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17 countries eager for contribution to Chabahar Port development

TEHRAN — Iranian deputy industry minister said 17 countries have expressed willingness for contribution to development of Chabahar Port in southern Iran, Tasnim news agency reported on Wednesday. "At a conference held to attract foreign investors to develop Chabahar Port, 17 foreign countries announced their readiness [for contribution to the port's develop-

ment]," Hossein Modares Khiabani said. Referring to the comprehensive development plan of Chabahar Port, the official pointed to some of the provisioned projects in this port including setting up a rice processing plant, construction of slaughterhouse, construction of oil drainage tanks and preparation of silos with over 100,000 tons of capacity. **→4**

Tuberculosis treatment completely free of charge in Iran

TEHRAN — Tuberculosis treatment in Iran is completely free of charge despite the fact that it costs \$120 to \$60,000 per patient depending on the situation's severity, head of tuberculosis control department of Health Ministry has said. The average cost of treating a person with TB disease increases with greater resistance, direct costs average \$120 to

treat drug susceptible TB, and \$60,000 to treat drug-resistant TB, IRNA quoted Mahshid Nasehi as saying on Wednesday. The number of people diagnosed with tuberculosis (TB) in the country estimated at 8,713, 54 percent of which are male and 46 percent are female, she regretted, adding, about 16.3 percent of the cases suffering the disease are foreign nationals. **→12**

Afghan rivals to meet in China after U.S. talks stall

TEHRAN— China is organising talks among Afghanistan's rival factions as part of efforts to end years of war after negotiations between the Taliban and the United States on the withdrawal of U.S. forces broke down. According to Reuters, China, which shares a short border with Afghanistan, has been trying to encourage peace efforts and last month a Taliban delegation visited Beijing for talks with

government officials. "China has invited a delegation ... to participate in the intra-Afghan dialogue," a Taliban spokesman, Suhail Shaheen, said in a post on Twitter late Tuesday. The so-called intra-Afghan dialogue is aimed at reconciliation between Afghanistan's warring parties and has been running parallel to the talks between the insurgents and the United States.. **→13**



ARTICLE

Hamid Bayati
Tehran Times journalist

The death of Netanyahu's political career

The Zionist regime's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Monday evening formally announced he had failed to form a new government, and therefore returned the mandate to carry out this job to Israeli President Reuven Rivlin. Subsequently, Rivlin said that he would charge Blue and White Party leader Benny Gantz with the task of forming new government within a few weeks. Arab Israeli lawmakers have pledged to back Gantz, though he still needs more than ten seats for the job. Forming a government requires 61 seats in parliament. Rivlin has said he will try to avoid another election, while two elections have been held in Israel this year. The right-wing Likud Party won 31 seats and the centrist Blue and White Party 33 on the Sept. 17 election. Before the election, Gantz explicitly claimed that he aims to oust Netanyahu by forming a new government. The recent developments can be considered as the end of Netanyahu's political career, since he personally announced his failure. Also, given that other Zionist regime's parties are reluctant to cooperate with Netanyahu, he has little chance to have a role to play in the future cabinet, even as a minister. **■ The countdown to end up in the ash heap of history** Netanyahu faces four serious financial corruption cases. He has so far postponed the trial and implementation of verdicts, but following his withdrawal from the cabinet, the Zionist regime's judiciary can easily bring him to trial. In September, Israel's Channel 13 revealed that Netanyahu is seeking to leave political life on condition that he is acquitted of charges. Earlier, Israel's Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit had said that Netanyahu had been charged with breaching rules. Netanyahu has been trying to ask Rivlin to acquit him of charges in exchange for abdication from politics. **→13**

Jailed Saudi scholar's son arrested for supporting Palestinian cause

TEHRAN — Saudi authorities have reportedly arrested the son of an imprisoned prominent dissident cleric over his support for the Palestinian cause and strong denunciation of the kingdom's attempts to normalize diplomatic relations with the Israeli regime after years of clandestine contacts. The rights group Prisoners of Conscience, which is an independent non-governmental organization advocating human rights in Saudi

Arabia, announced in a post on its official Twitter page that Saudi officials have detained Abdulaziz al-Odah, adding that "the arrest clearly shows that condemnation of normalization of ties with the Tel Aviv regime and support for the Palestinian cause will land activists behind bars. This is Abdulaziz's only crime." According to Press TV, On October 10, the so-called Specialized Criminal Court in Riyadh adjourned the trial of the 62-year-old clergyman

to October 30, without providing any reasons. The Arabic-language Saudi newspaper Okaz reported on September 4, 2018 that Saudi public prosecutors had leveled 37 counts against Sheikh Odah, and even demanded his execution. Saudi authorities detained the prominent Muslim scholar on September 7 last year and have been holding him in solitary confinement without charge or trial ever since. **→13**

'Shock and sadness': 39 bodies found inside lorry in England

TEHRAN — Police in southeast England say emergency services have recovered 39 bodies from a container truck believed to have been driven from Bulgaria. Chief Superintendent Andrew Mariner said on Wednesday that authorities were in the process of trying to identify the deceased; 38 adults and one teenager. Police were alerted by the ambulance service

shortly before 1:40am local time (00:40GMT) following the discovery of a truck container with people inside at the Waterglade Industrial Park, which houses mostly courier and logistics companies, Al Jazeera reported. Mariner said the truck entered the country on October 19 and that police were "working closely with our partners to investigate". The 25-year-old driver, from Northern Ire-

land, was arrested on suspicion of murder, the police said. UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson said he was "appalled by this tragic incident". "I am receiving regular updates from the Home Office and will work closely with Essex Police as we establish exactly what has happened," he said. "My thoughts are with all those who lost their lives and their loved ones." **→13**

U.S. envoy says Trump withheld Ukraine aid over investigation

TEHRAN — The acting US ambassador to Kyiv has provided congressional committees conducting impeachment hearings a detailed account of how Donald Trump repeatedly sought to make a summit meeting and military aid to Ukraine conditional on its government launching investigations into the president's political opponents. Bill Taylor's testimony was the latest in a series of depositions by serving and former administration officials, as part of the impeachment

inquiry, about Trump's use of the presidency to put pressure on the Ukrainian government to procure compromising information on his political rivals. And it was the most detailed and damning to date, Guardian reported. Taylor, who took over as acting ambassador in June, presented his testimony behind closed doors on Capitol Hill but copies of his opening statement soon leaked. The veteran diplomat said that soon after arriving in Kyiv, he became concerned "our

relationship with Ukraine was being fundamentally undermined by an irregular informal channel of US policymaking, and by the withholding of vital security assistance for domestic political reasons". Taylor said this irregular channel was run by Trump through several emissaries: the president's personal lawyer, Rudy Giuliani, the departing energy secretary, Rick Perry, the ambassador to the European Union, Gordon Sondland, and the special Ukraine envoy, Kurt Volker. **→13**



PERSPECTIVE

Seyed Amin Saneey Mehri

Fam trip, a new way to introduce tourist attractions of Iran

Nowadays, various countries are relying on influencers as an effective strategy in order to market their tourism capacities. Countries can display their tourism capacities with the help of influencers and this has been welcomed as a new method for marketing in different areas. Iran has also attended the influencers' project. The marketing project of Iranian tourism, titled "Feel Iran" was executed by the private sector and facilitated by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts. Twelve influencers, with a total of more than 20 million followers from Italy, Ukraine, India, Brazil, Russia, Turkey, France, the U.S., Sweden, Georgia and China traveled to Iran in the form of a tourist-attraction project. However, this project has sparked the fire of opposition while has absorbed some advocates. A question remains unanswered here: is the familiarization trip project an objective necessity for Iran's tourism industry? Given the status quo, are there any other options for Iran to introduce its tourism capacities? Successful experiences in this area in other countries can be a good guide for tourism industry in Iran. One of these countries is Australia that employs influencers to develop its tourism industry. "Australia is fortunate that it is a highly aspirational destination for travelers internationally," said Lisa Ronson, the marketing manager of Australian tourism industry. She announced that more than 200 influencers from Australia and other countries are working in the Australian tourism industry and referred to the significant role of social media and other marketing platforms in developing tourism and attracting tourists to this country. Recently, the Australian tourism industry has started Dundee campaign. This campaign is one the biggest tourism marketing campaigns in this country and famous actors such as Chris Hemsworth and Danny McBride participate in it. Nowadays, many countries abuse the cultural assets of Iran in order to make destinations for tourists. For example, hand-made carpets have always belonged to Iranian culture and even China couldn't copy and possess it. **→10**



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Photo exhibit observes 70th anniversary of Geneva Conventions

Reto Stocker (C), head of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) delegation in Iran, visits an exhibition of photos held at the Sacred Defense Garden Museum in Tehran on October 22, 2019 to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the Geneva Conventions. The Geneva Conventions comprise four treaties and three additional protocols that establish the standards of international law for humanitarian treatment in war.

Trump’s threat of war is ‘bluff’, defense chief says

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Defense Minister Amir Hatami said on Wednesday that Iranian armed forces are ready to counter any threat, dismissing U.S. President Donald Trump’s recent threat of a military attack against Tehran as only a “bluff” to cover Washington’s failures.

“It seems more like a bluff to cover their chagrin” for their failed policies, Hatami told reporters after a cabinet meeting.

The minister’s remarks came in response to Trump who said on Monday that the U.S. may get into new wars, when asked about Washington’s foreign policy priorities.

Hatami said, “Today, the (Iranian) enemies face a vigilant and united people who back the armed forces.”

Trump insisted that he is working to bring home American soldiers but warned the U.S. may soon enter into new military conflicts.

“We may have to get into wars. We’re better prepared than we’ve ever been. If Iran does something, they’ll be hit like they’ve never been hit before. I mean, we have things that we’re looking at,” Trump said in a cabinet meeting.

Hatami said the armed forces are prepared to give a firm response to any threat by relying on domestic capabilities.

“If they make a mistake, they will receive a response that will make them more ashamed than the previous measures which brought about humiliation to them,” Press TV quoted him as saying.

On Tuesday, the defense chief said no enemy dares to threaten Iran.

“We have reached a high deterrence point in the entire aspects of a war so that, thanks to the God, no danger is threatening the country, but, we must promote our security mechanism in maritime sector via making more efforts,” he said while inspecting projects in naval industry.

Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Baqeri also underscored the Islamic Republic’s deterrent power on Tuesday, warning that enemies will have to pay heavy costs if they carry out any act of aggression against the country.

Such a confrontation, Baqeri added, would merely bring the enemies heavy casualties and humiliation.

The chief commander of Iran’s Army also said earlier this month that the country will give a crushing response to any threat posed by enemies at any level.

Major General Abdolrahim Mousavi said the Iranian Armed Forces have simulated “the most severe and worst-case” threats against the country, and are ready to respond in kind and defend the Iranian borders, skies and nation as well as the Islamic Revolution’s ideals.

IRGC drone makes emergency landing in southwestern Iran

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — An unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV), owned and operated by the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Aerospace Force, made an emergency landing in the southwestern province of Khuzestan on Wednesday.

According to Fars News Agency (FNA), the drone was under the command of the IRGC when it made emergency landing near the village of Magranat near Shushtar town.

Fars rejected rumors that the drone has been targeted.

Details on the root cause of the incident has not thus far been revealed.

Zarif says Washington seriously threatens multilateralism

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Tuesday that Washington is seriously threatening multilateralism.

“It is essential for countries to pay attention to diplomacy and multilateralism,” he said upon arrival in Baku, Azerbaijan to attend ministerial meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement.

He said that the meeting will focus more on boosting multilateralism.

The NAM ministerial meeting was scheduled to be held on Wednesday and Thursday, before the 18th summit of NAM heads of states that will be held on October 25 and 26.

President Hassan Rouhani will attend the 18th summit of NAM on Friday.

NAM is an organization consisting of 120 developing world states that are not formally aligned with or against any major power bloc. After the United Nations, it is the largest grouping of states worldwide.

Turkish FM to possibly meet Russian and Iranian counterparts in Geneva

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said on Wednesday that he will possibly meet with his Russian and Iranian counterparts in Geneva a day before the meeting of the Syrian constitutional committee, IRNA reported.

“A day ahead of meeting of the Syrian constitutional committee, which will be held on October 30, my Iranian and Russian counterparts and I will possibly hold a meeting in Geneva,” the top Turkish diplomat said.

In a meeting in the resort city of Sochi, the Turkish and Russian officials concluded an agreement over Syria, based on which Ankara’s national ministry announced that at this stage there is no need for any fresh military operation against Syrian Kurdish fighters.

According to the statement, the U.S. at the end of a 120-hour-long deadline informed Ankara about complete retreating of the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) and the People’s Protection Units (YPG) from safe zone in the north-eastern part of Syria.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Russian President Vladimir Putin held over six hours of meeting on Tuesday in Sochi over Ankara’s military incursion into Syria.

Turkish troops launched Operation Peace Spring in northern and northeastern Syria to hit Kurdish militants almost two weeks ago in spite of the international community’s opposition.

U.S. addiction to sanctions is undermining intl. economic relations: Zarif

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Wednesday that the United States’ addiction to sanctions is undermining the fabric of international economic relations and putting global commerce at risk.

“In fact, the U.S.’ addiction to sanctions—or more correctly economic terrorism—against the people of many non-aligned countries, including Cuba, Venezuela, Syria, Iran and even major powers such as China and Russia, is undermining the fabric of international economic relations, and putting hundreds of millions of people, as well as global commerce, at risk,” he said during a speech at the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) ministerial meeting in Baku, Azerbaijan.

Following is full text of his speech published by IRNA:

I would like to begin by thanking our neighbors and brethren—the people and government of the Republic of Azerbaijan—for organizing this NAM Summit and for the warm hospitality they have extended to the participants. My gratitude also goes to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela for proficiently presiding over our Movement during the past three years.

An escalating contempt for diplomacy, multilateralism and international cooperation has exacerbated the chronic challenges and increased uncertainties around the globe. International law, multilateral agreements, Security Council resolutions, and the norms of civilized behavior are all seemingly being sacrificed for personal political ambitions.

West Asia suffers the most from this vendetta against the global order:

The Palestinian right to self-determination, as one of the most important NAM objectives, is being trampled on by unilateral and destructive U.S. policies; particularly by its illegal and dangerous positions on Al-Quds and the Golan. The



Zionist regime has been emboldened by the U.S. blind support—and unfortunately also by the short-sighted acquiescence of some in our region—to usurp and absorb more, and even more, of Palestine.

The horrendous atrocities against the people of Yemen, along with the regional ramifications of that war—conducted with

full U.S. backing—threaten to spiral out of control and lead to further escalation and insecurity in the region and beyond.

The irresponsible action by the U.S. in its withdrawing from the JCPOA—despite Iran’s full adherence to its commitments—has been another major disrupting element in our region and beyond. The American

The American economic war—indeed its economic terrorism—targeting ordinary Iranian people and wishfully attempting to starve them into submission—is not just a willful and publicly-announced crime against humanity, but a grave and immediate threat to international peace and security.

Iran welcomes maintaining Syria’s territorial integrity

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** - Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said on Wednesday that Iran welcomes any action in line with maintaining Syria’s territorial integrity and national sovereignty.

“Iran welcomes any action which results in maintaining territorial integrity, strengthening national sovereignty and restoring peace and stability to the region,” Mousavi said.

The remarks by the Iranian Foreign spokesman followed after Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan announced on Tuesday that a deal has been reached with Russia for Kurdish fighters to withdraw from a Turkish-ruled “safe zone” in northeast Syria within 150 hours, after which Ankara and Moscow will run joint patrols around the area, Aljazeera reported.

Iran considers agreement between Russian Federation and Turkey on ending clashes in northern Syria a positive step to restore peace and stability to the region,” Mousavi noted.

The announcement by Ankara was made after marathon talks in Sochi between Erdogan and Russian President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday, hours before a United States-brokered five-day truce between Turkish and Kurdish-led forces was due to expire.

According to the deal announced at a joint news conference in Sochi, Ankara will control a 32km-wide (20 miles) area between the towns of Tal Abyad and Ras al-Ain, which covers 120km (75 miles) of the Turkish-Syrian border.

Mousavi said, “We hope this agreement would allay Turkey’s security concerns and would also guarantee Syria’s territorial integrity and national sovereignty.”

“The Islamic Republic of Iran has always supported dialogue and peaceful ways to solve problems and has always encouraged talks to reach agreement. Iran considers the Adana agreement a good basis to ease Syria and Turkey’s concerns and will spare no help to create agreement between Ankara and Damascus,” he added.



Turkey launched military operation against Syrian Kurdish fighters, known as the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), in northeast Syria on October 9, arguing they are linked to the PKK (The Kurdistan Workers’ Party).

Europeans, others talking to Tehran on a mechanism to save JCPOA, Iran says

Iran adamant to take next step in reducing nuclear commitments if no action is taken: government

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iran reiterated on Wednesday that it will take the next step to reduce commitments to the 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), if no concrete action is taken by the remaining parties to protect Iran from the U.S. sanctions.

Under the JCPOA, Tehran agreed to restrictions on its nuclear work in exchange for termination of economic sanctions. The deal was signed in July 2015 between Iran, the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, Germany and the European Union. However, U.S. President Donald Trump quit the deal in May 2018 and imposed the toughest ever sanctions on Iran.

“Europeans and others constantly send us messages and talk about reaching a common framework before end of two-month deadline,” presidential chief of staff Mahmoud Vaezi told reporters on the sidelines of a cabinet meeting.

He added, “Negotiations are being held. However, Mr. President [Hassan Rouhani] has formed a committee for taking the fourth step. Definitely, we will take the fourth step if we do not reach a common framework.”

On May 8, exactly one year after the U.S. abandoned the deal, Tehran began to partially reduce its commitments to the agreement at bi-monthly intervals.

In the first stage, Iran announced that it will not limit its stockpile of the nuclear fuel to 300 kilograms allowed under the deal. However, on that date (May 8) Iran’s Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) said if the remaining parties to the JCPOA, especially Europeans, de-



vise a mechanism to protect Iran from the sanctions’ effect in the two-month deadline it will reverse its decision.

But since European parties missed the deadline, on July 7 Iran announced that it has started enriching uranium to a higher purity than the 3.67%, thereby starting the second step.

Again, as Europe missed the second 60-day deadline, Iran moved to take the third step, removing a ban on nuclear research and development (R&D).

Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said on Monday that Tehran is ready to take the fourth step to reduce commitments under the JCPOA.

“We hope that we would witness special action by the remaining countries to the JCPOA, otherwise Iran is ready to take the fourth step,” Mousavi said in a regular press briefing.

Mousavi added that the mechanism for the next step (fourth step) has been

devised.

Iran’s next step falls in early November. Reportedly, in the next step, Iran intends to limit nuclear inspections by the United Nations’ International Atomic Energy Agency.

Mousavi also said Iran’s action in reducing its commitments is within the framework of the JCPOA and the Europeans have no right to complain about it.

Paragraph 36 of the JCPOA has provided a mechanism to resolve disputes and allows one side, under certain circumstances, to stop complying with the deal if the other side is out of compliance.

■ ‘Opponents of FATF must accept responsibility of their objections’

Vaezi also said that those who oppose Iran joining the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) must accept the responsibility for consequences.

“Unfortunately, these economic and banking bills have been politicized and

economic war—indeed its economic terrorism—targeting ordinary Iranian people and wishfully attempting to starve them into submission—is not just a willful and publicly-announced crime against humanity, but a grave and immediate threat to international peace and security.

In fact, the U.S. addiction to sanctions—or more correctly economic terrorism—against the people of many non-aligned countries, including Cuba, Venezuela, Syria, Iran and even major powers such as China and Russia, is undermining the fabric of international economic relations, and putting hundreds of millions of people, as well as global commerce, at risk.

There is an urgent need for a unified stance by the international community to compel the U.S. to reverse its dangerous course in order to avert a global catastrophe.

Today, the United States has even proven its propensity to betray its own clients. Many have learned that it is wishful—if not suicidal—to expect the U.S. to provide them protection and support.

But it is our people who are paying the price for the U.S. reckless behavior. As such it is absolutely imperative for the members of our movement to close ranks and engage in collective and innovative thinking—and action—to reverse this course, or at least to reduce its impact on our peoples.

The Hormuz Peace Endeavor (HOPE) that President Rouhani presented at the United Nations this past September is one such effort. It aims to promote dialogue, mutual respect and equal footing, respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity and the inviolability of international borders; peaceful settlement of all disputes; rejection of the threat or use of force; non-aggression and non-intervention in internal or external affairs of each other; and energy security and the free flow of resources.

We again invite our neighbors and all our partners in NAM to work with us to enrich and implement HOPE.

Expediency Council rejects Jahangiri's remarks on FATF

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — The Expediency Council's Public Relations has rejected the Tuesday remarks of Vice President Es'haq Jahangiri on FATF-related bills, saying the council will mull over the bills regardless of all the pressure.

The council will consider national interests when examining the bills, the body said in a statement on Wednesday, IRNA reported.

It also said Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has not made any written or oral remarks to show his approval of the FATF-related bills.

It is expected that governmental authorities avoid misrepresenting the Leader's remarks, it added. Mohsen Rezaee, the secretary of the council, made similar remarks in a tweet on Wednesday.

On Tuesday, Jahangiri urged the Expediency Council to ratify the FATF-related bills as soon as possible.

"Given that the FATF and CFT bills were passed in the meeting of heads of government branches and also confirmed by the Supreme Leader, the Expediency Council would better ratify these bills," he suggested.

"It would be better if the people were informed about all affairs, including talks



within the administration, Majlis, Guardian Council and Expediency Council," the vice president noted.

The Paris-based Financial Action Task Force (FATF) said on Friday it had given

Iran a final deadline of February 2020 to tighten its laws against money laundering in compliance with the global watchdog's financial standards.

"If before February 2020, Iran does not

enact the Palermo and Terrorist Financing Conventions in line with the FATF Standards, then the FATF will fully lift the suspension of counter-measures and call on its members and urge all jurisdictions to apply effective counter-measures, in line with recommendation 19," the FATF said in a statement, according to Reuters.

"The FATF expects Iran to proceed swiftly in the reform path to ensure that it addresses all of the remaining items by completing and implementing the necessary Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorist Financing reforms."

One of the actions Iran is required to take to appease the FATF is joining the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC), which is also called the Palermo Convention, a 2000 United Nations-sponsored multilateral treaty against transnational organized crime.

