a restaurant diner in New York, wasting the leftovers from your meal, you really can help to #StopTheWaste."

In the U.S., award-winning chef Andrew Zimmern has joined the movement by creating his own recipe using food that would normally go to waste and has pledged #StopTheWaste in hopes of inspiring his followers to do the same.

"Feeding those in need requires a dozen different action steps as part of a multi-pronged solution to reduce, and hopefully eliminate food waste," said Andrew Zimmern, four-time James Beard Award-winning TV personality, chef, writer and teacher. "This is a global problem at every level: from the farm to the wholesaler to the grocery store to your house and we can all do our part to help. By taking simple steps at home to reduce food waste is good for your wallet and the environment, and supporting organizations that rescue perfectly good landfill bound produce is vital for feeding those in need."

The World Food Programme has also launched a 30-second animated video as part of the campaign. The animation aims to spotlight food waste and highlight simple solutions we can take to prevent it by educating people on how to get involved.

Follow these simple steps to pledge #StopTheWaste:

1. Search your fridge or pantry for a food item that is nearing its expiration date and safe to eat
2. Snap a selfie with your item (do not forget to eat it)
3. Share your photo on social using #StopTheWaste and challenge three friends by tagging them in your post
4. Take your pledge one step further by sharing your food waste recipes or host a dinner party and encourage others to do the same.

(Source: WFP)

WORDS IN THE NEWS

Zimbabwean Asylum Seekers

(January 14, 2002)
The British government is coming under increasing pressure for deporting Zimbabwean asylum seekers. Some members of the governing Labour Party are calling for a temporary halt to all deportations to Zimbabwe. Bethan Rhys Roberts Reports. Asylum policy is rarely far from the **top of Britain's political agenda**. Last year the government was accused of being too **lenient** and of making Britain a «**soft touch**» for asylum seekers.

Now Prime Minister Tony Blair is facing claims that his policy is too **harsh**, especially for those **fleeing** Zimbabwe. A senior member of the governing Labour party, the chairman of the Parliamentary Group on Refugees, Neil Gerrard, is calling for a halt to all deportations to Zimbabwe until the situation there improves.

The Refugee Council in Britain is claiming that lives are being put at risk by the government's policy and the main opposition Conservative Party is calling for urgent talks on the matter. Mr Blair has expressed concern about the deteriorating situation in Zimbabwe after the parliament there passed legislation **granting** President Mugabe wide ranging powers ahead of elections in March. Mr Blair discussed developments with the South African leader Thabo Mbeki **ahead of a meeting** on Monday of the South African Development Community in Malawi. The Prime Minister insists that all asylum seekers in Britain go through the same procedure. Claims that they will be **subject to** abuse or torture if they return are **put to the test** and asylum is granted to those who may be persecuted. His spokesman insisted that the government was closely **monitoring** the situation in Zimbabwe and that developments there would affect the way claims were assessed.

■ **Words**
top of Britain's political agenda: the most important political issue being discussed at the moment
lenient: if an authority is lenient it is not as strict or severe as expected
soft touch: easily manipulated to someone else's advantage
harsh: severe or strict
fleeing: escaping or running away from
granting: giving
ahead of a meeting: before a meeting which has been planned
subject to: likely to be affected by
put to the test: if a claim is put to the test it is tried out to see if it true in practice
monitoring: regularly checking or observing

(Source: BBC)

Zagros forest protection plan being implemented

ENVIRONMENT **TEHRAN** — A plan to protect Zagros forest is being implemented through which nearly 100,000 hectares of the forest will be covered with seedlings, Khalil Aqaei, head of the Forests, Range, and Watershed Management Organization has announced.

Under the five-year plan, Zagros Mountain neighboring provinces are assigned with specific tasks, including planting seedlings on 85,000 to 100,000 hectares of the forest, which will be carried out in the current year, he explained.

He went on to say that the plan kicked off on May 22 in Ilam province. "Actions to be taken in Zagros forest and the priorities are outlined in the plan, most notably the issue of aquifer and watershed management, conservation and reforestation."

"Forest enrichment and development along with controlling pests and diseases are among other objectives of the plan," he added, Mehr news agency reported on Sunday.

He highlighted that a total budget of 6.5 trillion rials (around \$155 million) has been earmarked for the plan.

Aqaei noted that about one-third of our commitments in the provinces have been fulfilled, adding that the remaining



two-thirds will also be implemented in the coming months.

Referring to watershed management plans, he said that this year, some €150 million from the National Development Fund has been allocated, which is being implemented in more than 10,000 locations around the country.

According to Aqaei, watershed projects will be conducted on 1,033 basins constituting 90 percent of the country's cities. Parts of the measures are being taken in southeastern Kerman and northern Mazandaran provinces.

Pointing out that these projects have so far completed by 55 percent, he concluded that most of these projects will be accom-

plished by February 16, 2020.

Earlier in July, Aqaei said that given that Zagros forest's condition is worrisome being gravely threatened by wood logging, it must become the main concern of the related bodies to prevent it from disappearance.

Zagros Mountain forest steppe ecoregion with an area of about 6 million hectares (3.5 percent of Iran) is located primarily in Iran, ranging northwest to southeast and roughly paralleling the country's western border. The forests constitute 40 percent of the country's forested area and is stretching over 12 provinces. These forests have also been called western oak forests, due to the dominance of oak species.

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

A wide variety of wildlife, including wolves, leopards, and even the Persian fallow deer which was once thought extinct have made their homes in the mountains.

Expert delineates factors driving rural population decline in Iran

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — Over 53 percent of Iran's population were living in rural areas some four decades ago, but urbanization has influenced rural demographic trends, decreasing the rural population to 20 million, representing 25 percent of the country's population, Shahla Kazempour, a demographer and sociologist has said.

Referring to the three main reasons behind migration from villages to urban areas, she noted that population in Iran was associated with high growth due to increased fertility, but since the rural economy is based on agriculture, rural areas lost attraction due to lack of farms, ISNA reported on Wednesday.

Eventually, a population overflow happened in urban areas, that is, the population grew but rural economy was not capable of attracting more villagers, so the villagers migrated to the cities, she said, adding, on the other hand, high concentration of population in rural areas caused some populated ones to become cities.

Pointing to another factor contributed to increased urbanization rate, she noted that in the period when cities expanded due to population growth and migration, some surrounding villages joined the urban complex, and urbanization rate reached up to 75 percent.

Currently, rural areas hold a share of 21 million people in the country, of which 10.6 million are men and 10.1 million are women, she stated.

About 24 percent of Iran's population is less than 15 years old, and some 6 percent is above 65 years old, while 70 percent of the population is 15-65 years old, she announced.

According to statistics, rural areas are holding higher



population of younger people, because fertility is still slightly higher than urban areas and migration from rural to urban areas generally occurs by working population, in fact about 27 percent of the rural population are aging less than 5 years old, she explained.

She went on to say that Golestan province ranks the first with highest rural population amounting to 47 percent and South Khorasan province comes the next with 41 percent of rural population, however, provinces of Qom and Tehran rural population account for less than 10 percent.

"Rural women account for a quarter of Iranian women, 2.7 million of which are youngsters aging less than 15, while 6.4 million of them also are 15-65 years old.

Although statistics showed that only seven percent of the rural women are working, it can be argued that in fact out of the 6.4 million women aged 15 to 65, about 40 percent are active as many of whom are involved in farming, animal husbandry and poultry," she explained.