The other action is to ratify the CFT, the convention combatting financing of terrorism.

On October 7, 2018, the parliament voted in favor of the CFT. However, the oversight Guardian Council rejected the bill by finding 22 faults with it, which put the fate of the bill on the hands of the Expediency Council.

MP: Talks over FATF meaningless under sanctions

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — The rapporteur for the Iranian Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Committee said on Wednesday that talking about ratifying a bill related to the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) is not logical when the country is under sanctions.

"When a part of financial and monetary mechanism worldwide is not capable of working with Iran due to the U.S. sanctions, talking about the FATF is meaningless and ratification of FATF-related bills is model of self-sanctioning, Seyed Hossein Naqavi Hosseini said.

At the time the JCPOA (the official name for the 2015 nuclear deal) went into force, the signatories were claiming that they had been facing some FATF-related restrictions to fulfill their obligations, the MP said.

"They claimed that FATF's regulations were preventing them from complying with their JCPOA's obligations."



The MP further said, "The point is here, when the U.S. quit the JCPOA and re-imposed sanctions on Iran and the European signatories of the pact did not fulfill their

obligations... and are not still willing to fulfill them, talking about the FATF and the Palermo bill has no logical justification in the country."

"The U.S. sanctions against Iran are beyond the FATF and Palermo. If we comply with the entire 41 advices of the FATF and ratify the Palermo bill in the Majlis, there will not be any outcome for us but more imposed obligations," he underscored.

The MP went on to say, "A part of international financial and monetary mechanism is not working with us. Washington's secondary sanctions have created barriers on our way. Being in the FATF blacklist or not has no influence on the U.S. sanctions against us."

Naqavi Hosseini concluded, "Therefore, in such cases neither talking about the FATF nor ratifying Palermo bill will benefit us."

Most members of Zam network already identified: IRGC



POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Brigadier General Ramazan Sharif, the spokesman for the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), said on Wednesday that most members of Ruhollah Zam's network have already been identified.

The IRGC announced on October 14 that it had arrested Ruhollah Zam, the head of an anti-Iran website and Telegram channel, during a complicated intelligence operation, which involved luring him back to Iran.

"Soon the details of issues related to the head of Amad News will be made public," Sharif said, Mehr reported.

"Given the process of intelligence monitoring and controlling of this mercenary element for a long time, most members of Zam's network have been identified and there is relatively certain access to domestic elements helping this anti-Revolution network and foreign agencies supporting it, and there is not much need for the conventional confessions by the aforementioned," he explained.

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.

Amadnews was suspended by the messaging app Telegram last year after Iran accused it of carrying calls for violence during protests that started in late 2017 and continued across the country. But the channel soon reappeared under a new name.

In its statement, the IRGC said Zam was supported by intelligence agencies of certain countries, including France, the U.S. and Israel.

A day after the announcement, Mohammad Tavallaei, a high-ranking IRGC general, said Zam was arrested through cooperation with other intelligence services.

On Tuesday, the spokesman for Iran's Judiciary dismissed rumors about arrest of insiders linked to Zam.

"Until today, apart from Ruhollah Zam, no one in the administration, Judiciary, armed forces or elsewhere has been arrested," Gholam Hossein Esmaeili told a press conference, Tasnim reported.

"Do not speculate," Esmaeili said. "My advice is not to point the finger at each other."

He also lauded the IRGC for the "precision" operation to arrest Zam, saying "invaluable" information has been obtained after his arrest.

Velayati says Iran protected regional nations against terrorists



POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Ali Akbar Velayati, a top foreign policy adviser to the Leader, said on Tuesday that while others sponsored terrorism in the region, it was the Islamic Republic that protected the region's peoples from terrorists.

He made the remarks in a meeting with China's Special Envoy on the Middle East Zhai Jun in Tehran.

Pointing to the foreign-orchestrated conspiracies against Middle East countries including Syria, Iraq, and Yemen, Velayati said Iran stood by the people of those countries against foreign-backed terrorism, Fars reported.

Emphasizing that Tehran will continue its support for the countries in the region, he said, "Syria, Yemen, and Iraq will certainly emerge victorious and security will return to the region."

The top adviser pointed out that the Resistance Front will have the upper hand in the balance of power in the Middle East.

Zhai, for his part, lauded Iran's positive role in the region, saying, "Iran-China relations are at a very good level and the strategic partnership between the two countries is very developed and relations are very deep."

The Chinese envoy added, "The region is very sensitive and security has to return to it."

He also pointed to the friction between Tehran and Riyadh, saying Iran and Saudi Arabia are important countries in the region that should have a peaceful relationship.

Before meeting with Velayati, Zhai had a meeting with Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, during which he voiced Beijing's strong willingness to maintain consultations with Tehran over the Middle East issues.

"China is attaching great significance to peace and stability in the Middle East, and is willing to continue its consultations with the Islamic Republic of Iran on this issue," Zhai said.

Zarif, for his part, said that Tehran views its ties with Beijing as strategic.

Referring to President Hassan Rouhani's plan for promoting peace in the Persian Gulf through his Hormuz Peace Endeavor (HOPE) initiative, the foreign minister welcomed China's willingness to contribute to peace and stability in the region.

President Rouhani presented the HOPE initiative while delivering a speech at the UN General Assembly in New York on September 25, inviting all regional countries to join it.

Rouhani due in Baku

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — President Hassan Rouhani is set to visit neighboring Azerbaijan on Thursday to attend a summit of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) due to be held later this week, according to a senior presidential official.

In remarks on Wednesday, Alireza Mo'ezzi, the presidential office's director for communications and information, said the president will travel to Baku on Thursday at the official invitation of his Azeri counterpart, Ilham Aliyev.



Mo'ezzi said President Rouhani is scheduled to address the 18th NAM Summit, due to be held on October 25-26 in the Azeri capital, and illustrate the Islamic Republic's positions on important regional and international issues.

NAM is a forum of 120 developing world states that are not formally aligned with or against any major power bloc. NAM is the largest grouping of states worldwide after the United Nations.

The 17th summit of NAM was hosted by Venezuela in September 2016.

Meanwhile, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif is currently in Baku to participate in the NAM ministerial meeting.

Rouhani will also hold a bilateral meeting with Aliyev in order to discuss major issues surrounding Tehran-Baku relations and the process of implementation of joint agreement, Mo'ezzi added.

Russia to present own Persian Gulf security doctrine till yearend

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov has said that Moscow is trying to offer its Persian Gulf security doctrine within the framework of a completely internationally-accepted document till the end of 2019, the Persian language service of the Sputnik news agency reported on Wednesday.

"Then, entire officials from related countries including Arab states, Iran, Iraq, Yemen, five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, India and other beneficiary countries should reach an agreement over the Moscow-offered document."

He further said, "In case of reaching an agreement over the document, the entire nations in the very important region (of the Persian Gulf) will have peace of mind for exporting their crude to Japan, the Far East and China."

Bogdanov stated that the Russian Foreign Ministry embarked on preparing the country's security doctrine for the Persian Gulf in June, adding, "One of the suggested policies stipulated in the document will be preventing establishment of any trans-regional military base in the region."

Bogdanov went on to say that the draft document has been handed over to representatives of Arab countries, Iran, Turkey, the five permanent members of the UNSC, the European Union, the Arab League and BRICS nations.



Iran-Bangladesh direct flight to be launched soon: envoy

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Bangladesh's Ambassador to Tehran Gousal Azam Sarker has said a direct flight line will be launched between the two countries in the near future.

Speaking at a meeting with deputy governor of the central province of Isfahan, Sarker said the decision is aimed to boost bilateral relations in different fields, including economy, Tasnim reported.



He said Bangladeshi leaders and top authorities have special respect for Iran's officials and its great people.

Iran and Bangladesh are two Muslim countries that share many similarities which can help enhance political, cultural and economic relations, he added.

The Bangladeshi envoy further said the direct flight line will be launched so that producers and entrepreneurs can establish better ties with each other.

In recent years, Iran and Bangladesh have ramped up efforts to promote bilateral relations in various political and economic areas.

In April, Iran's Industry and Trade Minister Reza Rahmani said Iran and Bangladesh can reach an annual trade target of \$1 billion given their potentials and capacities.

Rahmani made the remarks in an address to a ceremony in Tehran on April 16 marking the 49th Independence and National Day of Bangladesh.

Tehran University expresses solidarity with Kashmir

TEHRAN — To express solidarity with the people of Kashmir and in commemoration of Black Day, the Urdu Department of Tehran University organized a seminar in collaboration of the Embassy of Pakistan on "Cultural and literary linkages between Iran and Kashmir" today. Ambassador of Pakistan Riffat Masood was the chief guest. Scholars, Academicians, students and media persons attended the seminar to highlight cultural and literary relations between Iran and Kashmir.

Iranian students paid tributes to the valiant Kashmiris in their poetry. Renowned scholar Dr. Qasim Saafi shed light on the close historical and cultural relations between Iran and Kashmir. Highlighting historical background of Kashmir issue he urged the United Nations to play its role in resolving Kashmir issue.

Reciting the poetry of Qudssi Mashhadi, Dr. Muhammad Hussein Sakit drew upon the richness of Kashmir's language and literature. While other scholars from the University recited from Allama Iqbal and other poets on the beauty and cultural heritage, Dr. Rashid Naqvi focused on human rights violations in IoK. Condemning the silence of human rights organizations and the international community particularly the Muslim countries, Dr. Naqvi said that this beautiful valley has turned into a graveyard of innocent Muslims who are fighting for their right to self-determination. There is no one to hear their voice. He said Kashmir is not as green as praised by the poets in their poetry, but now it is basin of red blood of innocent Kashmiris. He urged the students to raise voice in support of innocent Kashmiris and against the atrocities being committed by the Indian forces in Kashmir.

Ambassador Ms. Riffat Masood, referring to the statement of the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei on Kashmir said that Iran has always supported Kashmiris in their struggle. The Ambassador said that the Prime Minister of Pakistan has raised the Kashmir issue at the United Nations and asked the world leaders if Kashmiris were not Muslims, then India should commit these atrocities in Kashmir.

Shedding light on the current situation in Kashmir, the Ambassador said that "Kashmiriyat" is under threat after the illegal action of the Modi government to revoke Article 370 of the Indian constitution, which protected the identity and Kashmiriyat of all the Kashmiris in India. This is an attack on the culture of Kashmir. The Ambassador urged the scholars, academicians and students to raise their voice against this injustice and in support of innocent Kashmiris.

STOCK MARKET	
TEDPIX	308315.0
IFX	3804.88
Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir	

CURRENCIES	
USD	42,000 rials
EUR	46,841 rials
GBP	54,520 rials
AED	11,437 rials
Source: cbi.ir	

COMMODITIES	
Brent	\$59.19/b
WTI	\$53.73/b
OPEC Basket	\$60.06/b
Gold	\$1,487.55/oz
Silver	\$817.64/oz
Platinum	\$890.95/oz
Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com	

Inflation rate down 0.7%

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — The Statistical Center of Iran announced that the inflation rate in the twelve-month period ended on October 23, which marks the end of the seventh Iranian calendar month of Mehr, stood at 42 percent, head of the center announced on Wednesday.

Javad Hosseinzadeh said that the inflation rate has fallen 0.7 percent from the past month, IRNA reported.

In the Iranian calendar year of 1395 (ended on March 20, 2017), Iran could manage to experience a single-digit inflation rate after 26 years.

The inflation rate stood at 9.8 percent in that year according to the Statistical Center of Iran and at nine percent according to the Central Bank of Iran (CBI).

But since the last year's calendar month of Khordad (ended on June 22, 2018), when the inflation rate stood at 10.2 percent, as announced by the CBI, the country's experiencing double-digit inflation rates again.

Annual steel output to rise 3m tons by March 2020: IMIDRO head

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Annual production of crude steel in Iran is planned to rise three million tons to 28 million tons in the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 19, 2020), the head of Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO) announced on Wednesday.

Khodadad Gharibpour made the announcement during a ceremony on unveiling the comprehensive system of indigenizing steel chain products at IMIDRO, IRNA reported.

“Today, we are witnessing a national will and determination for self-reliance and promotion of production and indigenizing should be in fact considered as a necessity in this regard”, the official stressed.

Production of crude steel in Iran during the first eight months of 2019 has risen six percent from that of the same period of time in 2018, World Steel Association (WSA) has announced in its latest report.



The WSA put the country's crude steel output at 17.188 million tons in the eight-month period of this year, rising from 16.153 million tons in the same time span of the previous year.

Iran's production of crude steel is rising despite the U.S. sanctions. In an attempt to [as the U.S. president Trump put it] “choke off the country's largest non-petroleum related sources of export revenue”, Washington imposed new sanctions on Iran's metals and minerals sectors in early May.

While at the first glance [considering Trump's comments], this might seem to be a heavy hit to Iran's economy in the near future but a close look into the country's exports data could reveal Trump's great miscalculations. In fact, this could even be considered a “blessing in disguise” for the country's minerals and metal industry.

During a meeting with the members of Iran Steel Association in late July, 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.

In a press conference on June 8, deputy industry, mining and trade minister said that Iran's annual steel production is planned to reach 45 million tons by the Iranian calendar year 1400 (March 2021-March 2022).

Jafar Sarqini had also announced that Iran will inaugurate steel projects with the capacity of at least 10 million tons during the current Iranian calendar year.

According to World Steel Association, Iran became the world's tenth largest steel producer in 2018.

Iran which stood at the 13th place in 2017 could lag behind three major steel producers in the world, namely Italy, Taiwan, and Ukraine to stand at the 10th place in 2018, despite the re-imposition of sanctions by the U.S.

According to the WSA's report, Iran produced 25 million tons of crude steel in 2018 which indicates 17.7 percent growth from 21.2 million tons in 2017.

17 countries eager for contribution to Chabahar Port development

1 → “Currently, unloading and loading of goods at the port of Chabahar has no limitations in terms of facilities compared to other ports, and we seek to rapidly activate at least 50 percent of its 8.5 million-ton capacity,” Modares Khiabani said.

Inviting the country's investors for participation in the Chabahar development projects, the official said, “We believe that trade and commerce are the drivers of production in the country, and therefore the infrastructure for boosting them must be developed to increase production.”

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

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

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

Chabahar has two main ports, Shahid Kalantari port and Shahid Beheshti port. Shahid Kalantari port's development has been finished in 1983. However, the development project for Chabahar's Shahid Beheshti port



is planned to be implemented in five phases of which the first phase was started in 2007 and due to financial problems resulted from U.S.'s first round of sanctions on Iran the project was almost halted until 2016 in which the sanctions were lifted over Iran's economy.

Iran, Algeria discuss expansion of port, maritime co-op

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — A delegation from Algeria's Ministry of Transport visited Iran's Emam Khomeini Port in the southwestern province of Khuzestan to explore areas of mutual cooperation and discuss a sister city agreement between the port of Emam Khomeini and the port of Bejaia in Algeria.

According to the head of Khuzestan Province's Ports and Maritime Department, the delegation visited the facilities and achievements of the Iranian ports and explored areas of cooperation such as sea pollution, loading and unloading of vessels, and private sector's participation in the development of ports' infrastructure.

Adel Daris pointed to the sister city agreement between the two countries' ports as the beginning of a move towards further development of technical cooperation in ports and maritime sector and noted that “so far, the two sides have emphasized development of educational cooperation in port issues and the transfer of knowledge and experience.”

During their visit, the Algerian side also called for cooperation between the ports of the two countries as the main goal of their trip, saying that maritime transport, transfer of technical knowledge and ultimately increasing the level of commercial exchanges were among the key capabilities that could be used to realize the sisterhood agreement.

According to the Algerian officials, Emam Khomeini Port, as a focal point for grain unloading and loading, has great opportunities for private sector's investment, and that could be a valuable and inspiring model for Algeria to share such experiences with.



TEDPIX drops 2,507 points in a day

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), fell 2,507 points to 305,809 on Wednesday, IRIB reported.

The report said that 6.98 billion securities worth 37.278 trillion rials (about \$887.5 million) were traded through 289,861 deals at TSE on Wednesday.

As previously announced, the index has fallen 3,402 points to 309,647 during the five working days of the past Iranian calendar week (Saturday to Wednesday).

After some consecutive days of fall, TEDPIX registered growth on Monday and Tuesday, but it dropped again on Wednesday.

The stock market experts mention the emotional influence created by the new shareholders as the main reason behind the drops that this market has been experiencing recently.

It is 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, closed at an all-time high of 302,103 points.

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.

Iranian trade center to be opened in Damascus within 3 months

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — The chairman of Iran-Syria Joint Trade Committee said the Iranian trade center in Damascus is going to be opened within the next three months, ILNA reported on Wednesday.

“Equipping the trade center is in the final stages and it will be opened in the next three months, maximum,” Keyvan Kashefi said.

“Many businesses and companies have signed up to have booths in the trade center, and now the maps for the center have been

prepared and we have presented the map to all applicants to lease the units based on in the form of annual contracts,” Kashefi said.

The official also mentioned a suggestion for opening a new \$1 billion credit line for Syria by the Central Bank of Iran, saying “Iran Chamber of Commerce has proposed to the central bank to allocate a second credit line worth \$1 billion to Iranian companies active in Syria and the line's structure is so that all Iranian companies active there would be able to use this credit line provided that they are approved by the chamber.”

Iran and Syria agreed on establishment of an Iranian Trade Center in Damascus free zone back in January.

The decision was made during a visit by an Iranian economic delegation to Syria.

In late August, the two countries held their first joint trade committee meeting in Damascus, during which the two sides stressed their willingness for further expansion of economic ties.

Iran and Syria have been exchanging numerous trade delegations in the past few months and Iranian private companies are investing in different areas like providing construction materials especially cement and working on several reconstruction projects in Syria.

In August 2018, a delegation comprised of Iranian economic experts traveled to Syria to explore investment opportunities and finalize the reconstruction plans of the war-stricken country.

Also in January, the 14th preparatory meeting of Iran-Syria high joint technical committee of economic cooperation was held in Damascus.

Domestic manufacturing of auto parts to lower car prices: industry min.

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iranian Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Reza Rahmani said on Wednesday that domestic manufacturing of auto parts is going to lead to a decrease in the prices of passenger cars in the country.

“Currently, our most important program is to manufacture auto parts domestically, which will inevitably lead to lower prices,” Rahmani told IRNA.

“Usually the prices of all domestically-made parts and commodities are lower since domestic production costs are lower and more economical,” he said.

He also noted that the country's auto makers are going to suspend manufacturing of two passenger car brands by June 2020, adding that 18,000 pre-purchased cars of such brands are to be handed over to the customers before terminating their production.



Last week, Rahmani had said that his ministry plans to hand over the country's major auto makers to the

private sector.

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.

Goldman sees upside for South African economy at rock bottom

Goldman Sachs Group Inc. sees a silver lining for South Africa: The economy is at its lowest point and the only way is up.

According to dailymaverick.co.za, the “bad news is we are at 0.6% growth for 2019,” Colin Coleman, a partner and head of sub-Saharan Africa for the New York-based bank, said in Johannesburg last week. The “good news is our growth outlook has risk to the upside, there is no risk to the downside, because we are at the bottom.”

The comments come as Goldman Sachs bets that President Cyril Ramaphosa will be able to get the continent's most-industrialized economy back on track as the lender expands its operations in the country. Foreign investors are waiting to see if South Africa will “self-correct” once prosecutions for corruption during Jacob Zuma's almost decade-long term as head of state start happening, Coleman said.

Goldman Sachs has long been bullish on South Africa's prospects, with the bank's economists in May last year predicting an expansion of 2.4% for 2018. The economy expanded 0.8% last year.

If South Africa is able to keep electricity supply stable it should be able to lift exports and see growth in the finance, telecommunications and mineral resources sectors, he said. “If we can get the basics fixed, our growth rate should be at 2.5%, and our ability to be back there is quite good.”

But for South Africa, keeping the lights on has been a challenge. State-owned utility Eskom Holdings SOC Ltd. is piled with debt, an inflated wage bill and is battling to manage operations and maintain infrastructure.

Rolling blackouts are estimated to have cost 0.5% of South Africa's economic growth in the first quarter of this year alone, he said.

Coleman expects Eskom to enter a phase of stabilization by the end of the year, with plans to restructure its operations taking shape next year.

Growth in major Asian economies set to slow more than expected, IMF says

Economic growth across Asia is set to slow more than expected, according to the latest projections by the International Monetary Fund.

As per cnbc.com, in its Regional Economic Outlook report released Wednesday, the IMF said growth in Asia could moderate to 5% in 2019, and 5.1% in 2020 — that's 0.4% and 0.3% lower than its April projections.

Among the worst-hit major Asian economies projected to slow more than expected, Hong Kong — already battered by the months-long unrest — could grow 0.3% this year and 1.5% in 2020. That's 2.4% and 1.5% lower, respectively, than the fund's initial projections.

The city's chief executive Carrie Lam said this month that Hong Kong has slipped into a technical recession.

The report singled out the unrest in Hong Kong as one risk which could affect the region. A “deterioration of the sociopolitical situation, for example in Hong Kong... could have economic spillovers to other countries in the region and beyond.”

Growth in South Korea could fall to 2% this year and 2.2% in 2020 — both 0.6% less than predicted, according to the IMF report. Singapore's economy could grow 0.5% this year and 1% in 2020 — lower by 1.8% and 1.4%, respectively, than projected.

Activity in the region, particularly in the manufacturing sector, has been hit. While domestic demand has held up, investment and trade have “weakened significantly,” with exports in Asian emerging markets shrinking since late 2018 — largely dragged down by weak regional trade especially with China, the report said.

Earlier this week, the fund had projected the Chinese economy could grow at 5.8% next year — slower than the 6.1% forecast for 2019.

“Risks within the region include a faster-than-expected slowdown in Japan, a deepening of regional tensions such as China's and Korea's bilateral relationship, rising geopolitical risks,” the IMF report said.

NIOC to ensure participation of private sector in studying exploration blocks

E N E R G Y TEHRAN — The director of the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC)'s Discovery Department has stressed the need for ensuring the participation of the country's private sector in the assessment and study projects of the discovered blocks across the country.

"The Oil Ministry and NIOC have taken necessary measures to set the ground for the presence of domestic companies in the exploration sector," Saleh Hendi said on Tuesday in the signing ceremony of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) for development studies on Bamdad block in the Persian Gulf.

"Iranian companies have been able to participate in numerous exploration projects and offer acceptable performance in terms of utilizing qualified human resources and being equipped with the necessary knowledge and technology," Hendi said.

The official stated that in the past all the exploration and assessment study projects were carried out by foreign companies, and they have achieved very good results in the country's oil and gas blocks.



He pointed to the MOU for Bamdad block as the second development study MOU with domestic companies, saying "Bamdad block is considered the best block among the 14 newly discovered blocks by NIOC Discovery Department, since the system for recognizing

the proven oil in the block shows very small risks."

Back in February, Hendi had stressed that the private sector should be able to contribute to developing the country's oil fields.

Speaking in the 3rd Iran International

Exploration and Production Congress and Exhibition (Iran E&P 2019) in Tehran, Hendi had noted that like the mining sector in which mines are being developed by the private sector, NIOC should also award oilfield development projects to capable private companies.

"Iran has huge resources of shale oil, shale gas and gas hydrates which have not yet been developed; exploration and development of these resources should be awarded to the private sector", the official said.

"The private sector can well handle a significant part of the government's responsibilities in the oil industry," he said, adding that this could be initiated with small projects and small fields, and then move to bigger projects.

Earlier in December 2018, the official had also said that National Iranian Oil Company would transfer exploration projects for oil and gas fields to domestic companies.

"Plans are underway to award exploration projects to domestic companies now that the U.S. is putting pressure on foreign companies to operate in Iran", Hendi said in a press conference.

Can wind energy make the power industry happy?

Power system issues such as frequency control, voltage stability, harmonics and grid connection requirements were the recurrent topics at the recent Wind Integration Workshop in Dublin, says WindEurope. Grid forming converters, for the 3rd year in a row, was the hot topic of the conference.

As per smart-energy.com, WindEurope organized its own industry session on the topic: Can wind energy make the power system happy? OEMs Enercon and Vestas, wind farm operator Acciona and the Australian system and market operator AEMO addressed the topic. In a system with a decreasing contribution from conventional synchronous generators and increased power demand, the support from renewable energy plants, consumers and new technologies needs to step up.



All the speakers agreed that wind energy is a versatile and flexible technology that can provide ample support with regards to frequency and voltage control. But system operators are also searching for new sources of inertia, black-start capability and overall system strength. Today's converters at wind farms and PV plants can offer limited support in those areas.

So everyone agrees: both grid requirements and technology need to keep evolving. And many questions arise: how large is the need for those services? Should it only be the generators providing these, or can there be new market players (e.g. stand-alone storage systems)? How much of the fleet should incorporate these new capabilities (which come at an extra cost)? What is the cost of those? And finally: how do we incentivize the development and market uptake of the technology?

Daniel Fraile, WindEurope's Head of Market Intelligence, said, The "wind industry is fully aligned on these questions, as reflected during the discussions in Dublin. New functionalities both in hardware and software, additional features and oversized systems do come with an extra cost. And only a fraction of the fleet (e.g. largest wind farms, specific locations, etc.) might need to deploy them. TSOs and governments need to put in place market for those services with the clear product specification. This will limit the cost for consumers, and help to correctly price the value of such system support features."

The wind industry is not just looking into future system services. Today European TSOs have started to apply the new grid connection rules steaming from the European Network connection code (which entered into force in May 2019). But the challenges are multiple.

Proving compliance with regards to voltage control is not an easy task. There are multiple interactions between new and old wind farms, connected at various voltage levels. But all have to comply with different requirements at the same connection point.

Translating grid code requirements into real system services and support is set to be one of the biggest challenges facing European power systems over the years to come.

Russia predicts the death of U.S. shale

By Tsvetana Paraskova

U.S. shale production growth is slowing down, and America's shale output will likely peak in the next few years, Russia's Energy Minister Alexander Novak said on Tuesday.

We see that there is slowing activity in U.S. shale, and despite the fact that production continues to grow, growth is weaker than in previous years, Novak told reporters in Sochi on Tuesday.



The number of drilling rigs in the United States dropped by 160 in a year, Novak noted.

The U.S. oil rig count continued to drop in the latest reporting week, according to Baker Hughes data. The total oil and gas rig count now stands at 851, or 216 down from this time last year. The total number of active oil rigs in the United States increased by 1 last week, reaching 713—this is down by 160 rigs year on year.

"This is clearly a trend," Novak said, adding that at current oil prices, U.S. shale production will not grow as fast as it did in previous years.

Many factors, including financing, will determine the pace of American shale production, according to Russia's energy minister.

"In the near future, if forecasts turn out correct, we will see a plateau in production," Novak said.

Growing U.S. oil production, particularly from shale formations, has been keeping a lid on oil prices over the past two years and has been frustrating the efforts of Russia and OPEC to rebalance the oil market with their production cut deal.

Yet, analysts concur that U.S. oil production is set for slower growth going forward, even if the U.S. continues to set production records.

Goldman Sachs has just cut its estimate for U.S. shale growth next year. The investment bank now expects U.S. shale oil production to increase by just 700,000 bpd in 2019, compared to an earlier forecast of 1 million bpd growth. This year's production increase is seen at 1.1 million bpd.

(Source: oilprice.com)

Oil dips as U.S. stocks rise; prospect of OPEC action supports



Oil prices declined on Wednesday, holding below \$60 a barrel on data showing a bigger-than-expected rise in U.S. crude stocks,

but the prospect of deeper output cuts by OPEC and its allies offered support.

As per reuters.com, Brent crude futures LCOc1 were down 25 cents, or 0.43%, to \$59.45 a barrel at 0834 GMT.

West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures CLc1 for December delivery fell 32 cents, or 0.59%, to \$54.16 per barrel. The November contract expired on Tuesday at \$54.16.

U.S. crude stocks rose by 4.5 million barrels to 437 million barrels in the week ended Oct. 18, compared with analysts' expectations for a gain of 2.2 million barrels, data from industry group the American Petroleum Institute showed.

Helping underpin prices, the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)

is mulling whether to deepen production cuts amid concerns of weak demand growth next year.

Some analysts were skeptical of OPEC's ability to further cut output.

"It will be a struggle to get members to cut a significant amount more, particularly if you have some members who are not pulling their weight when it comes to cuts," Dutch bank ING said in a note.

OPEC and other oil producers including Russia, a group known as OPEC+, have pledged to cut production by 1.2 million barrels per day (bpd) until March 2020. OPEC and other non-members are scheduled to meet again Dec. 5-6.

Meanwhile, easing trade tensions between

China and the United States, the world's two largest economies and biggest oil consumers, were also helping to cushion overall sentiment for oil, traders said.

U.S. President Donald Trump said earlier this week that efforts to end the trade war with China were going well, a view echoed by Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Le Yucheng on Tuesday.

"With the headwinds of strong U.S. producer hedging and high freight rates fading, we expect stronger Brent time spreads and higher prices in coming weeks, with upside risk to our year-end \$62 per barrel forecast," Goldman Sachs said in a note.

The investment bank expects Brent prices to continue trading around \$60 a barrel in 2020.

Chinese LNG demand may be set to plateau, says analyst

By Alex Kimani

China's surging appetite for LNG looks set to slow markedly next year as the government concentrates on diversifying its sources of gas supply, the Eurasia Group has said in a note to clients.

"China's gas imports are about to change because of Beijing's shifting priorities," said the company's director of global energy, Henning Gloystein.

According to montelnews.com, Beijing's efforts to boost domestic gas production and import more of the fuel via pipelines could potentially combine with an economic slowdown to bring booming LNG demand growth to a halt.

The Eurasia Group saw a 30bcm growth in other sources of supply next year potentially eclipsing the country's likely gas demand growth.

China has rapidly become the world's largest gas importer as the government seeks to improve air pollution through a systematic replacement of industrial and residential coal burners.

Gas demand rose 18% last year to reach 280bcm. Yet even if the economy avoided slowing further this year, gas demand growth might only come in at 10%, or 28bcm, said the Eurasia Group.

"With domestic output potentially rising 20 bcm and pipeline supply potentially growing by 10bcm next year, China's LNG import boom may plateau."

This year's escalating trade dispute with Washington has made US LNG unpopular in China and exposed a potential source of vulnerability.

"Hoping to reduce its exposure to potential geopolitical disruptions, Beijing is expanding pipeline imports from politically allied neighbors and pushing for more domestic production," said Gloystein.

China's domestic production has been climbing 6-8% per annum in recent years, despite challenges with reserves located in difficult locations. The Eurasia Group noted forecasts from the International Energy Agency that China's domestic production would climb 10% annually through to 2024 to 242bcm.

The country has also been improving existing connections with central Asia this year, making full use of a pipeline to Myanmar and will launch a new connection with Russia – the Power of Siberia pipeline – in December. These could raise pipeline supplies another 10bcm to 65bcm in 2020.

A slowdown in LNG demand growth would have significant repercussions beyond China's borders as the country's appetite of recent years has captured much of



a rise in global supply, supporting gas prices in Asia and Europe.

China has been importing roughly 4.8m tons of LNG per month (6.5bcm) in the year to date, up 18% compared to 2018.

Its gas imports have nearly doubled since 2016, mostly due to a rise in coastal LNG supply, one of the easiest ways of rapidly increasing gas supply near demand centers.

Russia looks to Africa to broaden its global energy influence

By Eklavya Gupte and Rosemary Griffin

Russia is looking to increase energy cooperation with African countries as it strives to play a more influential role in global energy markets.

President Vladimir Putin will host the Russia-Africa Summit in Sochi this week as Russia looks to expand its footprint in Africa.

Africa is already a major producer of key commodities, but with its population and economies growing steadily, the continent is also emerging as a major demand hub. This is why these sectors will be at the heart of Russia's push towards Africa.

Egyptian President Abdel Fatah el-Sisi is set to speak alongside Putin in the plenary session of the summit and energy officials from several African countries are expected to attend.

An increase in dialog could translate into new deals in oil and gas exploration and production, LNG and oil trading, as well as nuclear power, according to analysts.

Indigo Ellis, head of Africa at risk consultancy Verisk Maplecroft, said African governments would welcome Russia's renewed interest as they are "slowly waking to the realities of China's murky lending, and long aware of the West's conditional, and ever scarcer loans." "Russia offers 'no strings attached' investment for African countries that seem to be a win-win for both parties," Ellis said, adding that she expects trade agreements and partnerships for energy, mining and defense to emerge from Sochi.

More energy deals

"While defense contracts have so far been Russia's primary modus operandi in engaging with African governments, Russia will curry favor across Africa through more energy deals."

Russia's pivot to the Middle East in the political and business sphere has yielded more power to Putin and the president is now looking to forge closer ties with Africa.

"Moscow will try to make as much as hay as possible about



its growing investments in the region at the Russia-Africa summit. It wants to present itself as influential in Africa, even if Russian engagement is relatively small compared to the United States, European Union, and China," Judd Devermont, director of the Africa Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies said.

"Most deals will focus on security and energy sector, such as a recently signed nuclear power deal with Rwanda." Russia's influence in Africa during the Soviet Union/Cold War era was very strong but since then its influence has been on the wane, with China emerging as the dominant investor in the continent.

Russian oil and gas companies are already present in North Africa, and also have some exploration projects in West Africa and Mozambique.

These have had mixed success in the oil and gas sector in Africa, however. This summit provides some of these business another shot at redefining their African strategy, analysts say.

Rosneft, Lukoil, Gazprom, Gazpromneft, Tatneft and Rosgeologia all currently have business in the African continent.

"Given the fact that African projects can only be realistically shouldered by state-backed players (Gazprom, Gazpromneft, Rosneft) plus Lukoil, it is fair to presume that most oil and gas cooperation will be taking place in countries where Russia already has or is quickly building out close military and security relations," George Voloshin, a director at risk consultancy Aperio Intelligence said.

Successful energy cooperation

Russia's most successful energy cooperation with Africa has been in North Africa, where Gazprom holds a stake in the El-Assel project in Algeria and Tatneft holds stakes in the Ghadames and Sirte projects in Libya.

Significant new deals signed in recent years include Lukoil joining the Marine XII license offshore the Republic of Congo, and Rosneft joining the Zohr gas project offshore Egypt.

Lukoil recently left projects in Sierra Leone, Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire because of uncertain economics and mixed exploration results.

"Lukoil will be the Russian player to watch," said Ellis. "While Gazprom and Rosneft have the Russian market cornered, Lukoil is looking to Africa for expansion, most recently entering Congo."

Despite these setbacks, Russia has been focusing on expanding its presence in Africa's growing LNG sector.

New LNG capacity from Mozambique, Egypt and Tanzania is expected to come on stream over the next five years and Russian companies are hoping to take advantage of that.

Rosneft has non-operating stakes in Mozambique and Egypt's coveted gas blocks. Rosneft also has a 12-year LNG supply deal with Ghana. Equatorial Guinea has also indicated it is interested in purchasing Russian LNG in future.

Rosneft has also signed an agreement with Nigeria's Oranto on future cooperation in Africa on oil and gas production, refining, logistics and trading projects across Africa.

Russia currently accounts for around 6% of the global LNG market, but is aiming to increase this to 15% by 2025.

(Source: spglobal.com)

A right balance between order and diplomacy

GLOBALTIMES — The US has begun to require Chinese diplomats to report meetings with state, local and municipal officials, official visits to educational institutions and official visits to research institution. The incident is brewing. US Ambassador to China Terry Branstad said on Monday that Washington is considering additional rules for employees of entities controlled by the Communist Party of China. He also said that employees of these entities may be required to register as foreign agents.

The US stated that this was due to the «reciprocity action» to force China to lift restrictions on the activities of US embassies and consulates in China.

First, the Chinese foreign affairs department has not imposed restrictions on the US embassies and consulates to contact various personnel in China, and American diplomats can see the people they want to see in China. Many people from the liberal camp in China have had contact with US diplomats. Some posted their interaction with US diplomats on the internet, and are proud of the experience.

However, there is a big difference in the governance in China and the US. When US diplomats reach out, some are wary. This is not what the Chinese government requires. It is how Chinese society usually reacts to such situations. This situation is not specific to the Americans. Diplomats from countries that have friendly relations with China also feel that «diplomacy is no small matter» in Chinese society. It is not easy even for the Chinese media or research institutions to get in touch with sensitive people or find someone to explore on sensitive issues. US diplomats have enjoyed some privileges that Chinese diplomats do not have in the US.

Chinese people value diplomacy and give foreign officials and institutions in China some preferential treatment consciously or subconsciously. For example, Beijing and Shanghai adopted a license-plate lottery system, but diplomats do not need to go through the system or bid for high prices for car plates. Chinese police attach more importance to cases involving foreigners. The attitude sparked widespread criticism from the Chinese netizens.

It is widely acknowledged that foreigners receive privileges in China, and even more so for US diplomats. Perhaps this is also something the US State Department and US embassies and consulates in China should take note of.

The US used to be confident and prided itself on its relaxed governance of internal affairs, which the US viewed as part of its soft power. However, it has become calculating in everything it does with China: it complains about «unfair» trade with China and grumbles about «restrictions» on its diplomats and media outlets. This casts a completely different scenario from the time when the US was open-minded about its market and its political and cultural resources.

Regardless of whether the US complains or not, Chinese society needs to further open up. Chinese academic institutions and officials at various levels should embrace communications with foreign diplomats in China, including US diplomats, in a more active manner. Negatively viewing engagement with Americans and other Westerners does no good to enhance mutual understanding and widen consensus. China-US relations are at a crossroads. Should the two sides be locked in a tit-for-tat engagement and escalate the conflicts?

Obviously, the US is the one which continues to strategically provoke China and add uncertainties to the bilateral relationship. Some US political elites are pushing China-US relations back. China shouldn't fall for it. Upholding opening-up needs to be the backbone of China's foreign relations, including with the US.

China is sincere in building a favorable relationship with the US, while preserving internal order. Prioritizing national interests is indisputably justified in any country. But China is a major power and its rapid rise has affected the world. Therefore, it is important for China to strike a balance.

Press freedom in Europe

TEHRAN (FNA) — Europe is “no longer a sanctuary for journalists”, says Reporters Without Borders.

The organization points to the murders of three journalists in Malta, Slovakia and Bulgaria in the space of a few months and warning that “hatred of journalists has degenerated into violence, contributing to an increase in fear”.

Most recent surveys and reports suggest that media freedom is on the decline generally in Western Europe too. Fear has been causing the most problems for journalists as well. In Europe specifically a number of countries have fallen down the Index. This is for a number of reasons and comes with rising populism, anti-media rhetoric from politicians, cyber-harassment of journalists, physical attacks.

Threats to journalists have emerged in recent years in Western Europe. For instance, in France or in Spain, during the Catalan independence protests, leaders of the movement delivered rhetoric which undermined trust in journalists. They did not think journalists were covering the situation properly, or at least not in the way they wanted, and they viewed journalists who were not supporting their cause as people who were working against it and trying to prevent independence.

Another example is Italy where there are 20 journalists who have around the clock police protection because they are facing threats from criminal networks. Journalists in Europe are facing cyber-harassment too - journalists covering protests in Spain and in France have been attacked online.

There is also a trend in Western Europe of journalists being attacked when covering protests themselves. This is because part of the population no longer trusts the media anymore – protest leaders have portrayed them negatively, as untrustworthy, because they are not happy with the coverage. Journalists sometimes face violence and terrible threats from protestors. And sometimes, when they cover demonstrations, journalists are sometimes targeted by both the protestors and the police, which makes their mission even harder.

Likewise, growing and new threats are emerging. One of these is growing legal harassment of journalists. Governments and businessmen are chasing journalists legally, through lawyers and courts, trying to stop them reporting and doing their jobs. This is extremely worrying. There is also physical intimidation of journalists and cyber-harassment too, while in some countries the independence of public media is under threat as well with governments trying to interfere in editorial independence, to influence them.

Western Europe is certainly not free of this. Journalists in Western European states do face physical intimidation. Places like France, Spain, Italy, and fascist groups in Greece. And it was only a few months ago that a journalist, Lyra McKee, was killed in Northern Ireland. Western Europe is not without this problem, even today. While the West is seen as having traditionally good, strong democracies to protect journalists, the situation with press freedom is not as good as it has been. Populist movements have spread across Europe, including Western Europe.

An erosion of press freedom in both Western and Eastern Europe is now a fact of life.

Meaningful polls against Trump

By Saeed Sobhani

TEHRAN — Recent polls in the United States indicate that there has been a sharp increase in opposition to Donald Trump. In such a situation, we are experiencing tough conditions for Trump. The President of the United States knows very well that, given the current trend, he will not stand a chance of winning next year's presidential election:

■ **Support for impeaching Trump soars among independents: Reuters/Ipsos poll**

As Reuters reported, Support for impeaching U.S. President Donald Trump surged among political independents and rose by three percentage points overall since last week, according to a Reuters/Ipsos poll released on Tuesday. People walk past the U.S. Capitol Building in Washington, U.S. October 21, 2019. REUTERS/Carlos Jasso

More Americans also said they disapproved of the president's handling of foreign threats.

The Oct. 18-22 poll showed public opinion continued to shift as Americans digested a flurry of news over the past several weeks stemming from the congressional impeachment inquiry and Trump's decision to pull troops from northern Syria. Overall, 46% of Americans said they supported impeachment and 40% said they opposed it.

Support for impeachment was relatively steady among Republicans and Democrats over the past week but it surged among independents, a group that includes people who neither identify as Democrats nor Republicans and do not favor either party when they vote. Among independents, 45% said in the latest poll they supported impeachment and 32% said they opposed it, the strongest level of support recorded in more than a year.

A little more than 1 in 3 independents had said they were in favor of impeachment in more than a dozen previous Reuters/Ipsos polls since June 2018.

Trump leveraged his advantage in support among independents to narrowly win the White House in 2016 and it is expected that he will need them again to be re-elected.

The Reuters/Ipsos poll was conducted after several administration officials backed up portions of a government whistleblower's report that alleged Trump pressured Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to investigate one of his main political rivals, former Vice President Joe Biden. The report said Trump linked the probe to the release of foreign aid.

Trump has denied any wrongdoing. He has tried to block administration officials from cooperating with the investigation and this week said he was the victim of a “lynching,” a racially charged description that was quickly condemned by many lawmakers.

The president also ordered U.S. troops to withdraw from northern Syria two weeks ago ahead of Turkey's cross-border offensive against the Kurds. The Turkish offensive displaced hundreds of thousands of people and raised concerns that it would allow prisoners from the Islamic State group to escape. Trump's decision drew a sharp bipartisan rebuke in Congress and the poll shows it may have hurt his standing among rank-and-file Republicans.

Overall, the poll found that Americans were more critical of Trump's handling of U.S. foreign policy and Islamic State than they were in a similar poll in April. Among Republicans, 73% said they approved of the president's handling of U.S. foreign policy and 75% said they approved of his handling of IS, down 6 points and 8 points respectively from April.

The Reuters/Ipsos poll was conducted online, in English, throughout the United States. It gathered responses from 4,083 adults, including 1,773 Democrats, 1,542 Republicans and 447 independents. It has a credibility interval, a measure of precision, of 5 percentage points.

■ **CNN Poll: 50% support impeaching Trump and removing him from office**

As CNN reported, Half of Americans say President Donald Trump should be impeached and removed from office, according to a new CNN poll conducted by SSRS, a new high in CNN polling on the topic and the first time that support for impeachment and removal has significantly outpaced opposition.

As support for impeachment has inched upward, however, Trump's approval ratings overall and for handling major issues have not taken a hit. Overall, 41% approve of his handling of the presidency and 57% disapprove, similar to his ratings in early September and August polls conducted before the House of Representatives formally launched an impeachment inquiry in late September.

■ **RELATED: Full poll results**

The share who say Trump used his office improperly to gain political advantage against a potential 2020 opponent in his interactions with the President of Ukraine stands at 49%, about the same as in the September CNN poll. At the same time, more now say Trump did not use the presidency improperly (43%, up from 39%), as the share who are undecided on the question dipped. That shift was largely driven by a 16-point increase in the share of Republicans who say Trump didn't improperly use the presidency (from 71% to 87%).



Overall, 50% say the things that Trump has said publicly about his handling of US relations with Ukraine are mostly false. Fewer, 44%, think the President is mostly telling the truth about it, with views sharply divided by party (86% of Republicans say his public statements on it have been mostly true, while 83% of Democrats say mostly false).