Referring to the healthcare among rural women, she said that the country's mortality rate is 5 per 1,000, but statistics show that the mortality rate is higher among men, with a rate of 6 per 1,000 while the figure is less than 5 per 1,000 among women.

However, mortality rate in urban areas are lower than rural areas, she lamented.

"Rural health facilities are less than urban areas, so lower of access to healthcare services and lack of sufficient income have made rural population less likely to live more.

And, rural women's daily activities such as farming, carpet weaving, animal husbandry, along with lack of awareness of healthy nutrition are the other reason behind higher mortality rate in villages," she stated.

But the country's average fertility rate is 2, in urban areas about 1.8 while it increases to 2.2 in rural areas, she concluded.

Abolfazl Razavi, deputy vice-president for rural development and deprived areas, has said that some 60 percent of migrations from rural to urban areas are caused by the lack of appropriate jobs and sufficient income for educated people.

Measures taken to reverse migration by making people to move to rural areas including providing facilities and sustainable job generating has increased rural population in some provinces of the country, he highlighted.

10,000 classrooms inaugurated nationwide

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — Some 10,000 classrooms were inaugurated across the country on Tuesday in a ceremony through videoconferencing by First Vice President Es'haq Jahangiri, IRNA news agency reported.

That was part of 1,892 projects on construction of educational places which have been completed nationwide.

A budget amounting to 32 trillion rials

(nearly \$761 million) has been spent on the projects. According to the organization for renovation, development and equipment of schools, 47 percent of the projects have been implemented by or with the participation of benefactors.

These projects include not only classrooms, but also sport halls, swimming pools and other recreational and educational spaces.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → ع

Clean air days double for Tehraners this year

Tehrani citizens have experienced a 2-fold rise in the number of clean air days since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (started March 21, 2018) compared to the same period last year, an official with Department of Environment has said.

Since the aforementioned period, clean air stayed in the capital for 27 days, while last year, during the same period, Tehraners breathed clean air for only 14 days, IRNA quoted Shina Ansari as saying on Sunday. Also, the air quality of the capital was healthy for 262 days, while being unhealthy for sensitive groups for 59 days, she said, adding that compared to the same period last year, Tehran's air quality reached healthy levels for 229 days and 97 days of unhealthy for sensitive groups has hit the capital.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“-plast, -plasty, -plastic”

■ **Meaning:** living cell or particle
■ **For example:** The next approach is **angioplasty**, in which a catheter is used to balloon open the arrowed part of the artery.

PHRASAL VERB

Head something off

■ **Meaning:** to prevent something from happening, especially something bad
■ **For example:** The President intervened to head off the conflict.

IDIOM

Nip something in the bud

■ **Explanation:** to prevent something from becoming a problem by stopping it as soon as it starts
■ **For example:** Try to nip this kind of bad behavior in the bud.

تهرانی‌ها امسال دو برابر بیشتر روزهای پاک داشتند

مدیرکل دفتر پایش فراگیر سازمان حفاظت محیط زیست گفت: تهرانی‌ها از ابتدای امسال تا امروز (۱۲ اسفند ۹۷) نسبت به مدت مشابه سال گذشته، دو برابر هوای پاک تنفس کردند.

شینا انصاری روز یکشنبه در گفت‌وگو با ایرنا افزود: تهران از ابتدای امسال تا امروز، ۲۷ روز هوای پاک داشته در حالیکه سال گذشته در مدت مشابه، تعداد روزهای پاک ۱۴ روز بوده است.

وی اظهار داشت: همچنین از ابتدای امسال تاکنون، کیفیت هوای پایتخت برای ۲۶۲ روز قابل قبول و ۵۹ روز ناسالم برای گروه‌های حساس بوده که در مدت مشابه سال گذشته به ترتیب ۹۷ و ۲۲۹ روز بوده که هشت روز نیز ناسالم برای تمام گروه‌ها بوده است.

Syrian army troops take full control of Manbij

TEHRAN — Syrian army troops have established full control over Manbij, a city in the northern province of Aleppo, and its nearby settlements, amid Turkey's cross-border invasion in northeastern Syria and an abrupt U.S. retreat of its forces from the city.

Syria's official news agency SANA reported on Tuesday that Syrian Arab Army units completed their deployment in Manbij and its surroundings, where they were welcomed by the locals.

It added that residents of the northeastern city gathered in the city center, carrying Syrian flags and cheering for the army forces, which arrived to defend the city and its people from the Turkish military invasion.

The Russian Ministry of Defense, as cited by the Tass news agency, also confirmed that Manbij and an area of more than 1,000 square kilometers around it were now under the full control of Syrian soldiers.

"The Syrian government army has established full control over the city of Manbij and nearby inhabited communities," it said.



It added that the government troops had taken control of the Tabqa military airfield,

two hydroelectric power plants, and a number of bridges across the Euphrates River.

Manbij is located some 85 kilometers east of Aleppo, the capital city of the eponymous province. Back in August 2016, the city was liberated from the Daesh terrorist group, which had turned the city into one of its major outposts in the Arab country.

On Sunday, Damascus said that it had deployed troops to northern Syria to counter the Turkish army.

On October 9, Turkish military forces and the Turkish-backed militants launched a cross-border invasion of northeast Syria in a declared attempt to push Kurdish militants from the so-called People's Protection Units (YPG) away from border areas.

According to press TV, Ankara views the U.S.-backed YPG as a terrorist organization tied to the homegrown Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) militant group, which has been involved in armed separatism in Turkey since 1984.

Turkey plans to create a 32-kilometer "safe zone" in northeast Syria, clear it from the presence of Kurdish militants, and relocate one million Syrian refugees there.

Erdogan: No talks with Syria Kurds until safe zone established

TEHRAN — Recep Tayyip Erdogan says Turkey will never sit at the negotiating table with Kurdish militants in Syria, emphasizing that Ankara's military operation in the Arab country's north will come to an end only when the Kurds leave the region and a "safe zone" is established there.

Speaking at a meeting of his ruling Justice and Development Party (AK Party) in Ankara on Wednesday, Erdogan said, "There are some leaders who are trying to mediate... There has never been any such thing in the history of the Turkish republic as the state sitting at the same table with a terror organization," referring to the Kurdish militants.

Turkey launched the offensive, called Operation Peace Spring, last week with the aim of purging the northern Syrian regions near its border of Kurdish militants, whom it views as terrorists linked to local autonomy-seeking militants of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

The incursion came after the U.S. abruptly pulled its

forces out of the region, clearing the path for Turkey to go ahead with a planned military action against Washington's longtime Kurdish allies.

Erdogan said Turkey will end its offensive if the Kurds on the Syrian side of the border lay down their arms and withdraw from the planned "safe zone" that would span from the city of Manbij to the Iraqi border.

"Our proposal is that right now, tonight, all the terrorists lay down their arms, their equipment and everything, destroy all their traps and get out of the safe zone that we have designated," Erdogan said, adding that this would be "the quickest way of solving the problem in Syria."

According to Press TV, He emphasized that "no power" can stop the Turkish military operation in Syria until Ankara reaches its goals.

"We informed the U.S., EU and Russia before the oper-



ation began that ... we want this terrorist organization to be removed from our borders," he said at a weekly meeting of his ruling AK Party, referring to the YPG.