Support for impeachment and removal is strongest among Democrats (87% favor it) and stands at 50% among independents. Among Republicans, just 6% say they support impeaching and removing the Republican President, lower than the 14% who said so in a September CNN poll. While a handful of other polls also have found support for impeachment in double digits among Republicans, most have found Republican support closer to the level in the new CNN poll than the September one.

Beyond partisanship, demographic dividing lines on impeachment seem to mirror those that have driven Trump's approval rating throughout his presidency. Women (56%) are more apt than men (44%) to favor impeachment and removal. Nonwhites (68%) support it in greater numbers than whites (40%), and whites are split by education (51% with college degrees back impeachment and removal vs. 35% of those without degrees) and further by gender (26% of white men without college degrees favor impeachment and removal, but that more than doubles to 54% among white women who hold four-year degrees).

The poll finds that Americans overall are entrenched in their views on each side of the impeachment debate. Among those who say Trump should be impeached and removed, 90% say they feel that way strongly, as do 86% of those who say he should not be impeached and removed.

Americans are more apt to disapprove than approve of the way that both parties in Congress, the White House and the State Department are handling the impeachment inquiry thus far. Democrats in Congress fare best, with 43% approving and 49% disapproving. Disapproval outpaces approval of congressional Republicans' handling of the impeachment inquiry by a nearly 2-to-1 margin: 57% disapprove and 30% approve. Republicans themselves are more positive toward their partisans in Congress -- 52% approve and 32% disapprove of their handling of the inquiry, but Democrats express far stronger approval for their own congressional partisans (82% approve, 13% disapprove).

Democratic Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, who announced the impeachment inquiry in late September, has seen an improvement in favorability numbers in the new poll. Her favorability rating stands at its best mark since April 2007, with 44% holding a favorable view of her, and 46% unfavorable. That increase rests mostly on a shift among independents since May -- 32% had a favorable view of her then, while 42% do now.

Just about half of Americans say that most Democrats in Congress favor impeachment because they believe Trump committed impeachable offenses (48%), while around 4 in 10 say it's because they are out to get Trump at all costs (42%). On congressional Republicans' motivations, public opinion is flipped, with 50% saying Republicans in Congress mostly oppose impeachment because they are out to protect Trump at all costs, vs. 40% who say it's because they believe Trump did not commit impeachable offenses.

The public divides over whether Rudy Giuliani, the former New York mayor who was mentioned in the President's phone call with Ukraine's President and has become a central figure in the impeachment inquiry, had too much influence over Trump's foreign policy decisions -- 40% say he did and 41% say he did not. The former mayor's favorability ratings have taken a hit in the inquiry, as 56% now say they have an unfavorable view of him, up from

45% who felt that way last year, including a 17-point rise in unfavorable views among independents.

Trump's favorability rating has not lost any ground, however, holding at 42% favorable and 56% unfavorable. The President has also seen his approval ratings for handling top issues hold steady or increase in the last month. His approval rating for handling the economy has rebounded from an early September dip: 52% approve on that score, up from 48%. His numbers have held about even on immigration and foreign affairs, while ticking up 4 points on foreign trade.

The CNN Poll was conducted by SSRS from October 17 through 20 among a random national sample of 1,003 adults reached on landlines or cellphones by a live interviewer. Results for the full sample have a margin of sampling error of plus or minus 3.7 percentage points.

■ **Poll: Little backing for Trump's Syria withdrawal**

But two in three voters say the U.S. is engaged in too many foreign conflicts. A Turkish army tank moves towards the Syrian border on Oct. 18 as Turkish forces target Northern Syria.

Few voters are on board with President Donald Trump's decision to remove U.S. troops from northeastern Syria, according to a new POLITICO/Morning Consult poll that also shows fatigue over the nation's military entanglements around the world.

Only 37 percent of voters support Trump's decision regarding Syria, the poll shows, fewer than the 43 percent who oppose it. But a sizable number, 20 percent, say they don't have an opinion about Trump's decision.

Opinions of Trump's decision fall mostly along party lines. Among Democratic voters, 20 percent support it, while 62 percent oppose it. Republicans are a mirror image: 61 percent support Trump's decision and 22 percent oppose it. Among independents, just 30 percent back Trump's decision, while 43 percent oppose it.

Tyler Sinclair, Morning Consult's vice president, said the numbers show GOP voters “are standing by” Trump, even as most Republicans in Congress oppose his decision to withdraw troops. Majorities in both parties voted in the House last week to register their disapproval of the decision. “This week, 61 percent of Republicans say they support President Trump's decision to remove U.S. troops from Syria, compared to 56 percent who said the same last week,” said Sinclair. “The president's [overall] standing among Republicans also remains strong, as 84 percent approve and 14 percent disapprove of his performance.”

But while there is little public support overall for Trump's decision, he is trying to tap a vein of U.S. public opinion that is skeptical of the country's numerous military entanglements overseas. Two in three voters, 67 percent, agree that the U.S. is engaged in too many foreign conflicts, the poll shows.

At the same time, voters will support foreign intervention under certain circumstances. Nearly as many voters, 65 percent, say they agree with the statement, “The U.S. needs to be involved in foreign conflicts to support our allies, fight terrorism and maintain our foreign policy interests.”

The Syria decision is only one front of Trump's fights with Congress in recent weeks. The new POLITICO/Morning Consult poll shows little change in voters' views of the impeachment inquiry in the House. In the new survey, 49 percent of voters support the inquiry, while 43 percent oppose it. That is virtually identical to last week, when 50 percent supported the inquiry and 42 percent opposed it. Overall, Trump's approval rating in the survey is 41 percent, while 56 percent of voters disapprove of his job performance. That is also statistically unchanged from last week, when 40 percent of voters approved of Trump and 57 percent disapproved.

The POLITICO/Morning Consult poll was conducted Oct. 18-21, surveying 1,989 registered voters. The margin of sampling error is plus or minus 2 percentage points.

Morning Consult is a nonpartisan media and technology company that provides data-driven research and insights on politics, policy and business strategy.

■ **Also New York Times reported, What Our Poll Shows About Impeachment Views in 6 Swing States**

With core supporters and opponents dug in, a crucial sliver of people support the inquiry but not necessarily removal. Image Supporters of President Trump rallying against the congressional impeachment inquiry outside the Capitol building in Washington. Supporters of President Trump rallying against the congressional impeachment inquiry outside the Capitol building in Washington. Credit Carlos Jasso/Reuters

Voters in the states likeliest to decide the 2020 presidential election support the impeachment inquiry that House Democrats began last month, but a majority still opposes impeaching President Trump and removing him from office, according to a New York Times/Siena College survey.

In the six closest states carried by the president in 2016, registered voters support the impeachment inquiry by a five-point margin, 50 percent to 45 percent. The same voters oppose impeaching Mr. Trump and removing him from office, 53 percent to 43 percent.



Assange in court: What I saw

By Craig Murray

I was deeply shaken while witnessing yesterday's events in Westminster Magistrates Court. Every decision was railroaded through over the scarcely heard arguments and objections of Assange's legal team, by a magistrate who barely pretended to be listening.

Before I get on to the blatant lack of fair process, the first thing I must note was Julian's condition. I was badly shocked by just how much weight my friend has lost, by the speed his hair has receded and by the appearance of premature and vastly accelerated aging. He has a pronounced limp I have never seen before. Since his arrest he has lost over 15 kg in weight.

But his physical appearance was not as shocking as his mental deterioration. When asked to give his name and date of birth, he struggled visibly over several seconds to recall both. I will come to the important content of his statement at the end of proceedings in due course, but his difficulty in making it was very evident; it was a real struggle for him to articulate the words and focus his train of thought.

Until yesterday I had always been quietly skeptical of those who claimed that Julian's treatment amounted to torture – even of Nils Melzer, the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture – and skeptical of those who suggested he may be subject to debilitating drug treatments. But having attended the trials in Uzbekistan of several victims of extreme torture, and having worked with survivors from Sierra Leone and elsewhere, I can tell you that yesterday changed my mind entirely and Julian exhibited exactly the symptoms of a torture victim brought blinking into the light, particularly in terms of disorientation, confusion, and the real struggle to assert free will through the fog of learned helplessness.

I had been even more skeptical of those who claimed, as a senior member of his legal team did to me on Sunday night, that they were worried that Julian might not live to the end of the extradition process. I now find myself not only believing it, but haunted by the thought. Everybody in that court yesterday saw that one of the greatest journalists and most important dissidents of our times is being tortured to death by the state, before our eyes. To see my friend, the most articulate man, the fastest thinker, I have ever known, reduced to that shambling and incoherent wreck, was unbearable. Yet the agents of the state, particularly the callous magistrate Vanessa Baraitser, were not just prepared but eager to be a part of this bloodsport. She actually told him that if he were incapable of following proceedings, then his lawyers could explain what had happened to him later. The question of why a man who, by the very charges against him, was acknowledged to be highly intelligent and competent, had been reduced by the state to somebody incapable of following court proceedings, gave her not a millisecond of concern.

The charge against Julian is very specific; conspiring with Chelsea Manning to publish the Iraq War logs, the Afghanistan war logs and the State Department cables. The charges are nothing to do with Sweden, nothing to do with sex, and nothing to do with the 2016 US election; a simple clarification the mainstream media appears incapable of understanding.

The purpose of yesterday's hearing was case management; to determine the timetable for the extradition proceedings. The key points at issue were that Julian's defense was requesting more time to prepare their evidence; and arguing that political offenses were specifically excluded from the extradition treaty. There should, they argued, therefore be a preliminary hearing to determine whether the extradition treaty applied at all.

The reasons given by Assange's defense team for more time to prepare were both compelling and startling. They had very limited access to their client in jail and had not been permitted to hand him any documents about the case until one week ago. He had also only just been given limited computer access, and all his relevant records and materials had been seized from the Ecuadorean Embassy by the US Government; he had no access to his own materials for the purpose of preparing his defense.

Furthermore, the defense argued, they were in touch with the Spanish courts about a very important and relevant legal case in Madrid which would provide vital evidence. It showed that the CIA had been directly ordering spying on Julian in the Embassy through a Spanish company, UC Global, contracted to provide security there. Crucially this included spying on privileged conversations between Assange and his lawyers discussing his defense against these extradition proceedings, which had been in train in the USA since 2010. In any normal process, that fact would in itself be sufficient to have the extradition proceedings dismissed. Incidentally I learnt on Sunday that the Spanish material produced in court, which had been commissioned by the CIA, specifically includes high resolution video coverage of Julian and I discussing various matters.

The evidence to the Spanish court also included a CIA plot to kidnap Assange, which went to the US authorities' attitude to lawfulness in his case and the treatment he might expect in the United States. Julian's team explained that the Spanish legal process was happening now and the evidence from it would be extremely important, but it might not be finished and thus the evidence not fully validated and available in time for the current proposed timetable for the Assange extradition hearings.

For the prosecution, James Lewis QC stated that the government strongly opposed any delay being given for the defense to prepare, and strongly op-



posed any separate consideration of the question of whether the charge was a political offense excluded by the extradition treaty. Baraitser took her cue from Lewis and stated categorically that the date for the extradition hearing, 25 February, could not be changed. She was open to changes in dates for submission of evidence and responses before this, and called a ten minute recess for the prosecution and defense to agree these steps.

What happened next was very instructive. There were five representatives of the US government present (initially three, and two more arrived in the course of the hearing), seated at desks behind the lawyers in court. The prosecution lawyers immediately went into huddle with the US representatives, then went outside the courtroom with them, to decide how to respond on the dates.

After the recess the defense team stated they could not, in their professional opinion, adequately prepare if the hearing date were kept to February, but within Baraitser's instruction to do so they nevertheless outlined a proposed timetable on delivery of evidence. In responding to this, Lewis' junior counsel scurried to the back of the court to consult the Americans again while Lewis actually told the judge he was "taking instructions from those behind". It is important to note that as he said this, it was not the UK Attorney-General's office who were being consulted but the US Embassy. Lewis received his American instructions and agreed that the defense might have two months to prepare their evidence (they had said they needed an absolute minimum of three) but the February hearing date may not be moved. Baraitser gave a ruling agreeing everything Lewis had said.

At this stage it was unclear why we were sitting through this farce. The US government was dictating its instructions to Lewis, who was relaying those instructions to Baraitser, who was ruling them as her legal decision. The charade might as well have been cut and the US government simply sat on the bench to control the whole process. Nobody could sit there and believe they were in any part of a genuine legal process or that Baraitser was giving a moment's consideration to the arguments of the defense. Her facial expressions on the few occasions she looked at the defense ranged from contempt through boredom to sarcasm. When she looked at Lewis she was attentive, open and warm. The extradition is plainly being rushed through in accordance with a Washington dictated timetable. Apart from a desire to pre-empt the Spanish court providing evidence on CIA activity in sabotaging the defense, what makes the February date so important to the USA? I would welcome any thoughts.

Baraitser dismissed the defense's request for a separate prior hearing to consider whether the extradition treaty applied at all, without bothering to give any reason why (possibly she had not properly memorized what Lewis had been instructing her to agree with).

On the face of it, what Assange is accused of is the very definition of a political offense – if this is not, then what is? It is not covered by any of the exceptions from that listed. There is every reason to consider whether this charge is excluded by the extradition treaty, and to do so before the long and very costly process of considering all the evidence should the treaty apply. But Baraitser simply dismissed the argument out of hand.

Just in case anybody was left in any doubt as to what was happening here, Lewis then stood up and suggested that the defense should not be allowed to waste the court's time with a lot of arguments. All arguments for the substantive hearing should be given in writing in advance and a "guillotine should be applied" (his exact words) to arguments and witnesses in court, perhaps of five hours for the defense. The defense had suggested they would need more than the scheduled five days to present their case. Lewis countered that the entire hearing should be over in two days. Baraitser said this was not procedurally the correct moment to agree this but she will consider it once she had received the evidence bundles.

Baraitser then capped it all by saying the February hearing will be held, not at the comparatively open and accessible Westminster Magistrates Court

where we were, but at Belmarsh Magistrates Court, the grim high security facility used for preliminary legal processing of terrorists, attached to the maximum security prison where Assange is being held. There are only six seats for the public in even the largest court at Belmarsh, and the object is plainly to evade public scrutiny and make sure that Baraitser is not exposed in public again to a genuine account of her proceedings, like this one you are reading. I will probably be unable to get in to the substantive hearing at Belmarsh.

Plainly the authorities were disconcerted by the hundreds of good people who had turned up to support Julian. They hope that far fewer will get to the much less accessible Belmarsh. I am fairly certain (and recall I had a long career as a diplomat) that the two extra American government officials who arrived halfway through proceedings were armed security personnel, brought in because of alarm at the number of protesters around a hearing in which were present senior US officials. The move to Belmarsh may be an American initiative.

Assange's defense team objected strenuously to the move to Belmarsh, in particular on the grounds that there are no conference rooms available there to consult their client and they have very inadequate access to him in the jail. Baraitser dismissed their objection offhand and with a very definite smirk.

Finally, Baraitser turned to Julian and ordered him to stand, and asked him if he had understood the proceedings. He replied in the negative, said that he could not think, and gave every appearance of disorientation. Then he seemed to find an inner strength, drew himself up a little, and said:

I do not understand how this process is equitable. This superpower had 10 years to prepare for this case and I can't even access my writings. It is very difficult, where I am, to do anything. These people have unlimited resources.

The effort then seemed to become too much, his voice dropped and he became increasingly confused and incoherent. He spoke of whistleblowers and publishers being labeled enemies of the people, then spoke about his children's DNA being stolen and of being spied on in his meetings with his psychologist. I am not suggesting at all that Julian was wrong about these points, but he could not properly frame nor articulate them. He was plainly not himself, very ill and it was just horribly painful to watch. Baraitser showed neither sympathy nor the least concern. She tartly observed that if he could not understand what had happened, his lawyers could explain it to him, and she swept out of court.

The whole experience was profoundly upsetting. It was very plain that there was no genuine process of legal consideration happening here. What we had was a naked demonstration of the power of the state, and a naked dictation of proceedings by the Americans. Julian was in a box behind bulletproof glass, and I and the thirty odd other members of the public who had squeezed in were in a different box behind more bulletproof glass. I do not know if he could see me or his other friends in the court, or if he was capable of recognizing anybody. He gave no indication that he did.

In Belmarsh he is kept in complete isolation for 23 hours a day. He is permitted 45 minutes exercise. If he has to be moved, they clear the corridors before he walks down them and they lock all cell doors to ensure he has no contact with any other prisoner outside the short and strictly supervised exercise period. There is no possible justification for this inhuman regime, used on major terrorists, being imposed on a publisher who is a remand prisoner.

I have been both cataloguing and protesting for years the increasingly authoritarian powers of the UK state, but that the most gross abuse could be so open and undisguised is still a shock. The campaign of demonization and dehumanization against Julian, based on government and media lie after government and media lie, has led to a situation where he can be slowly killed in public sight, and arraigned on a charge of publishing the truth about government wrongdoing, while receiving no assistance from "liberal" society. Unless Julian is released shortly he will be destroyed. If the state can do this, then who is next?

HK needs education reform to better understand its future

By Ai Jun

GLOBALTIMES — In today's Hong Kong, rioters are clamoring for so-called democracy and freedom while seldom mentioning their recognition of Chinese history, culture and development. They have no idea why China became the world's second-largest economy.

What caused the phenomenon?

Joshua Wong Chi-fung, one of riot leaders in Hong Kong, was recently described in a local middle school's textbook as a "celebrity with traditional Chinese virtues." If an education system encourages young people to set fire outside police stations, break into legislative buildings, violate the rule of law and turn to violence when their demands are not met, the system must have gone wrong.

An illness is growing in the education system, it is only natural to prescribe a cure for it. Yet some Western media tend to claim that the Chinese mainland is trying to implement a mandatory political education course. It "must continue to march in step with the Party's new ideology," reported Reuters. Such rhetoric is inciting more violent activities in Hong Kong.

Hong Kong's education system needs to be reformed. It should abide by the "one country, two systems" principle. However, opposition forces argue that the relevant educational reform is a form of brainwashing. This is confusing right from wrong. It is these forces which attempted to obliterate the fact that Hong Kong and the Chinese mainland are a community of common destiny which shares the same history, culture and fate. That being the case, the education of local people's national identity must be strengthened.

It is time for young Hongkongers to discover the development of the Chinese mainland, the reason why it has become the second largest economy and why Shenzhen from South China's Guangdong Province overtook Hong Kong in terms of economic growth in 2018. All the achievements are the result of decades of hard work from the Chinese people.

Over the decades, Hong Kong has been influenced by Western-style egalitarianism. As Jordan Peterson, the obscure Canadian psychologist, once noted in his article, "When left goes too far," equity is "egregious, self-righteous, historically-ignorant and dangerous." He argued when students in the West are taught too much about equality of opportunity, they would easily form a simple method to understand the world - when making judgments, they tend to only consider if it is fair and equal - instead of if one has been diligent enough. This is also the problem of Hong Kong's education. And with growing leftist ideology in the minds, it is easier for young people to turn to violence.

Most intellectuals in Hong Kong have grown up under this Western-style education and lost sight of the value of self-discipline, the spirit of hard work and resilience when faced with difficulties.

That's why education plays a significant role in changing the situation. It will be a long process and must keep pace with the times. More exchanges between the two sides should be encouraged, including inviting more Hong Kong educators to the mainland, encouraging more Hong Kong students to study in the mainland, planning some exchange activities to let Hongkongers see the real mainland.

The goal of education reform in Hong Kong is to serve Hong Kong and China's future, which, in turn, will create more opportunities for young Hongkongers.

Professor David Bailey: No-Deal Brexit to considerably hit UK's economy

TEHRAN (FNA) — Professor David Bailey, a British academic economist, says despite the government preparations for a no-deal Brexit, the possible damage to the UK GDP will be around 8%, "which is a considerable impact".

Speaking in an exclusive interview with FNA, Professor Bailey said, "The implications of no-deal are profound [...] the supply chains are going to be really impacted by a no-deal scenario, when the new trade tariffs effectively go up. Also, there may be impact on services like co-operations over policing and fighting crime."

David Bailey is Professor of Business Economics at the Birmingham Business School, and a Senior Fellow of the "UK in a Changing Europe" program, exploring the impacts of Brexit on UK automotive and manufacturing. He is Editor-in-Chief of the leading journal Regional Studies and Chair of the RSA Europe Think-Tank and Policy Forum.

Below is the full text of the interview:

■ What might a no-deal Brexit look like for the Britons?

A: There is a leaked report from the government operation called Yellow Hammer in which the government was trying to estimate the likely impact of a no-deal, in terms of disruption to supplies, food, medicines and other possible impacts on society and economy. We have also seen estimates from the Office for the budget responsibility in terms of what the fiscal consequences of no-deal could be: that would be as much as 30 billion pounds a year. The studies show the immediate impacts are not clear; in the medium to long terms (from weeks to years) all the evident suggest that no-deal would be economically more damaging for the UK economy than the UK leaving in an orderly fashion. So, in the event of no-deal, for example, estimates suggest that the cost of the economy could be equal to 8% of the GDP which is a considerable impact.

■ What sectors could be adversely affected?

A: The implications of no-deal are profound. Despite some preparations, there is going to be much more the impact of the UK leaving the EU with no-deal than under a managed scenario. Part of manufacturing like automotive which have the supply chains which are relying on what goes just-in-time systems where many lorry-loads of components come across into the UK just as they are needed will be damaged. In that case, the supply chains are going to be really impacted by a no-deal scenario, when the new trade tariffs effectively go up. Also, there may be impact on services like co-operations over policing and fighting crime.

■ Is the UK government prepared for a no-deal Brexit?

A: There have indeed been some preparations. The Bank of England has announced because of those preparations, the chance of likely damages to the UK's economy in the event of no-deal has gone down. BoE's estimate is no longer 8% of the economy in terms of the hit to the GDP, but 5.5%; however, that is still a very considerable hit. So no-deal still involves a considerable hit to the UK's economy despite the preparations that have been made.

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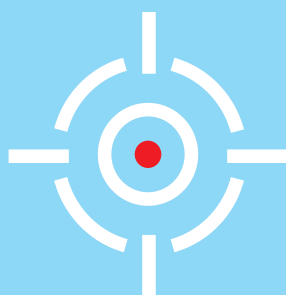
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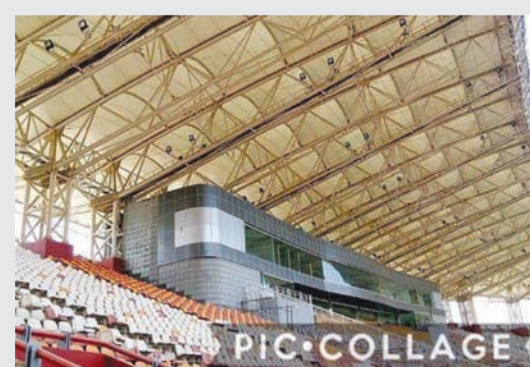
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Bezos’s Blue Origin partners with Lockheed, others on Moon lander

U.S. billionaire Jeff Bezos said on Tuesday his space company Blue Origin has signed agreements with Lockheed Martin Corp, Northrop Grumman Corp and research and development organization Draper for development of its lunar lander designed to help NASA put humans on the Moon by 2024.

Blue Origin’s so-called Blue Moon lunar lander, unveiled by Bezos in May, is in development and sits at the center of the space company’s ambition to ferry humans into deep space and land key contracts from the U.S. space agency for space exploration.

“I’m excited to announce that we put together a national team to go back to the Moon,” Bezos, founder and CEO of online retail giant Amazon, said at the



International Astronautical Congress.

The four companies, with Blue Origin as the lead contractor, plan to submit a proposal for the lander to NASA under its Artemis lunar program, an accelerated mission to the Moon kickstarted in March by U.S. Vice President Mike Pence.

Bezos called the partnerships a “national team” whose history in space exploration fits the Blue Moon’s mission. Lockheed is separately developing the Moon-bound astronaut capsule named Orion.

Northrop helped NASA build the Apollo lunar landers in the 1960s. Draper, a not-for-profit research and development organization, built NASA’s navigation computers for Apollo lunar landers.

(Source: Reuters)

Astronomers discover ‘cosmic yeti’ galaxy from the early universe

By chance, astronomer Christina Williams spotted a faint trace of light that led her to the discovery of a mythical galaxy.

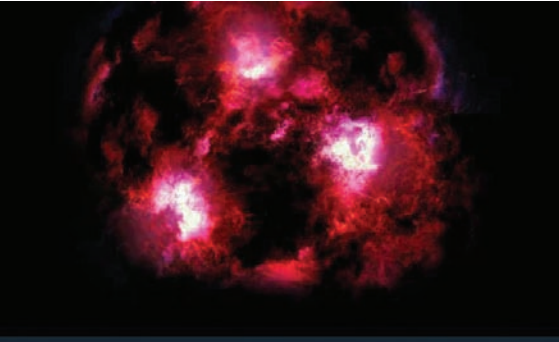
The University of Arizona astronomer saw the shimmering blob in new data from the Atacama Large Millimeter Array in Chile. But something didn’t match up. The light was on its own in an area without a known galaxy.

“It was very mysterious because the light seemed not to be linked to any known galaxy at all,” said Williams, lead study author of a paper published Tuesday in the Astrophysical Journal. “When I saw this galaxy was invisible at any other wavelength, I got really excited because it meant that it was probably really far away and hidden by clouds of dust.”

Without meaning to, Williams had found the footprints leading to a massive galaxy from the dawn of the universe 12.5 billion years ago. This means the light took that long to reach Earth.

The researchers likened it to coming upon a set of footprints belonging to a mythical monster, like the Yeti. This is because until now, due to a lack of data, astronomers didn’t know they could exist.

The light was likely caused by dust particles that were heated by the stars as they formed inside a galaxy. But the



dust clouds themselves obscured the stars, which essentially made the galaxy itself invisible from our view.

“We figured out that the galaxy is actually a massive monster galaxy with as many stars as our Milky Way, but brimming with activity, forming new stars at 100 times the rate of our own galaxy,” said Ivo Labbé, study co-author at the Swinburne University of Technology in Melbourne, Australia.

Previously, astronomers had no evidence of massive

galaxies from the early universe as they formed. Instead, they spotted some of the largest known galaxies had matured when the universe itself was still young. There was nothing in between to suggest formation.

“Our hidden monster galaxy has precisely the right ingredients to be that missing link because they are probably a lot more common,” Williams said.

Given that they discovered one instance of a galaxy like this, now the astronomers need to determine if this was a lucky find or if it’s one of many to be discovered.

“These otherwise hidden galaxies are truly intriguing; it makes you wonder if this is just the tip of the iceberg, with a whole new type of galaxy population just waiting to be discovered,” said Kate Whitaker, study co-author and assistant professor at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

When NASA’s James Webb Space Telescope launches in 2021, it could be used to investigate these galaxies further.

“JWST will be able to look through the dust veil so we can learn how big these galaxies really are and how fast they are growing, to better understand why models fail in explaining them,” Williams said.

(Source: CNN)

Stranded whales detected from space



A new technique for analyzing satellite images may help scientists detect and count stranded whales from space. Researchers tested a new detection method using Very High Resolution (VHR) satellite images from Maxar Technologies of the biggest mass stranding of baleen whales yet recorded. It is hoped that in the future the technique will lead to real-time information as stranding events happen.

The study, published this week in the journal PLoS ONE by scientists from British Antarctic Survey and four Chilean research institutes, could revolutionize how stranded whales, that are dead in the water or beached, are detected in remote places.

In 2015, over 340 whales, most of them sei whales, were involved in a mass-stranding in a remote region of Chilean Patagonia. The stranding was not discovered for several weeks owing to the remoteness of the region. Aerial and boat surveys assessed the extent of the mortality several months after discovery.

The researchers studied satellite images covering thousands of kilometers of coastline, which provided an early insight into the extent of the mortality. They could identify the shape, size and color of the whales, especially after several weeks when the animals turned pink and orange as they decomposed. A greater number of whales were counted in the images captured soon

after the stranding event than from the local surveys.

Many coastal nations have mammal stranding networks recognizing that this is a crucial means to monitor the health of the local environment, especially for providing first notice of potential marine contamination and harmful algal blooms.

Author and whale biologist Dr Jennifer Jackson at British Antarctic Survey says: “The causes of marine mammal strandings are poorly understood and therefore information gathered helps understand how these events may be influenced by overall health, diet, environmental pollution, regional oceanography, social structures and climate change.

“As this new technology develops, we hope it will become a useful tool for obtaining real-time information. This will allow local authorities to intervene earlier and possibly help with conservation efforts.”

Lead author, remote sensing specialist Dr Peter Fretwell at British Antarctic Survey says: “This is an exciting development in monitoring whales from space. Now we have a higher resolution ‘window’ on our planet, satellite imagery may be a fast and cost-effective alternative to aerial surveys allowing us to assess the extent of mass whale stranding events, especially in remote and inaccessible areas.”

(Source: Science Daily)

Musk’s satellite project testing encrypted internet with military planes



The Air Force is using SpaceX’s fledgling satellite network to test encrypted internet services for a number of military planes, the space company’s president said on Tuesday, detailing results for the first customer of Elon Musk’s planned constellation of thousands of broadband-beaming satellites.

“We are delivering high bandwidth into the cockpit of Air Force planes,” SpaceX President and Chief Operating Officer Gwynne Shotwell said on Tuesday. “Right now we’re just testing the capability and figuring out how to make it work.”

SpaceX’s so-called Starlink constellation, a planned network of up to 30,000 satellites in low Earth orbit intended to beam broadband internet globally, is crucial to generating the cash to fund development of Musk’s heavy-lift Mars rocket dubbed Starship.

The Air Force program, known as Global Lightning, started testing with SpaceX in early 2018 and used Starlink’s first two test satellites to beam to terminals fixed to a C-12 military transport plane in flight, demonstrating internet speeds of 610 megabits per-second, SpaceX Senior Vice President Tim Hughes said. That’s fast enough to download a movie in under a minute.

SpaceX launched in May the first batch of 60 operational satellites into low Earth

orbit and plans to launch another 60 in November from an Air Force station in Florida.

Shotwell said the program, part of a \$28 million Pentagon contract awarded to SpaceX in late 2018, is ongoing and expects to test Starlink with “a number” of additional military aircraft types. That contract also includes testing communications between satellites in orbit.

The U.S. military is increasingly dependent on satellites to determine what it does on the ground, guiding munitions with space-based lasers and satellites as well as securing such assets from satellite-jamming technology from Russia and China.

The head of the new U.S. Space Command, General John Raymond, told reporters in September that he visited SpaceX’s Starlink factory in Redmond, Washington, but did not go into details about the Pentagon’s plans.

Starlink is competing with Softbank-backed OneWeb, which aims to give millions of people in remote and rural areas high-speed internet beamed down from space and has already launched a batch of six satellites. Raymond said he also visited OneWeb’s new satellite production line in Cape Canaveral, Florida.

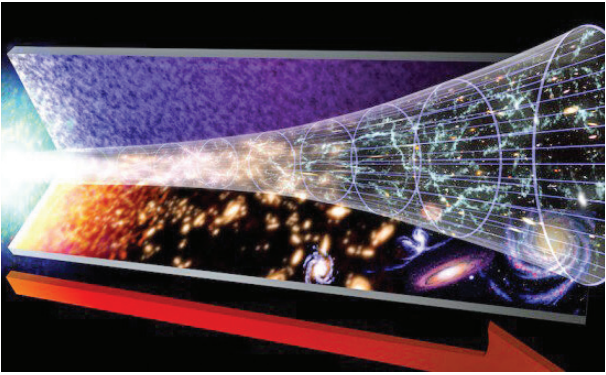
(Source: Reuters)

What was the first color in the universe?

By Brian Koberlein

The universe bathes in a sea of light, from the blue-white flickering of young stars to the deep red glow of hydrogen clouds. Beyond the colors seen by human eyes, there are flashes of X-rays and gamma rays, powerful bursts of radio, and the faint, ever-present glow of the cosmic microwave background. The cosmos is filled with colors seen and unseen, ancient and new. But of all these, there was one color that appeared before all the others, the first color of the universe.

The universe began 13.8 billion years ago with the Big Bang. In its earliest moment, it was more dense and hot than it would ever be again. The Big Bang is often visualized as a brilliant flash of light appearing out of a sea of darkness, but that isn’t an accurate picture. The Big Bang didn’t explode into empty space. The Big Bang was an expanding space filled with energy.



At first, temperatures were so high that light didn’t exist. The cosmos had to cool for a fraction of a second before photons could appear. After about 10 seconds, the universe entered the photon epoch. Protons and neutrons had cooled into the nuclei of hydrogen and helium, and space was filled with a plasma of nuclei, electrons and photons. At that time, the temperature of the universe was about 1 billion degrees Kelvin.

But even though there was light, there was not yet color. Color is something we can see, or at least some kind of eyes could see. During the photon epoch, temperatures were so high that light couldn’t penetrate the dense plasma. Color wouldn’t appear until the nuclei and electrons cooled enough to bind into atoms. It took 380,000 years for the universe to cool that much.

By then, the observable universe was a transparent cosmic cloud of hydrogen and helium 84 million light-years across. All the photons formed in the Big Bang were finally free to stream through space and time.

This is what we now see as the cosmic microwave background—the glow of light from a time when the universe could finally be seen. Over billions of years, the glow has cooled to the point that it now has a temperature less than 3 degrees above absolute zero. When it first appeared, the universe was much warmer, about 3,000 K. The early universe was filled with a bright warm glow.

We have a good idea of what that first color was. The early universe had an almost even temperature throughout, and its light had a distribution of wavelengths known as a blackbody. Many objects get their color from the type of material they are made of, but the color of a blackbody depends only on its temperature. A blackbody at about 3,000 K would have a bright orange-white glow, similar to the warm light of an old 60-watt light bulb.

Humans don’t see color very accurately. The color we perceive depends not only on the actual color of light but its brightness and whether our eyes are dark-adapted. If we could go back to the period of that first light, we would probably perceive an orange glow similar to firelight.

Over the next several hundred million years, the faint orange glow would fade and redden as the universe continued to expand and cool. Eventually, the universe would fade to black. After about 400 million years, the first brilliant blue-white stars began to form, and new light appeared. As stars and galaxies appeared and evolved, the cosmos began to take on a new color.

In 2002, Karl Glazebrook and Ivan Baldry computed the average color from all the light we see from stars and galaxies today to determine the current color of the universe. It turned out to be a pale tan similar to the color of coffee with cream. They named the color “cosmic latte.”

Even this color will only last for a time. As large blue stars age and die, only the deep red glow of dwarf stars will remain. Finally, after trillions of years, even their light will fade, and the universe will become a sea of black. All colors fade in time, and time will carry us all into the dark.

But for now, the colors of the universe still paint us. And if you ever sit by a fire with a creamed coffee as you look up into the dark of night, know that you are bathed by cosmic colors. Past, present, and future.

Biodiversity of insects modeled from space satellite data

The quantity and diversity of plants and animals, especially insects, is decreasing, also in Germany. For this reason, science would like to see opportunities to document the biodiversity of the planet as extensively and comprehensively as possible. In this way, it could be determined whether measures against the insect dieback are effective or not.

Satellite data are well suited for this purpose. “So far, however, they have hardly been used. Scientists were of the opinion that there were no freely available data that would provide sufficient results,” says Professor Jörg Mueller from the Biocenter of Julius-Maximilians-Universität (JMU) Würzburg in Bavaria, Germany. This is not true. Radar data available free of charge can be used very well to monitor biodiversity from space.

This was reported by Mueller’s colleague Dr. So-yeon Bae with an international team in Nature Communications. The South Korean landscape ecologist has shown in the research project DFG Biodiversity Exploratories that radar data from satellites are surprisingly well suited for describing the diversity of vertebrates, plants and fungi in forests, as well as the smallest insects and spiders. This is despite the fact that radar data are relatively coarse and despite the fact that forests with their highly dynamic and complex three-dimensional structure represent a particular challenge for monitoring biodiversity.

The JMU-led research team compared two methods. In five forest areas, whose biodiversity was very well known by ground truths, twelve species groups were analyzed -- on the one hand with high-resolution laser scanning data and on the other hand with coarser radar data.

(Source: Science Daily)

German WW2 U-boat base in France reboots as data center

The thick concrete walls of a long-abandoned World War Two German submarine base in Marseille, southern France, are set to find a new purpose: keeping banks of computer servers safe and cool.

Dutch cloud services firm Interxion plans to invest 140 million euros to turn the “Martha Base” bunker – which was built in 1943 to accommodate up to 20 U-boats but was never completed – into a data center for corporate clients. The first part of the restoration is set to be completed by March.

“It is not our job to restore historical buildings, usually

we build from scratch. But this was an opportunity and Marseille is a major telecoms, cloud and digital hub between Europe, Africa, the Middle-East and Asia,” Interxion France director Fabrice Coquio told reporters.

During the German occupation of France, the bunker was meant to be the main German U-boat base in the Mediterranean, but Allied forces bombed the city in May 1944 and took it back in August that year.

After the war it was used for storage by the army and customs service, but it had been abandoned in recent years.

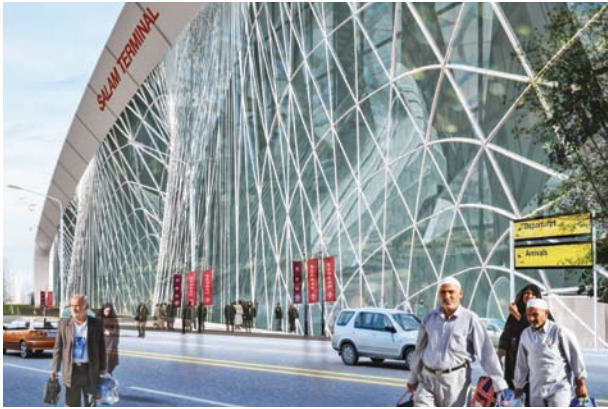
Coquio said the port city is France’s second data hub after Paris and the tenth-biggest in the world with about a dozen submarine and terrestrial data cables arriving there, and that Interxion needs to be as close as possible to those cables.

Filling an area of 25,000 square meters, the data center will consume 24 megawatts of electricity, the equivalent of a city of 20,000 people, and will have its own back-up diesel generators to protect against blackouts.

(Source: Reuters)

IKIA plans to operate more flights from Salam Terminal

TOURISM TEHRAN — Imam Khomeini International Airport plans to increase the number of daily flights from newly-established Salam Terminal by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 2020).



Imam Khomeini International Airport City Managing Director Ali Rostami on Wednesday said that the domestically-constructed terminal is ready to operate 15 international flights. “Currently, airlines operating international flights from the terminal include Aseman Airlines, Azerbaijan Airlines, SalamAir, Iraqi Airways, Bravo Airways and Armenia Airways,” he said. IKIA only handled international flights previously but plans are underway to transfer and increase some of the domestic flights to Terminal No. 1 in the near future, he added. In June, President Hassan Rouhani inaugurated Salam Terminal which has reportedly a capacity to transport five million passengers per year.

Iran prime source of tourism for Turkey in August

TOURISM TEHRAN — A total of 276,000 Iranian nationals visited Turkey in August, making the Islamic Republic the main source of foreign arrivals in the neighboring country.

Latest data released by the Turkish Statistical Institute show 276,000 Iranian tourists visited Turkey in August to register a 45% increase compared with the similar month of last year, Eghtesad Online reported on Tuesday.

The eastern province of Van, the southern province of Antalya, and Istanbul, which is Turkey’s largest city, are the most popular destinations for Iranian vacationers.

Some 1.37 million Iranian tourists visited Turkey during the first eight months of 2019, accounting for 4.4% of all international arrivals in the country. In fact, Iran was Turkey’s fifth biggest source of tourism from January to August, latest data released by the Turkish Statistical Institute show, the report said.

The data showed that Russia, Germany, the UK, and Bulgaria constituted the main tourist sources for Turkey before Iran.

In August, the first rail service between Tehran and Ankara, capitals of the two neighbors, resumed operation after a four-year halt. Later that month Iran and Turkey started negotiating to launch a direct passenger train service between Tehran and Istanbul.



ROUND THE GLOBE

Paphos archaeological property

Paphos, situated in the district of Paphos in western Cyprus, is a serial archaeological property consisting of three components at two sites: the town of Kato Paphos (Site I), and the village of Kouklia (Site II). Kato Paphos includes the remains of ancient Nea Paphos (Aphrodite’s Sacred City) and of the Kato Paphos necropolis known as Tafoi ton Vasileon (“Tombs of the Kings”), further to the north.



The village of Kouklia includes the remains of the Temple of Aphrodite (Aphrodite’s Sanctuary) and Palaeopaphos (Old Paphos). Because of their great antiquity, and because they are closely and directly related to the cult and legend of Aphrodite (Venus), who under the influence of Homeric poetry became the ideal of beauty and love, inspiring writers, poets, and artists throughout human history, these two sites can indeed be considered to be of outstanding universal value.

Paphos, which has been inhabited since the Neolithic period, was a center of the cult of Aphrodite and of pre-Hellenic fertility deities. Aphrodite’s legendary birthplace was on the island of Cyprus, where her temple was erected by the Mycenaeans in the 12th century BC and continued to be used until the Roman period. The site is a vast archaeological area, with remains of villas, palaces, theatres, fortresses and tombs. These illustrate Paphos’ exceptional architectural and historic value and contribute extensively to our understanding of ancient architecture, ways of life, and thinking. The villas are richly adorned with mosaic floors that are among the most beautiful in the world. These mosaics constitute an illuminated album of ancient Greek mythology, with representations of Greek gods, goddesses and heroes, as well as activities of everyday life.

(Source: UNESCO)

Fam trip, a new way to introduce tourist attractions of Iran

1 → However, in recent years, Turkey has created beautiful frames for carpet photography and attracted more than 2 million foreign tourists annually to Cappadocia.

Another example is Russia’s Saint Petersburg which attracts many tourists every year to take photographs with the tiles of some mosques that are barely two decades old! All of these examples are a warning alarm for confiscation of Iranian historic achievements.

After a simple investigation of the strategy implemented in Australia and other touristic countries, one can conclude that Iran has chosen the correct strategy to utilize the capacities of influencers, but it is only the beginning. There is a need for a coherent plan to be able to pave the way for future growth in tourist attraction.

Recently, some Instagram influencers have shared their experiences about the beauties, security and enjoyment of traveling to a country with thousands of years of civilization history. They have visited and stayed in Tehran, Shiraz, Isfahan and Kashan and shared their photos and videos on IG and the analysis of their feedback can show us the picture of the project’s success. This 12 influential tourists arrived in Iran on October 5th and stayed for a week or so (some left sooner and some later) in

the abovementioned cities.

These influencers have started to introduce Iran in their IG pages as well as other social media networks, so that their IG posts about Iran have been liked about 1,872,000 times in total and are estimated to be viewed at least 10 million times by people from around the world. In addition, the page of the project (@feeliran) has also been posting their photos with a total of 2 million likes and estimated 10 million views.

Familiarization trip projects for influencers from different countries can have a complementary effect for visa waiver program conducted by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts and the “Feel Iran” project is a good example of a successful project, from which both the private sector and the government are benefited.

Facilitating the future familiarization trips for the private sector can upgrade the share of Iran in the world tourism industry as the third most important and growing industry throughout the world. With the least possible costs, this method of marketing can bring the highest possible output for Iran.

The author is the deputy director for public relations and information at the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts



An influencer poses for a photo inside the atmospheric Nasir al-Molk Mosque, also known as the “Pink Mosque”, which is an amalgam of history, architecture and arts in Shiraz, southern Iran, October 2019. (Credit: Feeliran)

Nowadays, many countries abuse the cultural assets of Iran in order to make destinations for tourists. For example, hand-made carpets have always belonged to Iranian culture and even China couldn’t copy and possess it. However, in recent years, Turkey has created beautiful frames for carpet photography and attracted more than 2 million foreign tourists annually to Cappadocia.

Over-crowded tourist destinations are changing the way we travel

Certain places on our planet are getting loved to death. Why?

Not long ago, international travel was the purview of the rich and worldly. Today, however, the middle class enthusiastically travels the globe with bucket lists that concentrate attention on the most popular places in the world (and rightly so). Unfortunately, the byproduct of this increase in travel means that if the original character of these places is not in jeopardy now, it soon will be.

Hence travel experts offer 6 ways to travel responsibly in an age of over-tourism.

■ 1. Manage your expectations and emotions

As with much of life, aligning expectations with reality is half of the road to happiness. Planning travel is no different in this regard, as you anticipate what you will experience. If we allow preconceived notions of the Taj Mahal or Machu Picchu – without crowds – drive our desire to travel halfway around the world to experience these iconic destinations first hand, we may indeed leave disappointed.