U.S. House Republicans to introduce legislation imposing sanctions on Turkey

Trump says it's 'fine' if Russia helps Syria

TEHRAN — Republicans in the U.S. House of Representatives plan to introduce legislation on Wednesday that will impose sanctions on Turkey in response to Ankara's incursion into Syria, Representative Liz Cheney told reporters on Wednesday.

Even though Republicans do not control the chamber, the measure has a good chance of passing, with members of both parties condemning the swift eruption of violence from Turkey, a NATO ally.

In the Republican-led Senate top Democrat Chuck Schumer on Wednesday called for the House to quickly pass the resolution and for his chamber to then immediately take it up.

Republican President Donald Trump has announced sanctions on Turkey, ratcheted up tariffs on the country's steel imports and suspended a major trade deal, but many lawmakers say the U.S. response must go even further.

Meanwhile, Donald Trump on Wednesday played down the crisis in Syria touched off by Turkey's incursion against U.S.-allied Kurdish forces, saying the conflict was between Turkey and Syria and that it was "fine" for Russia to help Damascus.

Trump, speaking to reporters at the White House, said imposing U.S. sanctions on Turkey would be better than fighting in the region.

On October 9, Turkish military forces and the Turkish-backed militants launched a cross-border invasion of northeast Syria in a declared attempt to push Kurdish militants from the so-called People's Protection Units (YPG) away from border areas.

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Turkey plans to create a 32-kilometer "safe zone" in northeast Syria, clear it from the presence of Kurdish militants, and relocate

one million Syrian refugees there.

The Syrian government has condemned the act of aggression.

Earlier on Tuesday, the US military said that it had withdrawn all of its forces from Manbij.

"Coalition forces are executing a deliberate withdrawal from northeast Syria. We are out of Manbij," wrote Col. Myles B. Caggins III, a US military spokesman, on Twitter.

A day earlier, Syrian Kurds had announced that they had reached an agreement with Damascus aimed at blunting the Turkish cross-border offensive into Kurdish-held territory in northern Syria.

'Defiant message' as North Korea's Kim rides white horse on sacred mountain

TEHRAN — Aides to Kim Jong Un are convinced the North Korean leader plans "a great operation", state media said on Wednesday in a report that included lavish descriptions and images of the leader riding a white horse up North Korea's most sacred mountain.

In the photos released by state news agency KCNA, Kim is seen riding alone on a large white horse through snowy fields and woods on Mt Paektu, the spiritual homeland of the Kim dynasty.

"His march on horseback in Mt Paektu is a great event of weighty importance in the history of the Korean revolution," KCNA said.

"Having witnessed the great moments of his thinking atop Mt Paektu, all the officials accompanying him were convinced with overflowing emotion and joy that there will be a great operation to strike the world with wonder again and make a step forward in the Korean revolution."



It was unclear what the operation might involve, but Kim has often made trips to the sacred mountain at times

of major policy endeavors

Analysts say the symbolism underscores North Korea standing up to international sanctions and pressure over its nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs.

"This is a statement, symbolic of defiance," said Joshua Pollack, a North Korea expert at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies in California.

"The pursuit of sanctions relief is over. Nothing is made explicit here, but it starts to set new expectations about the coming course of policy for 2020."

In late 2017, Kim visited Mt Paektu days after North Korea launched its largest intercontinental ballistic missile, and weeks before he made a key New Year's speech in which he opened the door to engagement with South Korea.

Last year, Kim took South Korean President Moon Jae-in to the top of the mountain as part of a historic summit< Reuters reported, Reuters reported.

Britain struggles on two fronts to agree last-ditch Brexit deal

TEHRAN — Negotiators struggled on Wednesday to clinch an eleventh-hour Brexit deal on the eve of an EU summit, raising the chances that Prime Minister Boris Johnson will have to seek an extension of the Oct. 31 deadline for Britain's exit from the bloc.

Talks in Brussels on Tuesday between European Union and British officials ran into the night and resumed just hours later, but Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar said there were still "many issues" to be resolved.

Although differences over the complex divorce between the world's fifth-largest economy and its biggest trading bloc have narrowed significantly, EU sources reported on Wednesday that the two sides had reached a "standstill".

This was partly because of objections

to a proposal on customs from a small Northern Ireland political party whose votes Johnson will likely need to get a Brexit deal through parliament.

The main sticking point in the long-running talks with Brussels over Brexit, which has already been delayed twice, is the border between EU member Ireland and the British province of Northern Ireland.

The question is how to prevent the frontier becoming a backdoor into the EU's single market without erecting controls which could undermine the 1998 peace agreement that ended decades of conflict in the province.

London's latest proposal envisages Northern Ireland staying in the UK customs area. Tariffs would apply on goods crossing from mainland Britain to Northern Ireland if they were deemed to be headed further, to Ireland and the

bloc's single market.

Any approval by European Union leaders at their Thursday-Friday summit in Brussels of a last-minute Brexit deal could only be conditional on the British House of Commons approving it later, said three diplomats with the bloc.

■ Jigsaw puzzle

If Johnson is to get a deal through parliament, where he does not have a majority, he is likely to need the support of the Northern Irish Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), which says maintaining the economic integrity of the United Kingdom is sacrosanct.

Pro-Brexit lawmakers from Johnson's governing Conservative Party say they will only back deal if it has gained the support of the DUP, which fears Northern Ireland could be left behind in the EU's orbit when Britain leaves.

Officials in London described the demands of the three different parties - the EU, Conservative Brexit supporters and the DUP - as trying fit together the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle.

Johnson held talks with the DUP and pro-Brexit Conservatives on Tuesday and was expected to do so again on Wednesday, trying to find a way to soothe their concerns over any compromise he offers to the EU to try to secure a deal.

A central figure in the 2016 referendum who came to power as leader of the Conservative Party in July, Johnson has pledged to take Britain out of the EU on Oct. 31 with or without a deal.

But parliament has passed a law saying Britain cannot leave without an agreement, and Johnson has not explained how he can get around that, Reuters reported.

Barham Salih emphasizes opposition to ISIL transfer to Iraq

➔ On October 9, Turkish military forces and the Turkish-backed militants launched a cross-border invasion of northeast Syria in a declared attempt to push Kurdish militants from the so-called People's Protection Units (YPG) away from border areas.

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A day earlier, Syrian Kurds had announced that they had reached an agreement with Damascus aimed at blunting the Turkish cross-border offensive into Kurdish-held territory in northern Syria.

Turkey and the time bomb in Syria

➔ Media reports about the ISIS resurgence in Raqqa, the former ISIS stronghold, cannot be ignored, as dozens of terrorists have shot Kurdish police forces in this city. The terrorists aimed to occupy the headquarters of the Kurdish-Syrian security forces in the center of Raqqa. One of the eyewitnesses said the attack was coordinated, organized and carried out by several suicide bombers, but failed.

In response to Turkey's invasion of Syria, the Kurds have repeatedly warned that the attack will lead to release of ISIS elements in the region. Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan denied the reports about the escape of ISIS prisoners and called them "lies".

European officials fear that ISIS prisoners with European nationality, who have fled camps, will come back to their countries.

Kurdish forces are making any effort to confront Turkish troops in border areas, so their presence and patrol in Raqqa have been reduced.

Interestingly, the Turkish military bombarded one of temporary prisons and caused ISIS prisoners escaping. It seems that ISIS-affiliated covert groups have started their activities to seize the control of Raqqa. These groups are seeking to rebuild their so-called caliphate, as Kurdish and Syrian forces are fighting to counter the invading Turkish troops. Families affiliated with ISIS are held in Al-Hol camp, under the control of Kurdish forces. At the current situation, the camp has turned into a time bomb that could explode at any moment. Under normal circumstances, there have been several conflicts between ISIS families in the camp, but the current situation is far worse than before.