The proper research will help you to align expectations with reality. Ask many questions, but ask the right questions and don’t be afraid of the answers. Most importantly, stay open to the experience before you. It is unknown what lies ahead and that is the magic of travel. Be diligent in letting go of preconceived expectations, they are persistent. Refuse to let them as well as annoyances like crowds distract you from what drew you there in the first place. That’s when the true joy of discovery flows – no matter what it looks like.

■ 2. Find a local connection

Hire a passionate, local guide help to deepen the travel experience while avoiding the ‘group think’ impact of large tour groups. A good local guide can help skirt the crowds at popular sites and even introduce less-known sites for a unique perspective.

For example, a good guide will take you to the Taj Mahal twice, once to get in line before it opens and later in the afternoon before it closes to experience variable lighting.



■ 3. Rethink your bucket list

Discover wonders of the world beyond UNESCO’s at-risk sites or the favorite ports of call of the cruise industry. Instead of the crowded hilltop towns of Tuscany, try the hills of the Istrian peninsula of Slovenia and Croatia. Rather than being part of the problem of overcrowding in Venice, take the ferry to the small fishing town of Rovinj, where you are welcomed by locals who take you around in a traditional Batana fishing boat.

■ 4. Timing is everything – spend time at the right place

Plan your day at famous sites carefully and be sure to get the latest information as local conditions and regulations change constantly. The best plan is familiar the world over. In Croatia, plan to tour Dubrovnik before cruise ship passengers disembark, in Cambodia visit Siem Reap before tour buses disgorge, and in Peru arrive at Machu Picchu before the daily trains do. When you finally are where you’ve dreamt of being, follow slow travel principles and linger longer, but in fewer places.

■ 5. Pay to play

A great many worthwhile experiences cost more. Whether a part of a private and exclusive event or of a carefully managed ecotour that limits the number of visitors, the extra dollars spent help to protect fragile habitats and visitor experiences.

In Africa, this may look like tracking mountain gorillas in Rwanda and Uganda for which there are limited permits. To protect the experience in some locales for years to come, some safaris are very exclusive and conducted in a private nature reserve like Timbavati in Greater Kruger N.P. In Tanzania, the remote camps of Katavi and Mahale require bush flights to access some of the wildest places on the planet.

In South America, the fragile cultural patrimony of the Inca Trail in Peru and delicate balance of nature in the Galapagos Islands are carefully managed by limited permits and fees that control access and provide a source of revenue for critical conservation programs. Advance planning is required to enjoy the privilege of being among the few where limited numbers of permits are allotted.

■ 6. Consider where you stay

Your choice of accommodations is one of the most important considerations in minimizing impact on the local environs while maximizing the benefits you bring to the local community. Many hotels, camps, ecolodges, yachts and expedition ships are rated for their level of sustainability. They are rated on energy sources, recycling, waste management, water conservation, food sourcing, and other sustainability-focused initiatives. In addition, many are actively involved in nature and wildlife conservation and in educating guests about ecosystems and biodiversity. These accommodations are deeply connected and committed to indigenous culture and the well-being of local communities. The highest rated ecolodges and camps are safeguarding the world’s cultural and natural heritage while delivering the most meaningful guest experiences.

(Source: eturbonews.com)

Croatia ready to join border-free Schengen area, EU Commission says

STRASBOURG (Reuters) — The European Commission recommended on Tuesday that Croatia joins the border-free Schengen area, more than four years after the Balkan country applied for membership.

Croatia became an EU member in 2013 but to join the Schengen area it had to convince Brussels that it was able to effectively manage the bloc’s external border, a particularly sensitive issue since Europe’s 2015 migrant crisis.

Membership of the Schengen zone is expected to benefit the Croatian economy and its tourism sector which accounts for nearly one fifth of the country’s output, as checks to the cross-border movement of people would be removed.

“Croatia has taken the measures to ensure that the necessary conditions are met (to join Schengen),” the EU commissioner for migration Dimitris Avramopoulos told a news conference in Strasbourg.

The decision to allow Croatia to join



the Schengen area must be upheld by all EU governments. France last week blocked the opening of EU membership talks with North Macedonia and Albania despite the commission’s recommendation to begin negotiations.

The Schengen zone comprises 22 of the EU’s 28 member states as well as four non-EU members - Norway, Iceland, Switzerland and Liechtenstein. As well as Croatia, the other EU members not in Schengen are Britain, Ireland, Bulgaria, Romania and Cyprus.

Brexit, Yellow Vests dampen France’s tourism forecast

France’s ambition of welcoming 100 million foreign visitors in 2020 has been pushed back two years, with the government saying Yellow Vest protests and Brexit have pushed the target out of reach.

In a budget document posted online, the French finance ministry said: “France still aims to have 100 million foreign tourists, nonetheless the goal has been pushed back, given current circumstances, to 2022.”

Figures from 2019 suggest a decline in foreign tourism, with the number of overnight stays in hotels and hostels across France falling by 2.5 percent in the first quarter.

The document said this trend can be largely explained by nationwide social movements at the beginning of the year, which impacted reservations.

■ Brexit connection

The weakening of the British pound against the euro as a result of Brexit is said to be another factor, given the UK offers France its “biggest source of tourists”.

Nevertheless France posted a new record last year when it welcomed near-



ly 90 million foreign tourists – despite sometimes violent anti-government protests that prompted many visitors to delay their trips.

The country remains the world’s top tourist destination, with numbers climbing by 3 percent in 2018 from a year earlier.

While Europeans still make up the bulk of foreign tourists to France, national statistics agency Insee showed the biggest increase came from Asian visitors.

(Source: RFI)

Double Standard: Reuters coverage of women’s stadium attendance in Iran stands in contrast with Saudi Arabia

By Alireza Hashemi

TEHRAN — The first official presence of Iranian women in football stadiums earlier this month brought to surface a double-standard in the coverage the British-run agency Reuters, whose narrative of a similar move in Saudi Arabia last year was drastically different. Earlier this year, Iran left a bar on women watching men football matches, after Saudi Arabia took a similar step in January 2018. 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.

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.

The Saudi government also allowed a removed a ban on women entering stadiums last year, as part of the so-called Vision 2030 reform program.

But the tone and language of the Reuters reports on the two similar moves seems quite different.

■ **Saudi women hail decision**

The agency published only one report on Saudi women attending men-only stadiums for the first time.

The piece, published on January 13, 2018, is titled “Saudi women score right to watch men’s soccer in stadiums”.

The article portrays a positive atmosphere at the stadium, writing that the Saudi guards were “welcoming” people into the family section of the stadium after women “scored” right to enter stadiums.

The report says the decision is “one of many changes the country has undergone in recent months, hailed as proof of a new progressive trend in the deeply conservative Muslim Kingdom”.

The next paragraph says Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman “has been hailed as the face of these changes”, referring to Vision 2030 reform program.

This paragraph on MBS’s “reforms” takes flattering coverage to new extremes:

“Many young Saudis regard his recent ascent to power as proof their generation is taking a central place in running a country whose patriarchal traditions have for dec-

ades made power the province of the old and blocked women’s progress.”

And an attendee says “thank god that [the decision] came in the right time” and “hopefully what’s to come will be even more beautiful for women”.

■ **This is not enough**

Reuters published an “exclusive” piece before the Iran-Cambodia match, titled “Iran stadium campaigner says women attending match will ‘break a taboo’”.

The article says Iranian women will be allowed to watch men’s football in a stadium for the first time in 40 years, “but campaigners are not convinced the match against Cambodia heralds a wider opening up of sports by the government.”

Quoting an Iranian “activist” who did not want to be named because “protesters have faced repression in Iran”, Reuters writes this is not enough and FIFA should have pushed Iran “harder and sooner to adhere to its anti-discrimination rules”.

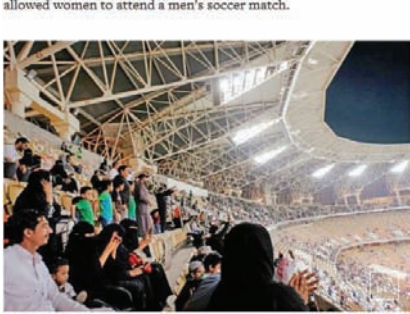
The article points to the case of self-immolation of Sahar Khodayari, saying she was an Iranian girl who set herself on fire “to protest against her arrest for trying to get into a match”.

But this is far from reality. According to her family, Khodayari was arrested for not wearing hijab and insulting police forces at

Saudi women score right to watch men’s soccer in stadiums

JEDDAH (Reuters) - Women in black abayas and fluorescent orange vests stood at the gates at King Abdullah Stadium, welcoming people into the family section that, for the first time in Saudi Arabia, allowed women to attend a men's soccer match.

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Screengrab from the Reuters article on Saudi women’s stadium attendance

Iran’s women football fans fenced off after decades-long ban lifted

Emma Barba

LONDON (Thomson Reuters Foundation) - The sister of Iran’s national football captain said the lifting of a ban on women in stadiums for Thursday’s World Cup qualifier did not go far enough, with many female fans unable to buy tickets even though seats were available.



Screengrab from a Reuters article on Iranian women’s stadium attendance

the gates of the Azadi stadium in March. And the self-immolation had its origins in his bipolar disorder. According to her family, he has committed suicide once before.

The activist tells Reuters “FIFA were sort of responsible for that” because they were aware of Iran’s “discrimination” against women for years.

The decision will “break a taboo for the hardliners in Iran”, Reuters says. However, Reuters fails to mention But one of those hardliners, former Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, asked for Iranian women to attend stadiums late 2000s.

The activist says Iranian authorities “killed the joy of going there” because the tickets were available for sale for a short period of time, the number of tickets was inadequate and there was no family section in the stadium.

This is while out of 4,600 tickets put to sale only 4,000 were purchased. Moreover, Iranian authorities allowed women who had not bought tickets to enter the Azadi stadium shortly after the match began.

Another piece published right after the game against repeats the story of Sahar Khodayari, again claiming Khodayari “set herself on fire to protect against her arrest for trying to get into a match”.

The report also says Iranian women are dissatisfied they are not able to attend matches with their male family members and they also want to attend all games, not just World Cup qualifiers.

The third piece is titled “Iran’s women football fans fenced off after decades-long ban lifted”.

This story is an interview with Maryam Shojaei, the sister of Iran’s national football captain Masoud Shojaei, who says the game “did not go far enough” as “many female fans [were] unable to buy tickers even though seats were available.”

Speaking by phone from Turkey, Shojaei says she was “angered to see women and men separated” in the stadium.

She also said “many women are very angry” because only 3,500 seats were allocated for women, and this is “a direct example of gender discrimination”.

■ **Big differences**

It appears the Saudi story could be of more news value to western agencies.

Saudi Arabia is well known as one of the world’s most gender-segregated nations, and the January 2018 match was the first sporting event Saudi women could attend in history.

But sex-segregation in Iran is limited to few public places and stadiums were subjected to segregation mainly because of the masculine atmosphere.

Iranian women are free to watch men games in many other sports and they have also showed up to man football matches several times before.

But Reuters dedicated only one report to the Saudi Arabia case and three reports to the Iranian case.

Reuters did not contact Saudi dissident to hear their opinion of the Saudi reforms, as if all people in Saudi Arabia are okay with the government.

The Saudi reports doesn’t go into details, just expressing satisfaction that the ban has been lifted.

But those Iranians contacted by Reuters are all upset, and all of them want more.

The main thrust of the Saudi article is that Saudi people hail MBS for his reforms, but the Iranian articles portray a rather dark picture and lament deficiencies.

It seems safe to conclude the case brought to surface an indefensible double-standard by Reuters on Iran and Saudi Arabia.

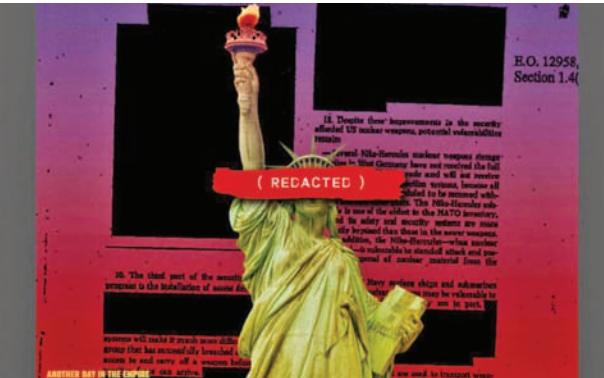
CIA and CFR work together to destroy truth

By Kurt Nimmo

ACTIVISTPOST — Early last year, the Swiss Propaganda Research center (SPR) published information cementing into place something many of us already know—the “mainstream” corporate media is controlled by the Council on Foreign Relations.

“It is no secret that over the last 4 decades, mainstream media has been consolidated from dozens of competing companies to only six,” writes Matt Agorist of The Free Thought Project. “Hundreds of channels, websites, news outlets, newspapers, and magazines, making up ninety percent of all media is controlled by very few people—giving Americans the illusion of choice... Top journalists and executives from all major media companies are integrated into the CFR.”

Peter Dale Scott’s American War Machine: Deep Politics, the CIA Global Drug Connection, and the Road to Afghanistan documents the connection between the CFR, the CIA, the national security state, and Wall Street banksters.



“[Frank] Wisner and [Allen] Dulles (the latter even when not in the government) were powerful because of their central position in the New York overworld of law, banking, the Council on Foreign Relations, and the New York Social Register,” writes Scott.

In its first years the CIA, like OSS before it, was dominated internally by the aristocratic elements of the New York overworld. All seven of the known deputy directors of the CIA at the time came from the same New York legal and financial circles, and no less than six of these seven (including both Dulles and Wisner) were listed in the New York Social Register as well.

Charles Burris writes:

[O]ur nation does indeed have, like its British cousins across the pond, an Establishment, complete with its own theological canon and doxology of statecraft and spy craft. Its “Vatican” is the Council on Foreign Relations. Its primary source of treasure and alms has been the Morgan and Rockefeller financial empires, which created the Fed, the great enabler of the Welfare-Warfare State. Many of its elite seminarians have studied at Ivy League institutions such as Harvard, Princeton, or Columbia; some in particular, at Yale where they were initiated into Skull and Bones.

This cabal of financial “overlords,” as Scott might have it, congregated at the CFR, is responsible for the “news” we consume daily, often without question or suspicion.

“The narrative created by CFR and its cohorts is picked up by their secondary communicators, also known the mainstream media, who push it on the populace with no analysis or questioning,” writes Agorist.

The plan to control the thoughts and opinions of the masses through media came to fruition in 1915. Congressman Oscar Callaway pointed this out two years later. His remarks were published in the Congressional Record of February 9, 1917, page 2947:

The plan to control the thoughts and opinions of the masses through media came to fruition in 1915. Congressman Oscar Callaway pointed this out two years later.

In March, 1915, the J.P. Morgan interests, the steel, shipbuilding, and powder interest, and their subsidiary organizations, got together 12 men high up in the newspaper world and employed them to select the most influential newspapers in the United States and sufficient number of them to control generally the policy of the daily press. They found it was only necessary to purchase the control of 25 of the greatest papers. An agreement was reached; the policy of the papers was bought, to be paid for by the month; an editor was furnished for each paper to properly supervise and edit information regarding the questions of preparedness, militarism, financial policies, and other things of national and international nature considered vital to the interests of the purchasers.

The CIA’s effort to consolidate and expand this hold on media tightened in the 1950s under what has become known as Operation Mockingbird. This effort to control information was later admitted in a CIA document.

“Although it is a document outlining their desire to become more open and transparent, the deception outlined by various whistleblowers (example) requires us to read between the lines and recognize that the relationships shared between intelligence agencies and our sources of information are not always warranted and pose inherent conflicts of interest,” writes Arjun Walia.

How many of us actually read between the lines? Not many, although the number is growing as it becomes obvious a hidden elite and its national security state apparatus—the CIA, the Pentagon, the NSA, and associated contractors and supposed NGOs—is skewering the “news” to provide various pretexts for endless war and mass murder that enrich the elite and their top-level cronies.

The torture of Julian Assange and the mistreatment of whistleblowers and genuine investigative journalists—the latter grew considerably under the “Change and Hope” phony Barack Obama—sends a strong message: if you reveal the secret crimes of the state and its financial overlords, you will pay a heavy price.

Turkey: No country for Kurdish newspapers

By Tom Stevenson and Murat Bayram

MEE — The newspaper formerly known as Welat may hold a record for the number of names under which it has published. Welat, Hawar, Welatê Me, Dengê, and Azadiya Welat are just a few of the titles the paper has held since its founding more than 25 years ago.

As the only nationally distributed newspaper in Turkey to be printed in the Kurdish language, the paper was subject to many bans, but its staff always found a way to evade the censors and refound the paper under a new name. Until now.

On 8 July, Welat was shut down by a government decree passed under Turkey’s state of emergency. This time, it has not been able to return to print.

Welat had already been banned twice in the last two years under the names Azadiya Welat in 2016 and Rojeva Medya in 2017. Last year, the paper returned to using its original name, Welat.

“That turned out to be both the first and the last name of our newspaper,” said Cetin Altun, the paper’s editor.

After the failed military coup in Turkey in July 2016, media outlets across the country have come under harsh pressure from the state. But for Kurdish media, this was nothing new. Even speaking Kurdish was banned in Turkey until 1991.

Pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party deputies hold copies of Azadiya Welat during a meeting of the Turkish parliament in October 2008 after a court banned the paper for a month (AFP)

Welat was founded as the first Kurdish language newspaper in Turkey in 1992, one year after the language prohibition was lifted. But despite the official removal of the ban, Kurdish was, and is, stigmatised. It is still illegal to provide public school education in Kurdish anywhere in Turkey.

For the first ten years of its existence, Welat was published in Istanbul because of the extent of political repression in the Kurdish heartland in southeastern Turkey. In 2003, the paper moved its headquarters to Diyarbakir and expanded its coverage, becoming a daily in 2006.

■ **Journalists killed**

Since the three-decades-old war between the Turkish army and the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) in the predominantly Kurdish southeast restarted in 2015, media outlets have faced increased pressure. “Many of our journalists have been killed, detained, arrested, and there were hundreds of legal cases opened against them,” Cetin told Middle East Eye.

The war between Turkish security forces and local militants linked to the banned PKK, in which more than 4,000 have been killed in three years, provided the worst possible environment for the Kurdish language press as fighting spilled into the major cities of the southeast.

In February 2016, one of Welat’s reporters, a journalist named Rohat Aktaş, was killed in a mass killing known as the Cizre basement massacre, according to individuals who were in the basement before the attack occurred. Turkish security forces, who were battling armed Kurdish fighters, stormed three basements in the city of Cizre, killing more than 150 people.

Welat’s editorial line is supportive of the opposition, pro-Kurdish People’s Democratic Party (HDP). It is also more accommodating of the PKK’s view of the conflict than any Turkish media outlet, which has earned it the censure of the authorities. The paper’s editors claim they represent widely held views in the predominantly Kurdish southeast.

The Turkish government claims Welat published “propaganda for terrorist organisations”. In an ongoing court case against

24 journalists from the paper, prosecutors have demanded 300 years in prison in total on terrorism propaganda charges.

Altun, however, maintains that his staff were journalists, whatever their political opinions might be.

“We are journalists: our reporters have been killed with cameras, pencils and notebooks in their hands,” he told MEE. All of the charges against Welat have concerned articles the newspaper has published.

“Whatever the state may say, they dislike us because we have resisted the assimilation of Kurdish language and culture attempted by the Turkish state,” Altun said.

■ **Raids and bans**

On Welat’s final day in print last month, police raided and detained a group of journalists from Ozgurlukcu Demokrasi, a pro-Kurdish newspaper published in Turkish.

Welat’s team had finished their last edition of the paper, which included a report on the arrests, and sent the copies to their printers in Istanbul. But the paper would never make it to print; police officers were waiting at the printers and blocked the paper from being published.

Altun approached printers across the country seeking a publishing partner, but to no avail. The paper’s staff considered buying their own printer and publishing despite the ban, but decided against the move on the grounds that the printing equipment would surely be seized.

As a statement of defiance, for two days they published the paper using a photocopier and sent the copies to majority Kurdish cities. These were the last printed editions of the paper.

Welat’s staff have not given up altogether. After the ban, they have moved their work online by setting up a news website under the name E-Rojname (E-Newspaper). “We couldn’t stop entirely,” Altun said. “It’s a responsibility to their memory of our colleagues to pick up their pens, and to use them.”

The website was quickly banned and readers in Turkey must use a VPN to access it.

■ **Print culture**

Welat may have been the only newspaper published nationally in Kurdish, but it is not the only casualty among the Kurdish press in Turkey.

In March 2011, Rosan Lezgin founded Newepel, an independent monthly newspaper published in the lesser-spoken Zazaki dialect of Kurdish. On 15 June last year, having published 100 issues, it too went out of print.

Hundreds of copies of the paper were confiscated by local government officials. The state postal service PTT would mysteriously lose large Newepel deliveries. It was absurd

- Rosan Lezgin, founder of Newepel

Lezgin, an autodidact Zazaki-speaking Kurdish columnist and novelist, founded Newepel as an eight-page literary newspaper that would both celebrate and preserve Zazaki language and culture. In addition to essays and local news, the paper published poetry, folkloric literary works, and even nursery rhymes.

“It’s very important to support these things, because we are losing our language, and the job of preserving it hasn’t been

After the recent closure of the only national Kurdish language newspaper in the country, Kurdish journalists feel the future is bleak



Editor Cetin Altun in an office that Welat currently uses as a newsroom (MEE/Murat Bayram)

done. The older generation who have the knowledge are dying out,” he told MEE.

Newepel’s style was unusual for a newspaper. Its writing was designed to be close to the spoken language of the countryside, but in written form. The paper nonetheless had an intellectual community around it, with dozens of academics and authors contributing to it.

But as with all Kurdish language publishing in Turkey, keeping the paper going wasn’t easy. According to Lezgin, both the state itself and elements within Zazaki-speaking society who were unhappy with the paper’s apparent lack of a clear political stance put pressure on him.

“Hundreds of copies of the paper were confiscated by local government officials. The state postal service PTT would mysteriously lose large Newepel deliveries – it was absurd,” he said.

Having decided to end the paper’s run at 100 issues, Lezgin has also taken Newepel online, to Zazaki.net, a website he maintains in the spirit of his newspaper.