There are more than 3,000 ISIS families in the camp and their women are calling for establishment of the ISIS caliphate. Some of SDF forces have abandoned their positions, and decreased their watch on the camp.

The danger of the return of ISIS elements is so serious, since they are so pleased with the Turkish attack and consider it as an opportunity to regain their power. There are pictures of ISIS wives in a camp in northern Syria, under watch of Kurdish militias, showing how happy they are about the Turkish invasion.

In any case, the Turkish attack, in addition to all the military, political and human consequences, holds Ankara responsible for the escape of ISIS militants and preparing the ground for their resurgence.

Currently, the camps holding ISIS and their families are like time bombs that will explode if they all escape. Covert groups affiliated with the terrorist organization are seeking to revive the ISIS caliphate and take further actions if the Turkish attacks continue. These attacks have created new conflicts in Syria and undermined Kurdish and Syrian power to fight ISIS.

Bahraini courts issue life terms for 271 anti-regime activists since Jan. 2018: Rights group

TEHRAN — An independent human rights group says Bahraini courts have sentenced hundreds of anti-regime protesters to life imprisonment since the beginning of last year, as the ruling Al Khalifah regime presses ahead with its heavy-handed clampdown on political dissidents in the Persian Gulf kingdom.

The [Persian] Gulf Institute for Democracy and Human Rights said in a report on Tuesday that the Bahraini regime's courts handed down 271 life sentences to dissidents between January 2018 and May 2019, Arabic-language Bahrain Mirror news website reported.

The report added that a total of 130 life sentences were issued by Bahraini courts between January and December last year - at an average of 10.8 cases per month. May 2018 set a record high then, when 43 life sentences were issued in just one month.

It further noted that the frequency of life sentences increased significantly in 2019, and a total of 141 Bahraini activists were sentenced to life in prison between January and May at a rate of 28.2 cases per month. The process reached its peak in April, when 63 Bahrainis were sentenced to life imprisonment. All those people sentenced to life in 2019 were revoked of their Bahraini citizenship as well.

"The increasing harsh and tough judgments in politically-charged cases indicate the Bahraini authorities' intransigence and unwillingness to ease tension and create a favorable climate conducive to national dialogue. Such an approach will deepen the human rights and political crisis in the country," the Chairman of the [Persian] Gulf Institute for Democracy and Human Rights, Yahya al-Hadid, said.

He added, "We call on Bahraini authorities to immediately and unconditionally release all detainees, compensate the victims of torture, bring those involved in the violations to justice, and call for a serious national dialogue with all parties."

Thousands of anti-regime protesters have held demonstrations in Bahrain on an almost daily basis ever since a popular uprising began in the country in mid-February 2011.

Bulgaria coach apologizes to England over racist chants

Bulgaria coach Krasimir Balakov has apologized to the England team after fans taunted their black players with Nazi salutes and monkey chants during a Euro 2020 qualifier in Sofia on Monday.

England thrashed Bulgaria 6-0 to hand the hosts their heaviest ever home defeat but the game will be remembered more for the racist incidents that led to action being temporarily stopped in the first half.

European soccer's ruling body UEFA has opened disciplinary proceedings against Bulgaria over the racist behavior.

While Balakov said after the game he had not heard any racist abuse from the stands, in an email to reporters late on Tuesday he apologized for the fans' behavior.

"I strongly condemn and reject racism as a norm of conduct that contradicts modern human relations," Balakov said.

"This is a prejudice that comes from the past that must be eradicated forever.

"I want to say something very clear: given that there have been insults on such a basis, I, as a coach of the national team, apologize to the English footballers and all those who feel hurt."

Bulgarian Football Union President Borislav Mihaylov resigned on Tuesday, a few hours after the Balkan country's Prime Minister Boyko Borissov called for the former international goalkeeper to step down.

Mihaylov had previously defended Bulgarian soccer from accusations of racism and criticized England for what he saw as a "fixation" on potential incidents that could raise tension. *(Source: Mirror)*

La Liga asks for Clasico to be moved to Madrid due to protests

Spain's top football division has asked that this month's El Clasico match between Barcelona and Real Madrid be moved from Barcelona to the capital amid growing protests in Catalonia.

Nine Catalan separatist leaders were jailed for between nine and 13 years on Monday for their roles in an illegal referendum and subsequent failed independence bid, sparking protests and clashes across the region. Barcelona is the capital of Catalonia.

The match is due to take place on Oct. 26 at Barca's Camp Nou stadium. But La Liga has asked the Spanish Football Federation (RFEF) to reverse the fixture.

The second meeting of the season is due to take place in Madrid in March.

"We have requested the competitions committee of the RFEF to meet and change the location of El Clasico to Madrid because of exceptional circumstances beyond our control," a La Liga spokesman said.

The RFEF did not immediately respond to a request for comment from Reuters.

The announcement of the jail terms triggered mass protests across the region, with chaos at Barcelona's El Prat airport leading to the cancellation of dozens of flights as well as clashes between police and protesters.

Local media reported that 51 arrests were made while 125 people had been treated for injuries.

On Monday, Barca released a statement titled "Prison is not the solution" condemning the sentences, while Manchester City's Spanish coach, Pep Guardiola, also spoke out against the jail terms in a video that was released on social media by the group Tsunami Democratic.

Protests continued throughout Wednesday, with the country's high-speed rail network suffering delays, while motorways throughout Catalonia and many of Barcelona's main thoroughfares remain closed.

(Source: Reuters)

Paris is stressful, racist; I don't like it - Alves

Former Paris Saint-Germain right-back Dani Alves has accused the city of Paris of being racist after leaving to join Sao Paulo in the summer.

Alves, 36, returned to Brazil to play club football for the first time in nearly 20 years when he completed a free transfer in August after two years at Parc des Princes.

Despite Alves being prepared to extend his stay with PSG, the former Barcelona, Juventus and Sevilla man told GQ in Brazil of his disgust at his experience of Parisian life and his preference for the life he enjoyed while playing in Spain.

"Paris is a stressful city -- I do not like it that much," Alves said. "If you go there for a week, it will be the trip of a lifetime. More than that, though, and it gets on your nerves.

"It reminds me a bit of Sao Paulo. However, in Paris, they are f---ing racists. Very much so. They did nothing towards me, as I would have told them where to go, but I saw it with my friends."

Alves added two Ligue 1, one Coupe de France, one Coupe de la Ligue and two Trophee des Champions titles to his impressive collection of silverware during his time with PSG.

Although he told ESPN FC of his desire to sample the 'exciting' Premier League as recently as May, Alves ultimately opted to return home to Brazil with childhood club Sao Paulo.

He was also voted MVP at this summer's Copa America as Brazil won the title on home soil.

The tourism office of Paris was not immediately available for comment in response to Alves' comments.

(Source: Soccernet)

Lazio handed partial stadium ban for fans' racist behavior

Lazio have been ordered to close four sections of their stadium for their next Europa League home game due to racist behaviour by the Italian club's fans during a group stage match against Stade Rennais earlier this month.

European soccer's governing body UEFA said in a statement that Lazio must also display a banner carrying the words "#EqualGame" with the UEFA logo on it for the match against Celtic on Nov. 7.

The club were also fined 20,000 euros (\$22,088) and given a suspended sentence of having to play one more match behind closed doors, contingent on there being no further racist incidents during a probationary period of one year.

(Source: Goal)

Bulgarian police make six arrests following racist abuse of England players

Bulgarian police have identified 15 fans they suspect are responsible for subjecting black England players to racist abuse and arrested six of them.

The nine not arrested are under police investigation, with three wanted.

England's 6-0 Euro 2020 qualifier win over Bulgaria in Sofia was stopped twice in the first half following racist chanting by home supporters.

"We do not tolerate such behavior," Bulgaria Ministry of the Interior commissioner Georgi Hadzhiev said.

Bulgaria's football chief Borislav Mikhailov resigned on Tuesday.

Bulgaria manager Krasimir Balakov said after the game he "didn't hear" any chanting, having previously accused England of having a bigger racism problem.

But Balakov has since posted a statement on Facebook, acknowledging the incidents on Monday and apologizing to "English footballers and to all those who felt offended".

"I condemn all forms of racism as an unacceptable behavior that contradicts normal human relations," he added. "I think that this form of prejudice should be buried deep in our past, and no-one should ever be subjected to it."

Bulgarian legend Hristo Stoichkov became emotional when he was asked on TV how to



prevent a similar occurrence in future. He advocated that "fans are not allowed in the stadium or even [face] heavier punishments".

Apparently referring to the five-year European ban imposed on English club sides after 39 people died at Heysel Stadium

before the start of the 1985 European Cup final between Liverpool and Juventus, he added: "Like in England for years - five years without going to stadiums. People don't deserve to suffer."

Meanwhile, the English Football Association

German regional clubs probed after players mimic Turkish military salute



At least five German regional football teams face disciplinary action after their players imitated the military salute performed by the Turkish national team during matches last weekend.

Germany has a Turkish population of around 2.5 million people and three teams in the Recklinghausen district, near Gelsenkirchen, will face a disciplinary committee after pictures posted on social media showed their players made the controversial salute to celebrate goals.

"In one case it was the whole team, in another case, it was five or six players," Hans-Otto Matthey, the district chairman of the Westphalia Football and Athletics Association (FLVW), told AFP subsidiary SID.

Matthey said making the clubs accountable should discourage other teams in the region, which has a sizeable Turkish community, against repeating the gesture in this weekend's matches.

"I predict that nobody else will have the nerve to repeat something like this," he added.

The military gesture has become a hot topic after Turkey players saluted to celebrate goals during Euro 2020 qualifiers against France in Paris on Monday and Friday against Albania.

The salute is seen as a reference to Turkey's military operation against Kurdish militants

in Syria, which has been condemned by both France and Germany.

On Tuesday, Turkey's sports minister Mehmet Muharrem Kasapoglu described the controversial gesture as a "nice salute", but European football's ruling body UEFA is investigating the national team for the "potential provocative political behavior" of its players.

There were also two further cases of teams in Bavaria making the salute gesture, with both clubs also set to face disciplinary measures.

On Tuesday, both the Bavarian (BFV) and North German Football Associations (NFV) warned players in their areas to expect "heavy penalties" for imitating the military salute.

"Insults and provocations have no place on or off the pitch and will not be tolerated", an NFV football official told SID.

The German Football Association (DFB) took a similar stance at the weekend.

Germany internationals Emre Can and Ilkay Gundogan, who have Turkish roots, apologized on Sunday after they both clicked 'Like' on a picture of the Turkish footballers saluting during Friday's 1-0 win over Albania, which they later removed.

"We are against all forms of violence and discrimination," said national team director Oliver Bierhoff.

(Source: France 24)

LeBron James says he's turning his focus from China to a championship

LeBron James said Tuesday he had not seen reports of protesters in Hong Kong trampling on his jerseys, and even watching one burn, following his comments about Houston Rockets general manager Daryl Morey's tweet that sparked turmoil and tension between China and the NBA.

A day after saying he believed Morey "wasn't educated" on the ramifications and impact that sending out a tweet in support of anti-government protesters in Hong Kong would have, James was asked whether he had a sense of how his own comments would be felt in Hong Kong among protesters.

"No, I had a sense of [how] what I said felt for me," James said after the Los Angeles Lakers' practice. "And like I said yesterday, when I speak upon things, I speak from a very logical standpoint on things that hit home for me. Yesterday, obviously, I gave thoughts on what I felt and how I saw things that transpired from that week that we were [in China]."

Saying this would be the last time he addressed the turmoil between China and the NBA that resulted from Morey's Oct. 4 tweet, James said he hopes tension between the parties will subside over time.

"I plan on being here and being a captain of this team and trying to figure out how we can win a championship," James said when asked whether he plans to learn more about the anti-government protests in Hong Kong. "That's my main goal right now. I feel like I talked about it yesterday. I tweeted out responses to people not understanding my knowledge and where it came from with my brain and learning from the situation. I'm talking about it now. I won't talk about it again.



"I'd be cheating my teammates by continuing to harp on something that won't benefit us. We're trying to win a championship. That's what we're here for. We're not politicians. It's a huge political thing. But we are leaders and we can step up at times. I'm not saying at this particular time, but if you don't feel like you should speak on things, you shouldn't have to."

On Tuesday in Hong Kong, fans gathered on courts to express frustration with James' comments the night before. James, who has not shied away from speaking out about social injustice issues here in the United States, said Monday that he felt Morey wasn't educated or was "misinformed" before sending out that tweet and how "so many people

Tokyo Olympics marathon and race walks could be moved to Sapporo: IOC



The marathon and race walks at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics could be moved to Sapporo where temperatures will be "significantly lower", the International Olympic Committee said on Wednesday.

The IOC is considering the move because temperatures in Tokyo during the July 24-August 9 Games could reach the high 30s Celsius.

In Sapporo, more than 800 kilometres (500 miles) further north, they would be five to six degrees cooler during the day.

"Athletes' health and well-being are always at the heart of our concerns," IOC President Thomas Bach said in a statement.

"The new far-reaching proposals to move the marathon and race walking events show how seriously we take such concerns.

"The Olympic Games are the platform where athletes can give 'once-in-a-lifetime' performances, and these measures ensure they have the conditions to give their best."

The plan to change to change the location of the events has yet to be rubber-stamped.

The initiative will need the backing of all of the major stakeholders, notably the host city Tokyo, the national Olympic committees and the relevant broadcasters.

The IOC Coordination Commission for

and Uefa have condemned the actions of the 'ultras' section of Bulgaria fans, with Aleksander Ceferin, president of the sport's European governing body, calling for "football family and governments" to "wage war on the racists".

The FA has also offered full support to England players following the racist chanting, with counselling one of the options open to them.

■ Players condemn abuse

England midfielder Jordan Henderson called the behavior of Bulgaria fans "disgusting", after they were warned for making Nazi salutes and monkey noises.

"Obviously wasn't happy with the situation that we were in - it wasn't nice to be involved in and it shouldn't be happening in 2019," he said.

Team-mate Tyrone Mings, who was making his international debut on Monday, said he heard racist chanting "clear as day" during the pre-match warm-up in Sofia.

A number of players posted on social media following the game, thanking travelling fans for their support and expressing their pride in the performance despite the abuse.

"Not an easy situation to play in and not one which should be happening in 2019," said striker Marcus Rashford. "Proud we rose above it to take three points but this needs stamping out.