■ **‘We feel hopeless’**

It isn’t only Kurdish newspapers that have faced closures. A string of Kurdish language television channels have also been closed by government decree in September 2016, two months after the attempted coup.

But in Diyarbakir, journalist Ferhat Mehmetoglu has recently set up a new television and radio station that broadcasts in Kurdish. With a staff of just three people, his channel, Amed TV, which is named after a common Kurdish name for Diyarbakir, is still going.

Mehmetoglu started his channel in 2010 but was forced out by the owners over the apparent lack of advertisements he aired for the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP), he explained. Having fought and won a seven-year legal battle over the rights to the name Amed TV, he has now refounded the channel as an independent broadcaster.

“Kurdish media is not in a good state at the moment; the overall quality is not good,” Mehmetoglu told MEE. “So our goal is to run a local Kurdish language channel of high quality.” Amed TV lacks the resources to cover all the breaking news. Instead, the channel reports on cultural and artistic items.

However, the bans and closures of Kurdish newspapers are a sign of dark times for Kurdish readers, according to Mehmetoglu. “After Welat was banned, we feel hopeless for the future of Kurdish media.”

MEE asked the Turkish government for comment, but had not heard back by the time of publication.

Charity foundation provides 40,000 stationery packages for the deprived

SOCIETY d e s k **TEHRAN** — The Mostazafan Foundation has provided some 40,000 packages consisting of stationery products for student residing in deprived areas, according to the Foundation's public relations department.

These packages include 13 essential stationery items which have been distributed among the financially-struggling students, Mehr reported on Wednesday.



The items, types and contents of the packages are selected according to the educational level and gender of the students, which are domestically made and are of high quality.

By the end of this year (March 2020), in addition to distributing educational books and holding vocational training courses for the deprived, the Foundation also plans to distribute thousands of clothes among students in underprivileged areas.

First 100% electric black cab for 120 years launches in London

The launch of a fully electric black cab for London has been hailed by the mayor for helping clean up the capital's polluted air.

The Dynamo, a taxi converted from a Nissan electric van in a Coventry factory, is the first 100% electric taxi on the streets of London since 1899. Its predecessor, the Bersey, failed to take off



outside central London capable of up to 400 miles.

The Dynamo Taxi, based on the Nissan e-NV200 Evalia, has a range of up to 187 miles from a single charge. It costs £55,495, but drivers will be able to claim a £7,500 government grant for electric cars against the price.

The mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, said he was delighted to see taxi-drivers "doing their bit to improve our filthy air". Most of the 20,000 licensed black cabs in the capital are diesel.

He said: "Working with cabbies to go electric is a key part of our plans to improve London's air quality. The Dynamo taxi will accelerate the retirement of polluting diesel taxis from city streets across the UK."

London has set aside £42m to encourage drivers to trade in older, dirtier vehicles earlier. According to TfL, taxis account for 16% of vehicle nitrogen oxide (NOx) emissions in central London. (Source: The Guardian)

WORDS IN THE NEWS

State of the Union address

(January 30, 2002)
President Bush has delivered his first State of the Union address to Congress. He warned Americans that they face continued danger and said that several countries still harbored terrorists or weapons of mass destruction. This report from Tim Franks. Tim Franks: George Bush told Congress and the American people that as he spoke the nation was at war, the economy was in recession and the civilized world faced **unprecedented** dangers and yet he insisted the United States was stronger than ever. He warned Americans that terrorist training camps still existed in at least twelve countries and North Korea, Iran and Iraq were, **as he put it**, **an axis of evil** - regimes which posed a grave and growing danger for which he said **the price of indifference** would be catastrophic.

President Bush: «I will not **wait on events** while dangers gather. I will not **stand by** as peril draws closer and closer. The United States of America will not permit the world's most dangerous regimes to threaten us with the world's most destructive weapons.»

Tim Franks: For that reason the President proposed the largest increase in defense spending in two decades and a doubling of the budget for **homeland security**. Opinion polls suggest that the level of interest many Americans have in the war on terrorism is beginning to **dwindle**. The President's speech was in part an extended **appeal** for the nation to be as concerned as ever.

■ **Words unprecedented:** if something is unprecedented it has never happened before or is, here, the worst of its kind
as he put it: in the words he used
axis of evil: places which have links with each other and with unlawful groups
posed: are causing
the price of indifference: the cost of not taking an interest
wait on events: do nothing until something happens
stand by: if you stand by and let something bad happen, you do nothing to stop it happening
homeland security: precautions to protect the USA
dwindle: if something dwindles it becomes smaller or less strong
appeal: request

(Source: BBC)

Tuberculosis treatment completely free of charge in Iran

1 → "However, foreign nationals infected with TB in the country accounted for 12 percent in the Iranian calendar year 1392 (March 2013-March 2014)," she said.

During the past five decades, the incidence of tuberculosis has dropped from 140 per 100,000 to 11 per 100,000 people in Iran, she highlighted.

According to Nasehi, the highest incidence of tuberculosis in the country is in the age group of 65 years and above.

"Sistan-Baluchestan and Golestan provinces have the highest prevalence of TB, respectively," she noted.

She further concluded that tuberculosis is mostly treatable, provided that one began taking medication on time and taking the course of treatment completely.

■ Tuberculosis symptoms and causes

Tuberculosis is a communicable disease that is a major cause of ill health, one of the top 10 causes of death worldwide and the leading cause of death from a single infectious agent (ranking above HIV/AIDS). It is caused by the bacillus Mycobacterium tuberculosis, which is spread when people who are sick with TB expel bacteria into the air; for example, by coughing.



It typically affects the lungs (pulmonary TB) but can also affect other sites (extrapulmonary TB). About a quarter of the world's population is infected with M. tuberculosis and thus at risk of developing

TB disease. With a timely diagnosis and treatment with first-line antibiotics for 6 months, most people who develop TB can be cured and onward transmission of infection curtailed.

\$2.3b to be earmarked for school renovation projects

SOCIETY d e s k **TEHRAN** — A budget of 100 trillion rials (nearly \$2.3 billion) will be allocated to renovate and retrofit the schools across the country while constructing new educational places, Education Minister Mohsen Haji Mirzaei has stated.

The budget is partially paid by the Ministry of Education and the benefactors by the end of this year (March 2020), Fars quoted Haji Mirzaei as saying on Tuesday.

Referring to the students' population of 15 million in the country, he noted: "There are 150,000 schools which is not sufficient, so we try to increase the number of educational facilities."

In December 2018, Mehrolah Rahkshanimehr, director of the organization for renovation, development,



and equipment of schools said that 30 percent of the schools nationwide are old, of which some 12 percent must be completely rebuilt and 18 percent must be retrofitted, which requires a total budget of \$3 billion.

There are 530,000 classrooms nationwide, 160,000 of which are dilapidated, not meeting safety standards, he added.

Generous benefactor frees 11 prisoners in Tehran

SOCIETY d e s k **TEHRAN** — A Tehrani philanthropist has donated as much as 3 billion rials (nearly \$72,000) to free 11 prisoners who had committed involuntary financial crimes, IRNA reported on Wednesday.

"He made the contribution and released the inmates who had been imprisoned for many years and had poor financial conditions," Manouchehr Rahmani, the director of Tehran's office of Blood Money Organization, explained.

Donation of benefactors and forgiveness of the plaintiffs in unintentional financial crimes not only free one person but saves the prisoner's family as well as preventing social and cultural harm, he highlighted.

Since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21), 3,318 prisoners who had committed unintentional

The number of TB cases occurring each year (and thus the number of TB-related deaths) can also be driven down by reducing the prevalence of health-related risk factors for TB (e.g. smoking, diabetes and HIV infection), providing preventive treatment to people with a latent TB infection, and taking multisectoral action on broader determinants of TB infection and disease (e.g. poverty, housing quality and undernutrition).

■ TB in the world

According to World Health Organization, an estimated 10.0 million (range, 9.0–11.1 million) people fell ill with TB in 2018, a number that has been relatively stable in recent years. The burden of disease varies enormously among countries, from fewer than five to more than 500 new cases per 100,000 populations per year, with the global average being around 130.

TB affects people of both sexes in all age groups but the highest burden is in men (aged >15 years), who accounted for 57 percent of all TB cases in 2018. By comparison, women accounted for 32 percent and children (aged <15) for 11 percent.



tional crimes have been released, Asadollah Joolaei, head of Blood Money Organization said earlier this week that since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21), philanthropists helped release 3,318 prisoners who had committed unintentional crimes.

Currently, 1,289 unintentional crime prisoners are behind bars in Tehran, he added.

10,000 taxis to be added to public transport fleet

SOCIETY d e s k **TEHRAN** — A total of 10,000 new taxis will be added to the country's public transport fleet by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 2020), Mohsen Pourseyed Aqaei, deputy mayor of Tehran for traffic and transport affairs, has announced.

A scheme on renovation of clunker taxis started in the Iranian calendar year 1395 (March 2016-March 2017), through which 90,000 new cabs would have replaced the old ones.

"This year, however, regarding economic conditions and sanctions, car prices have increased. This issue has led to a halt to the renovation scheme," he lamented.

He went on to highlight that negotiations with Iran Khodro car manufacturing company led to a contract to receive some 10,000 cabs by the end of this year, ISNA reported on Tuesday.

Referring to the taxi fleet as a public transport system providing people with cheap and high quality service, he noted: "If we want people to use less personal cars, we need to provide them with an efficient, cheap and high quality fleet."

He further stated that last year, only 600 taxis have



replaced the clunker ones operating in the capital's public transport fleet.

Emphasizing that the minibus is an important and efficient sort of transportation in Tehran, which have come to a halt due to some problems, he said that in the new era of urban management we try to return

the minibuses to the city.

Pointing to the role of vans in passenger transportation in the metropolis of Tehran, he highlighted that today, cars do not meet the capital's passenger population and vans can come efficient.

Using vans in the capital's fleet should also become a priority, he said, concluding, "We hope that with the help of car manufacturing companies, we will solve the problem of public transportation in the city."

Morteza Zameni, director general of urban taxi drivers' union said in August that there are currently 150,000 clunker taxis in the country, which will reach up to 192,000 by the end of this year.

The number of old taxis is expected to reach 240,000 by the next 2 years, which constitutes 75 percent of the country's total taxi fleet, he lamented.

Clunker cars, produce great deal of emission and cause air pollution especially in metropolises like Tehran. According to the Air Quality Control Company, 27 days of unhealthy for sensitive groups due to ozone pollution and particulate matter haunted Tehran, in addition, air quality reached a level which was unhealthy for all the residents for 1 day.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → ع

Non-repayable loans for e-bikes must increase: Tehran City Council chairman

While an important strategy to contain Tehran's air pollution is using clean energies, non-repayable loans to incentivize the owners to replace their motorcycles with electric ones is not sufficient and must increase, Mohsen Hashemi, Tehran City Council chairman, has said.

The scheme on encouraging the citizens to replace carbureted motorcycles with electric ones has started over a few years ago, however, the process has been evolving slowly, he said, adding, we hope to increase the use of electric motorbikes by allocating the necessary funds along with supporting the manufacturers next year (March 2019-March 2020). The handouts supporting the residents to purchase the motorbikes has been about 25 million rials (nearly \$600), which is not adequate anymore given the current economic condition, he stated, Tasnim reported on Saturday.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“-an, -ian”

■ **Meaning:** a word ending used to form nouns and modifiers that shows something belongs to a group, place, etc.
■ **For example:** I like to learn how to cook **Mexican** food.

PHRASAL VERB

Hand something out

■ **Meaning:** to give something to each person in a group; distribute
■ **For example:** Could you start handing these books out please?

IDIOM

Browned off

■ **Explanation:** if you are browned off, you are bored, fed up or disheartened
■ **For example:** “Tom is browned off with his job.”

تاکید رئیس شورای شهر تهران بر افزایش وام بلاعوض خرید «موتورسیکلت‌های برقی»

محسن هاشمی رئیس شورای شهر تهران با اشاره به اینکه یکی از راه‌های کاهش آلودگی هوای تهران استفاده از انرژی‌های پاک است، گفت: رقمی که به عنوان وام بلاعوض خرید موتورسیکلت برقی برای تشویق دارندگان موتورسیکلت پرداخت شده است، پاسخگوی این شرایط نیست و این رقم باید افزایش یابد.

وی تصریح کرد: جایگزینی کردن موتورسیکلت‌های برقی به جای موتورسیکلت‌های کاربراتوری از چند سال پیش آغاز شده است اما این کار با کندی پیش رفته است و امیدواریم در سال آینده با تخصیص اعتبارات لازم و حمایت از تولیدکنندگان، میزان استفاده از موتورسیکلت‌های برقی افزایش یابد.

به گزارش روز شنبه خبرگزاری تسنیم هاشمی با اشاره به میزان تسهیلاتی که تا به امروز به‌عنوان وام بلاعوض برای خرید موتورسیکلت برقی در نظر گرفته شده است، یادآور شد: با توجه به افزایش قیمت خرید موتورسیکلت برقی، رقم ۲ میلیون و ۵۰۰ هزار تومان رقم قابل قبولی به‌عنوان وام بلاعوض نیست و باید این رقم افزایش یابد.

‘Taking legal action’: Iraq pleads with UN to kick unauthorized U.S. forces out of country

TEHRAN — The Iraqi government is seeking international help after U.S. troops withdrawing from Syria entered western Iraq without authorization, with Baghdad now taking legal action against the uninvited presence.

Baghdad did not give permission for U.S. forces to stay in Iraq, Prime Minister Adil Abdul-Mahdi reaffirmed on Wednesday.

According to RT, U.S. Defense Secretary Mark Esper said Tuesday that U.S. troops transiting from Syria would use Iraq to make preparations to go home and assured that the aim is not to “stay in Iraq interminably.” Esper did not specify how long the American troops would be staying.

Washington removed its troops from northern Syria on foot of a Turkish offensive against Kurdish militias in the region, who Ankara regard as terrorists.

Turkey said on Tuesday that it would not launch a new offensive against the Kurds following a five-day ceasefire and President Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s lengthy talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow.

The U.S. already has 5,000 troops in Iraq under an arrangement with the Iraqi government, but the agreement is a controversial one, with many Iraqis regarding it as continued occupation after the



disastrous 2003 U.S. invasion.

On Tuesday also, the Iraqi military said U.S. forces that have crossed into Iraq as part of a pullout from Syria do not have permission to stay on Iraqi soil and can only be there if they are later being transported out of the country.

“All U.S. forces that withdrew from Syria received approval to enter the Kurdistan Region so that they may be transported outside Iraq. There is no permission granted for these forces to stay inside Iraq,” the military said in a statement on Tuesday.

The statement contradicted an an-

nouncement by Pentagon chief Mark Esper on Saturday that all of the nearly 1,000 troops withdrawing from northern Syria were expected to move to western Iraq to allegedly continue the campaign against the Daesh Takfiri terrorist group and “to help defend Iraq.”

A senior U.S. defense official later clarified that the situation was still fluid and plans could change.

News agencies said Monday that U.S. troops had crossed into Iraq from Syria through the Sahela border crossing in the northern province of Dohuk.

Video images showed armored vehicles carrying troops into Iraq, with Iraqi Kurdish sources saying that U.S. troops had crossed into the semi-autonomous Kurdistan Region.

President Donald Trump abruptly announced the withdrawal of U.S. troops from northeastern Syria earlier this month.

The withdrawal effectively granted Turkey a green light to carry out a long-planned invasion of northern Syria targeting U.S.-allied Kurdish forces in the region.

With U.S. troops in Iraq and Turkish forces in Syria, some observers are wondering whether Ankara and Washington are coordinating their moves for a new chess game in the region.

Syria will continue to fight terrorism by all legitimate means: Assad

TEHRAN — Syrian President Bashar al-Assad has emphasized his complete refusal of any invasion of Syrian land under any pretext, noting that Syria will continue to fight terrorism by all legitimate means.

Speaking in a telephone conversation with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin late on Tuesday, Assad thanked the Russian leader for reaching an agreement with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to establish “a safe-zone” in northeastern Syria and conduct joint patrols in the area after marathon talks in the Black Sea resort of Sochi, Press TV reported.

The Syrian president also “expressed his full support for the results of the work, as well as the readiness of the Syrian border guards, together with the Russian military police, to reach the Syrian-Turkish border.”

Putin, for his part, briefed Assad on the results of his talks with Erdogan, and highlighted that the main provision of the memorandum of understanding agreed upon during the meeting was to restore the territorial integrity of Syria and to continue joint efforts concerning Syria’s political settlement,



especially the work within the framework of the country’s constitutional committee.

The Russian president told Assad that any agreement between Turkey and Russia will focus on fighting all kinds of terrorism and dismantle any separatist agendas on the Syrian land.

Earlier in the day, Putin and Erdogan signed a memorandum of understanding, stating that Kurdish forces must withdraw from a Turkish-ruled “safe zone” in northeast Syria within 150 hours, after which Ankara and Moscow will run joint patrols around the area.

The announcement was made hours before a United States-brokered five-day truce between Turkish and Kurdish-led forces was due to expire.

EU considers Brexit delay; Johnson says that would lead to election

TEHRAN— EU leaders considered on Wednesday whether to give Britain a three-month Brexit extension, and Prime Minister Boris Johnson said that if they do so he would call an election by Christmas.

Britain appears closer than ever to resolving its 3 1/2 year Brexit conundrum, with Johnson having agreed a deal with the EU last week and secured an early signal of support for it from parliament, Reuters reported.

But there are still plenty of hurdles left, and Johnson’s ability to deliver on a “do or die” pledge to get Britain out of the EU by Oct. 31 is in doubt, after parliament rejected a three-day timetable to enact his agreement.

European Council President Donald Tusk said on Twitter he was recommending that EU leaders back a delay, which Johnson says he does not want but was forced by parliament to request.

European officials said the most likely scenario was that the bloc would grant a three-month delay, with Britain permitted to leave sooner if it could enact legislation



faster. There was also a chance that some EU countries, notably France, could demand a shorter extension, possibly of just days or weeks.

Johnson’s spokesman said that if the EU offers a delay until the end of January there would need to be an election in Britain, and this could be held before Christmas.

Johnson paused the bill that would implement the agreement he reached with the other members of the EU, after dramatic votes on Tuesday in which parliament accepted the deal in principle but rejected the three-day timetable to enact it.

The government argued a tight schedule was necessary to meet next week’s deadline but lawmakers said they needed more time.

Putin, Erdogan announce plan for northeast Syria

TEHRAN— On Tuesday, President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia played host to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey for more than six hours of talks on how they and other regional players will divide control of Syria, devastated by eight years of civil war.

The negotiations cemented Putin’s strategic advantage: Russian and Turkish troops will take joint control over a vast swath of formerly Kurdish-held territory in northern Syria. The change strengthens the rapid expansion of Russian influence in Syria at the expense of the United States and its Kurdish former allies.

Under terms of the agreement, Syrian Kurdish forces have six days to retreat more than 20 miles from the border, abandoning land that they had controlled uncontested until earlier this month — when their protector, the American military, suddenly began to withdraw from the region. The Syrian Kurdish leadership did not immediately respond to the demand.

Erdogan also got most of what he wanted — a buffer zone free of a militia that Turkey regards as a terrorist threat — but it came at the expense of sharing control of the area with Mr. Putin and the Syrian president, Bashar al-Assad, whose rule Mr. Erdogan has long opposed.

“Only if Syria’s sovereignty and territorial integrity is respected can a long-lasting and solid stabilization in Syria be achieved,” Putin said alongside Mr. Erdogan after the meeting.

“It is important that our Turkish partners share this approach,” Putin added. “The Turks will have to defend peace and calm on the border together with the Syrians. This can only be done in the atmosphere of mutual respect and cooperation.”

■ **Russia urges Kurdish fighters to withdraw from Syria’s border**

Meanwhile, Russia has warned Kurdish forces to quickly withdraw from the Turkey-Syria border - after a deal between Moscow and Ankara - or be crushed by the Turkish army, adding that the United States had “betrayed and abandoned” the Syrian fighters.

Wednesday’s comments by Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov followed a deal agreed on Tuesday between Turkey and Russia that will see Syrian and Russian forces deploy to northeast Syria to remove Kurdish fighters and their weapons from the border.

Peskov, reportedly reacting to comments by US President Donald Trump’s special envoy for Syria James Jeffrey, complained that it appeared the Americans were

encouraging the Kurds to stay close to the Syrian border to fight the Turkish army.

“The United States has been the Kurds’ closest ally in recent years. [But] in the end, it abandoned the Kurds and, in essence, betrayed them,” Peskov was quoted as saying. “Now they [the U.S.] prefer to leave the Kurds at the border [with Turkey] and almost force them to fight the Turks.”

If the Kurds did not withdraw as per the deal, Peskov said Syrian border guards and Russian military police would have to withdraw, leaving the Kurds to deal with the Turkish army.

The Kurdish fighters would be “steamrolled” by the Turks, he said.

A column of Russian military police arrived in the city of Kobane in northern Syria, Russia’s defense ministry said on Wednesday, according to the TASS news agency.

The military police will help facilitate the withdrawal of Kurdish forces.

Turkey’s President Recep Tayyip Erdogan was quoted as saying on Wednesday that Russian President Vladimir Putin assured him that Kurdish fighters will not be allowed to remain in Syria along the Turkish border wearing “regime clothes”.

The death of Netanyahu’s political career

➔ According to Channel 13, Netanyahu has spoken to one person regarding his possible acquittal, but this person is not so optimistic about Rivlin’s consent. Surely, the Israeli attorney general will strongly oppose the request because he considers it a violation of law.

■ **Corruption cases and repetition of history**

Netanyahu is accused of bribery, fraud and breach of trust in four corruption cases, including Case 1000, 2000, 3000 and 4000. In the first case, he is accused

of taking about \$300,000 in bribes from Jewish capitalists. In the second case, he is accused of colluding with Arnon Mozes, the owner of well-known Yedioth Ahronoth newspaper, to represent a positive image of Netanyahu and his activities, as well as to put pressure on Yedioth Ahronoth’s rival, the private Israel Hayom (Israel Today) newspaper, by the government.

Case 3000 is Netanyahu’s most disputable case, which is related to purchasing three submarines from Germany in 2016.

It sparked controversy, with some Knesset members and Israeli politicians gravely criticizing him. Case 4000 is about the relationship of Bezeq Telecommunications Company with its regulator, the prime minister, and favorable coverage to Netanyahu in Walla news website. According to regime’s prosecutor, the prime minister is accused of widespread corruption in this case.