(Source: BBC)

could have been harmed not only financially, physically, emotionally, spiritually."

After Morey's tweet created an international controversy between China and the NBA, the Rockets general manager deleted it and attempted to clarify his intent in subsequent tweets. Rockets owner Tilman Fertitta denounced the original tweet and said the Rockets, who previously enjoyed immense popularity in China, were "not a political organization" and that Morey did not speak for the team.

Following his initial comments on Morey's tweet on Monday evening, James took to Twitter to clarify his comments and "clear up the confusion." He tweeted, "I do not believe there was any consideration for the consequences and ramifications of the tweet. I'm not discussing the substance. Others can talk about that," before adding how tough a situation the Lakers found themselves in during their visit to China and saying that people need to understand "what a tweet or statement can do to others."

James reiterated Tuesday that he will address issues he is passionate and knowledgeable about.

"It's a tough situation we're all in right now with the association, us as athletes, GMs and owners and so forth," James said. "I also don't think every issue should be everybody's problem as well. When things come up, there's multiple things that we haven't talked about that have happened in our own country that we don't bring up. There's things that happen in my own community in trying to help my kids graduate high school and go off to college."

(Source: ESPN)

Infantino offers condolence over death of Jafar Kashani

S P O R T S T E H R A N — FIFA President Gianni Infantino extended his deepest sympathies to the Iran Football Federation over death of Ex-Team Melli and Persepolis defender Jafar Kashani.

Kashani died of heart attack at his home at the age of 76 in early October.

«On behalf of FIFA and in my own name, I would like to express my sincere condolences to Iran Football Federation and Jafar Kashani's family,» Infantino said.

Kashani, born in Tehran, started his football career at 1964 in Shahin club after he was scouted by Abbas Ekrami, the founder of the club.

After three years, he joined Persepolis and was a member of the Iranian popular football team for seven years.

Kashani represented Iran national football team from 1968 to 1974 and made 38 appearances for Team Melli.

He won AFC Asian Cup twice with Iran in 1968 and 1972.

Kashani also represented Iran at the 1972 Summer Olympics, where they beat Brazil and lost to Hungary and Denmark and failed to book a place in the next round.

After retiring from football, he was employed by Ministry of Foreign Affairs and worked in embassies in Germany, Syria and the UAE.

Kashani was head of Persepolis's board of director.



Rahmani wins gold at beach wrestling



S P O R T S T E H R A N — Pouya Rahmani claimed a gold medal at the beach wrestling men's +90kg final at the 1st ANOC World Beach Games Qatar 2019 in Doha, capital of Qatar on Tuesday.

He defeated Ufuk Yilmaz of Turkey 3-0 in the final match.

The bronze medal went to Georgian Mamuka Kordzaia.

Iran's Fatemeh Sadeghi has already seized a silver medal in karate kata.

The 2019 World Beach Games, officially known as the ANOC World Beach Games Qatar 2019 and commonly known as Qatar 2019, is an inaugural international beach multi-sport event organized by the Association of National Olympic Committees (ANOC).

The competition started on 11 October and will finish on 16 October in Doha, Qatar.

Bahraini fans disrespect Iran's national anthem



S P O R T S T E H R A N — Bahraini football fans disrespected Iran's national anthem in the match held in Riffa Tuesday night.

Iran lost to Bahrain 1-0 at matchday 4 of Asia's Round 2 qualifying for the 2022 FIFA World Cup Qatar in Group C.

The Bahraini fans made a lot of noise during Iran's national anthem at the

Bahrain National Stadium.

Iran's Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs, Masoud Soltanifar, has said they will file a complaint to FIFA for disrespecting Iran's national anthem.

"The behavior of Bahraini fans is against the spirit of sportsmanship and we want Asian Football Confederation and FIFA to take legal action against that," Soltanifar said.

Iran lose to Bahrain in World Cup qualifier

S P O R T S T E H R A N — Iran suffered a 1-0 loss against Bahrain at matchday 4 of Asia's Round 2 qualifying for the 2022 FIFA World Cup Qatar in Group C on Tuesday.

Uzbekistani referee Valentin Kovalenko awarded a penalty stroke to Bahrain in the 65th minute which Mohamed Al Hardan coolly slotted home in Riffa's at Bahrain National Stadium.

Team Melli have already defeated Hong Kong and Cambodia in the competition.

The result means Bahrain now share the summit of the

group with Iraq with seven points each, although a superior scoring record sees Iraq claiming the top spot.

Iran dropped to third with six points from three matches.

Team Melli face a challenging trip to Iraq in November, while Bahrain head east to play Hong Kong next.

The eight group winners and four best runners-up will advance to the AFC Asian Cup China 2023 Finals and the final round of qualifying for the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022.

The next best 24 teams from the second round of the joint qualifiers will compete in a separate competition for the remaining 12 slots in the 24-team AFC Asian Cup China 2023.

A bitter shock after a sweet victory



defeat. In his first match as the team's coach, Iran defeated Syria 5-0 and then came a 1-1 draw against South Korea in Seoul. World Cup 2022 and AFC Asian Cup 2023 qualifiers campaign started for Iran in Group C with a 2-0 away victory over Hong Kong and then an unexpected 14-0 victory over Cambodia in the competition.

Neither Hong Kong nor Cambodia was

equipped enough to truly evaluate Wilmot's team and experts believed that matches against Iraq and Bahrain would be the real tests.

■ Rough road began with 'rude' Bahraini fans

The match against Bahrain started with fans' disrespect for Iran's national anthem and demonstrated part of reality about Team Melli's readiness. The team's failure to reach full readiness is natural for a new coach who

has just sit on the bench. Also, Team Melli has not held regular training in this period and Wilmots has not had the required time to build the team he wants.

A lackluster first half against Bahrain proved that the players required more time to fit in Wilmot's style of football. In the first half, one could clearly feel the players' arrogance for that 14-0 victory over Cambodia; they underestimated their rival and were punished by a team that was ready for victory.

The fact is that neither the two victories over Hong Kong and Cambodia nor the loss against Bahrain was the total reality of the team. Team Melli enjoys great capabilities and just needs more time. Mainly entered the team under Queiroz, this generation has now grown to maturity and most of them can play for the team in the coming years.

Iran doesn't lack good and reliable players in any post. The question is whether Wilmots can make the best use of this human resource or not.

It is too early to judge Team Melli. Being defeated by Bahrain came at the best time possible; it both get players out of the air of conceit for the victory against Cambodia and warned of the match against Iraq. This defeat made the team understand that they have a tough way to go to advance to the next round of qualifications from this group.

Iran beach soccer team win bronze at World Beach Games

S P O R T S T E H R A N — Iran national beach soccer team claimed a bronze medal at the Association of National Olympic Committees World Beach Games semifinals on Wednesday.



Iran defeated Italy 3-1 on penalty shootout after two teams drew 5-5 at regular time.

Brazil will meet Russia in the final match.

Beach soccer is one of 14 sports being showcased at the World Beach Games, which are being held in Doha, the capital of Qatar, from 11-16.

Iranian athletes have already won one gold and one silver in the event.

Pouya Rahmani won a gold at the beach wrestling men's +90kg final and Fatemeh Sadeghi claimed a bronze in karate kata.

The 2019 World Beach Games, officially known as the ANOC World Beach Games Qatar 2019 and commonly known as Qatar 2019, is an inaugural international beach multi-sport event organized by the Association of National Olympic Committees (ANOC).

Kimia Alizadeh on BBC 100 Women of 2019 list

Iranian taekwondo athlete Kimia Alizadeh has been included on the prestigious list of «BBC 100 Women 2019».

The BBC has revealed its list of 100 inspiring and influential women from around the world for 2019.

In 2016, Kimia became the first Iranian woman to win a medal at the Olympics since the country began competing in 1948. As a taekwondo athlete, Kimia is credited with «emboldening Iranian girls and women to push the boundaries of personal freedom» by the UK's Financial Times newspaper.

The 21-year-old is now training three times a day to seek qualification for Tokyo 2020, where she hopes to inspire the next generation of Iranian women in martial arts.

(Source: BBC)

Majid Jalali named Gol Gohar coach

TASNIM — Long-serving Iranian coach Majid Jalali has been appointed as new head coach of top-flight football team Gol Gohar.

Jalali, 63, replaced Croatian coach Vinko Begovic, who was fired in early October following poor results.

Under coaching of Begovic, the Sirjan-based football team lost three matches and earned three draws in six matches in Iran Professional League.

Jalali started his coaching career at age of 21 by coaching Vahdat's youth team in 1986 while he was playing for the senior team.

He has coached Iranian clubs Pas, Saba Battery, Saipa, Tractor, Esteghlal Ahvaz, Paykan and Nassaji Mazandaran.

Branko Ivankovic, Ali Daei and Firooz Karimi had been also shortlisted to take charge of the team.

Iran to participate in 7th CISM World Games

MNA — Iranian athletes will take part in various sport disciplines of the 7th CISM World Summer Games in Wuhan, China.

As reported, some 1,000 athletes from Iran are to take part in the event in different disciplines including cycling, orientation, wrestling, lifesaving, volleyball, bow and arrow, parachuting and track and field.

The 7th CISM World Games – the 7th PEACE GAMES – will be held in Wuhan City from 15 to 30 October 2019 with 23 CISM Disciplines and one Demonstration sport, Tennis.

CISM has also confirmed jointly with the Organizing Committee that at least Track and Field and Archery will be organized for para athletes.

For the first time in the CISM World Games history, Boxing competitions will be opened to female military boxers.

Afshin Peyrovan appointed as Persepolis Sporting Director

PLDC — Persepolis football club announced that Afshin Peyrovani has been officially appointed to the role of Sporting Director of the club.

The former Iran and Persepolis full-back, who ended a long and impressive playing career with Persepolis, replaced Mohsen Khalili in the role.

Persepolis General Manager Mohammad Hassan Ansarifard appointed him after appreciating the efforts of Khalili.

Peyrovani has already worked at this role in 2018 in Persepolis.

He was a member of Iran national football team in the 1998 FIFA World Cup.

Peyrovani totted up more than 200 appearances as a player for Persepolis from 1993 to 2004 and scored 14 goals for the Reds.

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GUIDE TO
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Selfishness prevents one from progress and advancement.

Imam Ali (AS)

Hushang Moradi Kermani receives another nomination for 2020 ALMA

CULTURE **TEHRAN** — The Institute for Research on the History of Children's Literature in Iran has nominated renowned Iranian children's book writer Hushang Moradi Kermani for the 2020 Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award (ALMA).

Earlier in September, Iran's Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (IIDCYA) also announced that it has nominated Moradi Kermani for the prestigious international honor, which is granted by the Swedish government every year.

The 75-year-old Moradi Kermani is mostly known as a children's writer, but his works also appeal to adults.

He is the author of numerous bestsellers such as "You're No Stranger Here", "The Water Urn" and "A Sweet Jam". Most of his works have been translated into English, German, French, Spanish, Dutch, Arabic, Armenian, Turkish and several other languages.

The Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award amounts to SEK 5 million (about €570,000), making it the world's largest award for children's and young adults' literature.

The award was established in 2002 by the Swedish National Council for Cultural Affairs to commemorate writer Astrid Lindgren and to promote children's and youths' literature from around the world.

The list of candidates will be presented at the Frankfurt Book Fair today.

The Iranian Association of Writers for Children and Youth has previously nominated the celebrated writer Mohammadreza Shams and children's literature expert Mehdi Hajvani for the 2020 ALMA.

IDFA to screen Iranian docs

A R T **TEHRAN** — A lineup of four Iranian movies will go on screen in the various sections of the International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam (IDFA).

"The Absence" by Fatemeh Zolfagari, "The Forbidden Strings", a co-production between Iran and Afghanistan by Hassan Nuri, and "The Unseen" by Behzad Nalbandi will be reviewed in Luminous, an IDFA non-competitive section.

"The Absence" is about the devastating earthquake that struck the Kurdish town of Sarpol-e Zahab in 2017 and the life after the disaster of a couple who try to salvage as many of their belongings as possible from the ruins for the memories attached to them.

"The Forbidden Strings" is about four young Afghan immigrants in Iran, Akbar, Suri, Mohammad and Hakim, who have formed a rock band and try to get a chance to play live in a concert in Afghanistan.

"The Unseen" is about street women who end up in prisons and detention centers. No one sees them or hears their voices due to their positions in society.

"Asho", a documentary by Jafar Najafi about a shepherd boy who is obsessed with Hollywood movies and wants to become an actor, will be screened in the Competition for Kids and Docs.

The lineup of the official section of the festival will be announced on October 23.

The IDFA will be held in the Dutch capital from November 20 to December 1.

Bosnian animation festival picks Iranian movies

A R T **TEHRAN** — The Banjaluka International Animated Film Festival in Bosnia will screen four movies by Iranian filmmakers.

"Mr. Deer" by Mojtaba Musavi and "The Pattern" by Azad Jannati are among the films that will compete in the official section of the festival, which will be held from October 24 to 28.

"Mr. Deer" is set in a modern but ruined subway in an unknown time. People in this society have animal faces, they have forgotten their humanity and ethics, and they do not avoid sins. Meanwhile, someone with a deer face is trying to reform the society.

"The Pattern", which is inspired by the Iraqi chemical weapons attack on Halabja in Iraqi Kurdistan in 1988, tells the story of a rug weaver and the patterns she has in mind.

"One Person" by Mahbubeh Kalai, about love and loneliness, and "Story of a Man without Lips" by Milad Shahjani, based on a children's poem by Ahmad Shamlu about a man who doesn't have lips to smile, are also among the films.

Payman Maadi to receive Stockholm Achievement Award

A R T **TEHRAN** — Iranian actor Payman Maadi will receive the Stockholm Achievement Award at the 30th Stockholm International Film Festival in Sweden, the organizers have announced.

Maadi will attend the festival, which will be held from November 7 to 18, to accept the Bronze Horse, the world's heaviest film prize that weighs 7.3 kilos.

The organizers called Maadi "an Iranian actor with universal appeal and world-class role performances that have enriched great cinema."

"With his powerful and insightful role interpretations, he opens a door for the audience to go beyond the big screen, past prejudices and over borders. It is the first time the Bronze Horse is awarded to an actor outside of Europe and the U.S.," the organizers said.

The Stockholm Lifetime Achievement

Award is presented to an individual in honor and acknowledgment of their contribution to the world of film.

Previous recipients of this award include David Lynch, Oliver Stone, Susan Sarandon, Claire Denis, Mike Leigh and Francis Ford Coppola.

In addition, "Just 6.5", in which Maadi plays the leading role will be competing for the prestigious Stockholm Impact Award.

"Just 6.5" by director Saeid Rustai shows a police group under the leadership of Samad who was assigned to arrest Nasser Khakzad, a major drug trafficker in Tehran.

The film was a big winner at the 19th edition of the Hafez Awards as it was honored in several categories including best film and best director.

The two-time Oscar-winning director Asghar Farhadi was honored with the Stockholm Visionary Award at the previous edition of the festival.



Payman Maadi and Navid Mohammadzadeh act in a scene from Saeid Rustai's drama "Just 6.5".

"Gracefully", "Exodus" honored at Yamagata documentary festival

A R T **TEHRAN** — The Iranian films "Gracefully" and "Exodus" were honored with prestigious awards at the Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival in Japan, the organizers announced on Wednesday.

"Gracefully" directed by Arash Es'haqi received the Directors Guild of Japan Award, while "Exodus" by Bahman Kiarostami won an Award of Excellence in the New Asian Currents section.

"Exodus" is about migrant workers from Afghanistan who have lined up to leave Iran as the renewed U.S. sanctions have sparked a recession, but first, they must endure interrogations at an immigration center in Tehran.

"Gracefully" tells the story of an 80-year-old man who was known in his youth for having danced at local ceremonies and celebrations dressed as a woman. Dancing publicly was banned after the revolution and he now lives as a farmer taking care of cows. This film captures one man's continued pursuit of happiness through dancing.

Iranian cinema at Yamagata festival

A selection of films directed by Iranian filmmakers from the 1960s to 1980s was reviewed in a program during the



Iranian filmmakers Bahman Kiarostami (L) and Arash Es'haqi (C) accept their awards during the Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival in Japan on October 16, 2019.

Yamagata festival, which was held from October 10 to 17.

Iranian cinema "continues to fascinate people all around the world," the organizers said in a statement for the program titled "Reality and Realism: Iran 60s-80s".

"This program explores the origins of this pull in the works" screened in the program, the statement added.

Fifteen fiction, documentary and experimental films ranging from shorts to features were reviewed during the program from October 11 to 15.

The program includes Bahram Beizai's movies "The Uncle with a Moustache" (1969) and "Bashu, the Little Stranger" (1985), and Sohrab Shahid Saless' "Black and White" (1972), "A Simple Event" (1973) and "Still Life" (1975).

"Women's Prison" (1965), "Women's Quarter", "Tehran Is the Capital of Iran" (1966) and "The Night It Rained" (1967), all directed by Kamran Shirdel, were also discussed.

The selection contained "The House is Black" (1962) by Forugh Farrokhzad, "Deliverance/Release" (1971) by Nasser Tagvai, "Hossein Yavari" (1973) by Khosro Sinai, "Tenancy" (1982) by Ebrahim Mokhtari, "First Case... Second Case" (1979) by Abbas Kiarostami and "Water, Wind, Dust" (1989) by Amir Naderi.

IIDCYA's books to compete in Belgrade illustration biennial



This combination photo shows the front covers of "Draw a Human Being" illustrated by Mitra Abdollahi (L), "This Book May Explode" by Samaneh Salavati and "String Doll" by Mahbubeh Yazdani. (IIDCYA)

A R T **TEHRAN** — Three books published by Iran's Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (IIDCYA) have been selected to compete in the 15th Belgrade International Biennial of Illustrations in the Serbian capital.

The three books are "Draw a Human Being" illustrated by Mitra Abdollahi, "String Doll" by Mahbubeh Yazdani and "This Book May Explode" by Samaneh Salavati, the IIDCYA announced in a press release published on Wednesday.

The three along with 14 other books by Iranian illustrators will also go on display in an exhibition arranged by

the organizers.

"Rolly Pumpkin" by Parisa Alankhani, "I Am Talking" by Mehrnush Masumian, "Dave & Apple Tree" by Delaram Faghani, "The Explorer" by Ghazal Fatollahi, "Mana" by Malileh Eynali and "Shahrzad" (The Storyteller) by Sahar Khorasani are among other Iranian books taking part in the biennial.

The 50th Golden Pen Belgrade and the 15th Belgrade International Biennial of Illustrations will be held at the Gallery of the Serbian Broadcasting Company from November 7 to December 1.

The organizers of the biennial are the Association of Applied Arts Artists and Designers of Serbian (ULUPUDS) and the Exhibition Art Council.

Iranian cinema receives nominations at APSA



Iranian actor Mohsen Tanabandeh acts in a scene from "Rona, Azim's Mother", a co-production between Afghanistan and Iran by Tehran-based Afghan brothers Jamshid and Navid Mahmudi.

A R T **TEHRAN** — Iranian films have received six nominations at the 13th edition of the Asia Pacific Screen Awards (APSA), the organizers have announced.

"Rona, Azim's Mother", a co-production between Afghanistan and Iran by Tehran-based Afghan brothers Jamshid and Navid Mahmudi, receives the nomination for the Cultural Diversity Award under the Patronage of UNESCO, while its Iranian star Mohsen Tanabandeh is nominated for the award for best actor.

Navid Mohammadzadeh, the star of Iranian director Saeid Rustai's acclaimed drama "Just 6.5", is also contending for the award for best actor.

Reza Mirkarimi's award-winning drama

"Castle of Dreams", co-written by Mohsen Qarai and Mohammad Davudi, is competing for the best screenplay award.

"The Unseen" by Behzad Nalbandi was nominated for the award for best animated feature film, and "Narrow Red Line" by Farzad Khoshdast received a nomination in the best documentary feature film category.

"So Long, My Son" by Wang Xiaoshuai from China leads the nominations at the APSA with six nods, including best film, best director, best screenplay and best actress.

The film is followed by "Beanpole" by Kantemir Balagov from Russia with four nominations.

Winners will be announced during a special ceremony, which will take place in Brisbane, Australia on November 21.

Jolie and Pfeiffer battle for power in "Maleficent" sequel

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — The sequel to Walt Disney Co's 2014 hit "Maleficent", which begins rolling out in global theaters on Wednesday, puts three women at the center of a fight for control between humans and fairies.

Angelina Jolie stars in "Maleficent: Mistress of Evil" as the titular villain and dark fairy godmother to Aurora, the queen of the fairies played by Elle Fanning.

When Aurora becomes engaged to the human Prince Phillip, the pending marriage brings Maleficent in conflict with Aurora's future mother-in-law, Queen Ingrith, who is played by Michelle Pfeiffer.

It is the rare Hollywood movie where men are in secondary roles. "They're just not the focus" in this film, Pfeiffer told Reuters in an interview.

Chiwetel Ejiofor, in the role of a mysterious figure named



Actor Angelina Jolie looks on as she attends the UK premiere of "Maleficent: Mistress of Evil" in London, Britain October 9, 2019. (Reuters/Peter Nicholls)

Conall, said the movie plays with many of the traditional narratives typical to fairy tales.

"There's like 100 tropes that are exploded in this film," Ejiofor said. "Seeing those explored in different ways, I think is very exciting."

The sequel reflects the message of the original, which urged people not to judge a book by its cover or to attach labels to others that ostracize them.

The sequel amplifies the look with more fantastical creatures and more intricate costumes.

"You try that little bit harder to say 'We've got to give them something better or we've got to give them something a little more fun,'" said Jolie, who also acted as a producer of the film, "or this would make a better Halloween costume for the kids."