The experts and co-workers of Israeli attorney general had earlier stated that, after two years of investigation and con-

sultation, they were ready to announce their final decision about the case. They announced the decision as Israeli police claimed in December that they did not have enough evidence to prove financial corruption and bribery that Netanyahu and his wife had been charged with. The corruption of senior officials is a pervasive issue in Israel. After sentencing former president Moshe Katsav and former prime minister Ehud Olmert because of financial and moral corruption, now it is Netanyahu’s turn to be arrested.

U.S. envoy says Trump withheld Ukraine aid over investigation

➔ They became focused solely on persuading the new Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, to announce investigations that would damage Democrats and especially Joe Biden, the former vice-president and leading contender to be the 2020 Democratic nominee.

Democrats declared it to be the clearest account to date of Trump’s abuse of office in the Ukraine scandal.

The White House spokeswoman, Stephanie Grisham, issued a statement denouncing the congressional hearings as “a coordinated smear campaign from far-left lawmakers and radical unelected bureaucrats waging

war on the constitution”.

According to Taylor’s statement, published by the Lawfare website, Sondland, made clear in a phone call that both military aid and a White House meeting with Trump were dependent on the launch of two investigations.

One was into a Ukrainian energy company, Burisma, which had employed Hunter Biden, the son of former vice-president and 2020 Democratic contender Joe Biden. The second was into Ukraine’s role in the 2016 presidential election, a reference to a conspiracy theory that — counter to the consensus view of US intelligence agencies — held

that it was Ukraine that had interfered in the vote in the Democrats’ favour, rather than Russia in favour of Trump.

“During that phone call, Ambassador Sondland told me that President Trump had told him that he wants President [Volodymyr] Zelenskyy to state publicly that Ukraine will investigate Burisma and alleged Ukrainian interference in the 2016 election,” Taylor said in his statement.

He added: “Sondland said ‘everything’ was dependent on such an announcement, including security assistance ... President Trump wanted president Zelenskyy in a ‘public box’ by making a public statement about ordering such investigations.”

Afghan rivals to meet in China after U.S. talks stall

➔ Last month, U.S. President Donald Trump halted the talks with the Taliban aimed at striking a deal for U.S. and other foreign troops to withdraw in exchange for Taliban security guarantees, after the militants carried out a bomb attack in Kabul that killed 12 people, including a U.S. soldier.

The United States has been hoping that its deal with the Taliban would pave the way for a ceasefire and power-sharing talks between the Afghan government and the insurgents.

The Taliban have refused to talk to the government, denouncing it a U.S. puppet, but government officials have taken part in the intra-Afghan dialogue as private citizens.

Shaheen said the talks in China would be held on that basis.

“All participants will be attending the meeting in their personal capacity and they will share their personal opinions for solving the Afghan issue,” he said.

He did not give a date for the talks and officials at China’s embassy in Kabul were not available for comment.

The Afghan government was aware of China’s plan to host talks but it could not comment at this stage, said deputy foreign minister, Idress Zaman.

A spokesman for former Afghan president Hamid Karzai, who attended intra-Afghan talks in Russia in February, said Karzai’s office was aware of China’s plan for talks and Karzai would attend if invited.

A 60-strong delegation of Afghans, including government officials and representatives of civil society groups, held a second round of intra-Afghan talks with the Taliban in July in Qatar.

Jailed Saudi scholar’s son arrested for supporting Palestinian cause

➔ Officials have imposed travel bans on members of his family as well. A family member told Human Rights Watch that the distinguished cleric was being held over his refusal to comply with an order by Saudi authorities to tweet a specific text to support the Saudi-led blockade of Qatar.

Odah, instead, posted a tweet, saying, “May God harmonize between their hearts for the good of their people.” - an apparent call for reconciliation between the Persian Gulf littoral states, the US-based rights group said in a statement.

Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt all cut off diplomatic ties with Qatar on June 5, 2017, after officially accusing it of “sponsoring terrorism.”

Qatar said the move was unjustified and based on false claims and assumptions.

Saudi Arabia has lately stepped up politically-motivated arrests, prosecution and conviction of peaceful dissidents and human rights campaigners.

Over the past years, Riyadh has also redefined its anti-terrorism laws to target activism.

In January 2016, Saudi authorities executed Shia cleric Sheikh Nimr Baqir al-Nimr, who was an outspoken critic of the policies of the Riyadh regime. Nimr had been arrested in Qatif, Eastern Province, in 2012.

‘Shock and sadness’: 39 bodies found inside lorry in England

➔ **Murder inquiry**

Al Jazeera’s Paul Brennan, reporting from London, said the lorry entered the UK mainland at the port of Holyhead in North Wales, which is “the transit point for freights and lorries coming in from Northern Ireland”.

“A murder inquiry has begun,” he added, “but everybody’s thoughts will be with the bereaved relatives of the deceased.”

Essex Police said the people were pronounced dead at the scene in Grays, east of London. “This is a tragic incident where a large number of people have lost their lives,” the service said in a statement.

A cordon has been put in place and access to and from the Waterglad Industrial Park remains closed.

“The cordon around the scene is expected to be in place for quite some time,” Brennan said.

“The police are saying it will take a lengthy time to identify the victims,” he added.

Bulgarian authorities said they could not yet confirm that the truck had started its journey from Bulgaria.

“We are in contact with our embassy in London and with British authorities,” foreign ministry spokeswoman Tsvetlana Krasteva said.

■ **‘Vile and dangerous’**

Essex Police appealed for anyone with any information about the lorry’s route to get in touch via their website.

“The identification of victims remains our top priority,” said Pippa Mills, Essex Police’s deputy chief constable.

Jackie Doyle-Price, the local Conservative MP, said “people trafficking is a vile and dangerous business”, adding: “Let’s hope they bring these murderers to justice.”

Haulage industry experts suggested the lorry was likely to have arrived in Ireland from Cherbourg or Roscoff in France, avoiding the tighter checks for people-smuggling at Calais and Dover.

Richard Burnett, chief executive of the Road Haulage Society, said “this tragedy highlights the danger of migrant gangs people-smuggling on lorries”.

He told the PA news agency: “It’s highly unlikely that if this vehicle has come from Europe that it’s been physically checked.

“Because of the migrant issue at Dover and Calais, you’ve got far more checks.”

Seamus Leheny, Northern Ireland policy manager for the Freight Transport Association, told PA: “If the lorry came from Bulgaria, getting into Britain via Holyhead is an unorthodox route.

“People have been saying that security and checks have been increased at places like Dover and Calais, so it might be seen as an easier way to get in by going from Cherbourg or Roscoff, over to Rosslare, then up the road to Dublin.

“It’s a long way around and it’ll add an extra day to the journey.”

The tragedy bears similarities to the worst of its kind in the UK, when the bodies of 58 Chinese people were found in a container at Dover, Kent, in 2000.

Seven men were jailed by a Dutch court for their role in the human-smuggling operation that led to the young people suffocating, and the Dutch lorry driver was jailed for 14 years.

Bayern suffer defensive crisis as Hernandez joins Sule

Bayern Munich's defensive crisis went from bad to worse on Tuesday night as record signing Lucas Hernandez suffered a partial ligament tear in his right ankle in the 3-2 win at Olympiakos.

The France defender is set to miss several weeks of action following the diagnosis and his injury comes just days after fellow defender Niklas Sule suffered a possible season-ending anterior cruciate ligament tear in his left knee. Bayern now only have two proven centre-backs in their squad.

Hernandez, who joined from Atletico Madrid for €80 million in the summer, injured his right ankle in the Champions League win at Olympiakos, Bayern announced on Wednesday.

Bayern did not say how long Hernandez will be sidelined for, but with just two months left in 2019, the defender could be out for the remainder of the year.

Speaking to reporters on Tuesday, Bayern sporting director Hasan Salihamidzic had partially blamed the French FA for the injury. The French Football Federation had called Hernandez up for the latest set of international games despite a minor knee injury, and various setbacks throughout 2019.

The defender played the full 90 minutes in the 1-1 draw with Turkey and Bayern coach Niko Kovac had thanked France boss Didier Deschamps for giving Hernandez playing time.

But speaking on Tuesday, Salihamidzic said: "He came out of a long injury and was thrown into a lot of games. This annoys me a bit."

Upon returning from France duty, Hernandez played the full 90 minutes in Bayern's 2-2 draw at Augsburg and three days later returned to the starting lineup in Greece.

Hernandez injury leaves Bayern with a crisis at the back. Only Benjamin Pavard and Jerome Boateng have significant experience in central defence.

Spain international Javi Martinez and left-back David Alaba can also be deployed there while youngster Lars Lukas Mai, 19, could come in.

(Source: ESPN)

Leonard shines in debut as Clippers beat Lakers in season opener

Kawhi Leonard made his Los Angeles debut a successful one on Tuesday as his Clippers upstaged LeBron James and the Los Angeles Lakers 112-102 to get their 2019-20 campaign off to a winning start.

Leonard wasted no time roaring back into action, leading the way in the season-opener with his new team after powering the Toronto Raptors to their first NBA title last season.

"It was great. A lot of emotions, game one," said Leonard, who grew up in Riverside, 50 miles east of Los Angeles.

"I am just happy we came out and got a victory. We had great practices and had some carry over from that tonight."

The Clippers attacked the rim, forced easy turnovers, used a stingy defense to keep James and his new sidekick Anthony Davis in check.

Leonard also had six rebounds and five assists, reserve guard Lou Williams finished with 21 points and power forward Montrezl Harrell tallied 17 points and seven rebounds.

James shot seven-of-19 for 18 points and Davis shot eight-of-21 for 25 points for the Lakers who are hoping their offseason changes will boost the team's fortunes after they finished a disappointing 37-45 and failed to qualify for the postseason for the sixth season in a row.

The two Los Angeles teams made some of the most significant changes but the Clippers appeared to have added more value.

Every one of their bench players reached double figures on Tuesday as they outscored the Laker reserves 60-19.

Thanks to the addition of Leonard from Toronto and Paul George from Oklahoma City, the Clippers are one of the early front runners to contend for a title.

(Source: AFP)

Bayern Munich fans injured in clashes at youth game in Athens

At least six Bayern Munich supporters were injured during clashes with hooded people who stormed the pitch during a youth game in Athens, police officials said on Tuesday.

The UEFA Youth League game between Bayern Munich and Olympiakos was halted at the 84th minute, after a group of about 80 hooded people riding motorcycles and carrying bats and sticks stormed the pitch and attacked the fans in the stands.

Olympiakos was trailing 4-0 when the violence erupted, just hours before a Champions League game between the two teams at the Karaiskaki Stadium in Piraeus.

A security guard was also injured, a police official said, adding that there were no arrests so far.

"The intruders have nothing to do ... whatsoever with the Olympiakos family," Olympiakos said in a statement.

(Source: Reuters)

Neymar missed half of PSG games since move

Neymar did not play in Paris Saint-Germain's Champions League clash with Club Brugge, meaning he has missed half of their matches through injury or suspension since his world record €222 million move from Barcelona in 2017.

The Brazil international, who was due to return from Champions League suspension against Club Brugge in the Champions League after his ban for an outburst towards match officials during the round of 16 home defeat to Manchester United last season was shortened, was injured representing his country and will be out for up to a month.

This latest setback means Neymar missed the clash in Belgium -- with PSG won 5-0 -- and has therefore been unable to play in 63 of 126 games across all competitions -- half of their fixtures over his two-year spell at Parc des Princes.

Eight of the 63 matches missed by the 27-year-old have been through suspension, but the large majority (53) of the rest have been injury or fitness-related.

PSG beat Amiens 2-0 in the opening round of Ligue 1 fixtures in 2017-18 and while Neymar had been signed, his registration was not completed in time for him to play.

Also, coach Thomas Tuchel said ahead of this season's 4-0 home win over Toulouse and 2-0 away victory over Metz towards the end of August that Neymar was fit enough to play but would not feature as his future was then not clear.

Neymar's two main spells out of action both came in winter, with a fractured metatarsal in his right foot the lengthiest -- it ended his debut campaign in February of 2018 and made preparation for the 2018 World Cup difficult.

(Source: Soccernet)

El Clasico date set for Dec. 18, pending challenge

The Clasico between Barcelona and Real Madrid has been rescheduled for Dec. 18, the Royal Spanish Football Federation's (RFEF) Competition Committee has confirmed.

The match was supposed to be played this weekend but was postponed due to the political unrest in Catalonia.

La Liga, which had initially suggested reversing the fixture and playing it at the Bernabeu instead of Camp Nou, is now expected to challenge the decision. It would prefer the game to be played on either Dec. 4 or Dec. 7.

The league added it "does not agree with the decision of the RFEF to set the date of the Clasico on Dec. 18" and are "studying the documentation to decide whether to appeal it, against whom, and before what bodies."

Following the postponement, the Competition Committee -- a panel consisting of three people, one from the RFEF, one from La Liga, one independent -- urged Barca and Madrid to agree on a new date. Both clubs put forward Wednesday, Dec. 18.

However, the league does not want its showcase fixture played on that day. It argues that it should not be scheduled on a day when there are Copa del Rey games featuring lower league sides. It would also prefer the game to be played over a weekend, rather



than on a Wednesday, when it has more reach among global television audiences.

Dec. 7, therefore, would be the ideal date for La Liga. But that would require Barca and Madrid's games against Mallorca and Espanyol to be moved. Dec. 4, which is also a midweek date, is the league's

second option.

The game had originally been scheduled for this weekend but was called off by the Competition Committee last week following the jailing of nine Catalan political leaders for their role in the region's push for independence in 2017.

Shaq backs Rockets executive Morey over China-NBA row



NBA legend Shaquille O'Neal gave his support to Houston Rockets general manager Daryl Morey on Tuesday, saying the executive "was right" in his comments that ignited a furore between the NBA and China.

Speaking on TNT television's Inside the NBA show, former Los Angeles Lakers star O'Neal said Morey was entitled to tweet support for Hong Kong pro-democracy protesters earlier this month.

"Daryl Morey was right," O'Neal said. "Whenever you see something wrong going on anywhere in the world, you should have the right to say 'That's not right' and that's what he did."

O'Neal said nothing should inhibit free speech.

"We as American people do a lot of business in China," O'Neal said.

"They know and understand our values, and we understand their values."

"And one of our best values here in America is free speech."

"We're allowed to say what we want to say and we're allowed to speak up about injustices, and that's just how it goes."

(Source: AFP)

"And if people don't understand that, that's something that they have to deal with."

Morey triggered a crisis earlier this month after tweeting an image captioned "Fight for Freedom. Stand with Hong Kong."

It came right before the Los Angeles Lakers and Brooklyn Nets arrived in China for what proved to be a tense two-game exhibition tour, with broadcasters refusing to air the games, public anger raging, and local sponsors cutting ties with the NBA.

Hong Kong has been rocked by months of demonstrations by citizens who accuse Beijing of chipping away at its freedoms. China has portrayed the protesters as violent separatists and bristled at what it calls "foreign interference" in the matter.

The backlash in China against Morey's comments cast a cloud over the NBA's lucrative broadcasting, merchandising and sponsorship interests in the country, where it has legions of fans.

NBA commissioner Adam Silver said last week China had demanded Morey be sacked for his tweet, a claim later denied by Beijing.

River Plate reach Copa Libertadores final despite Boca loss



Defending champions River Plate booked a place in the final of the Copa Libertadores on Tuesday despite losing a tense semi-final to rivals Boca Juniors at a packed Bombonera in Buenos Aires.

A goal from 19-year-old Venezuelan forward Jan Hurtado 10 minutes from full-time set up a frantic finale but River held on to go through 2-1 on aggregate.

The "Millionaires" will play the winners of Wednesday's all-Brazilian clash between Flamengo and Gremio in the final in Santiago next month.

Urged on by 50,000 fans, Boca failed to get revenge in a repeat of last year's final, the second leg of which was played 10,000 kilometers away in Madrid -- and two weeks behind schedule -- after the original match was twice postponed.

The tone was set for a scrappy encounter when the kick-off was held up by 15 minutes to allow groundsman using leaf-blowers to clear the pitch of thousands of paper sheets released like ticker tape by the fans.

When the match did eventually get

underway, it was predictably breathless as Boca -- two goals down from the first leg -- desperately sought an early breakthrough.

But with Ramon Abila too often an isolated figure up front, Boca struggled for any fluidity, and River's center-halves Lucas Quarta and Javier Pinola cleared everything that came their way.

Boca's Toto Salvio swept the ball into the net after 20 minutes but celebrations were cut short when it was rightly disallowed for a clear handball without the ref needing a VAR check.

The ball struck defender Emmanuel Mas on the arm as he collided with teammate Augustin Almendra when flicking on Alexis Mac Allister's deep free kick.

River played the more composed football as the half wore on and the nearest Boca came to threatening Franco Armani's goal was a sliced clearance by Enzo Perez that drew a point-blank reflex save from the Argentine goalkeeper just before half-time.

Boca were better in the second half but still struggled for composure.

(Source: ESPN)

Sterling, Mbappe light up Champions League with hat-tricks while Spurs claim key win

Raheem Sterling and Kylian Mbappe both scored second-half hat-tricks in UEFA Champions League action on Tuesday as Manchester City, Paris Saint-Germain and Tottenham Hotspur all recorded big victories.

Juventus, Real Madrid and Bayern Munich laboured to wins on a night which brought 30 goals in eight games, a third of which were scored by Premier League clubs.

Sterling's three goals came 11 minutes apart in the second half as Pep Guardiola's City thumped Atalanta 5-1 at the Etihad Stadium to maintain their perfect record in Group C.

The Italians had earlier taken the lead from Ruslan Malinovsky's 28th-minute penalty, but they were soon overrun and remain without a point in their debut Champions League campaign.

Sergio Aguero equalised from a Sterling assist and the Argentine scored a penalty to put City ahead before the break. Sterling then took over, although City finished with 10 men as Phil Foden was sent off late on.

"I should have had four. Riyad Mahrez put me through and I was looking to put one on a plate for him. But I went through and should have finished it," Sterling admitted to BT Sport.

City's will seal a place in the last 16 if they win away to Atalanta next, as nearest rivals Shakhtar Donetsk and Dinamo Zagreb played out a 2-2 draw in Ukraine earlier.



Yevhen Konoplyanka and Brazilian substitute Dodo netted for Shakhtar, with Dinamo's goals coming in between from Dani Olmo and a Mislav Orsic penalty.

Compared to Sterling, Mbappe took a sluggish 22 minutes to score his three goals in PSG's 5-0 romp away to former European Cup runners-up Club Brugge in Belgium in Group A.

Mauro Icardi scored twice for the French champions, who were without the injured Neymar but had Angel Di Maria in exceptional form -- the Argentine set up four goals.

According to sports statisticians Opta, the last player to come off the bench and score a hat-trick in the Champions League was Spaniard Joseba Llorente for Villarreal in 2008.

PSG have a maximum nine points, are yet to concede a goal in Europe this season and will be through to the last 16 with a win at home to Club next month.

Real edge Galatasaray

Below them, Real Madrid are up to second after claiming their first win in Europe this season. Eden Hazard set up Toni Kroos for

a first-half strike that handed them a 1-0 victory over Galatasaray in Istanbul.

Meanwhile, there was a welcome win for Mauricio Pochettino's Tottenham, who crushed Red Star Belgrade 5-0 in north London, three weeks on from their 7-2 humiliation at the hands of Bayern Munich at the same venue.

Captain Harry Kane scored twice for Spurs either side of a Son Heung-min brace and an Erik Lamela goal as they moved up to second place in Group B on four points.

"We know we have had a tough run of results and that was the perfect way to respond," said Kane.

Lewandowski fires Bayern to victory

They remain five points behind group leaders Bayern Munich, for whom Robert Lewandowski bagged two in a 3-2 win at Olympiakos that maintained their perfect record.

The Pole has 18 goals this season and 58 career Champions League goals -- only Cristiano Ronaldo, Lionel Messi, Raul and Karim Benzema have more.

Youssef El Arabi gave Olympiakos the lead, but Lewandowski's brace either side of half-time changed the game and Corentin Tolisso fired in a magnificent third before Guilherme pulled one back.

(Source: Eurosport)

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www.tehrantimes.com

■ Managing Director: Mohammad Shojaeian
■ Editor-in-Chief: Mohammad Ghaderi

» Editorial Dept.: Fax: (+98 21) 88808214 — 88808895
editor@tehrantimes.com

» Switchboard Operator: Tel: (+98 21) 43051000

» Advertisements Dept.: Telefax: (+98 21) 43051450

» Public Relations Office: Tel: (+98 21) 88805807

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No. 18, Bimeh Alley, Nejatollahi St., Tehran, Iran
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Zip Code: 1599814713

GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

The worst sin is that which the sinner considers small.

Imam Ali (AS)

“Exodus” wins special jury award at New Orleans filmfest


A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iranian filmmaker Bahman Giarostami’s documentary “Exodus” won the special jury award at the 30th New Orleans Film Festival, the organizers announced on Thursday.

The film was competing in the Documentary Features Competition section of the festival, which ran from October 16 to 23.

The film is about thousands of Afghan migrants who have lined up to leave Iran as the renewed U.S. sanctions have sparked a recession. But first, they must endure interrogations at an immigration center in Tehran.

The New Orleans Film Festival is an Oscar-qualifying event in all three Academy-accredited categories of narrative shorts, documentary shorts, and animated shorts.

Jury award-winning films in these categories automatically qualify for consideration for the Annual Academy Awards without the standard theatrical run.



Sydney to host conference on Al-Ghazali

C U L T U R E d e s k **TEHRAN** — The Australian city of Sydney will be hosting a two-day conference on prominent and influential Iranian philosopher and theologian Al-Ghazali.

Organized by the International Research Conference Organization, the event entitled “International Conference on Al-Ghazali and Islam” will be held on March 29 and 30, 2021.

The conference aims to bring together leading academics, scientists, researchers and research scholars to exchange and share their experiences and research results on all aspects of Al-Ghazali and Islam.

Abu Hamid Muhammad ibn Muhammad Al-Ghazali (1058-1111) was a Muslim theologian, mystic, law specialist, rationalist and spiritualist of Persian descent.

One of his greatest works is “Ihya Ulum al-Din” (“The Revival of the Religious Sciences”), which is about Sufism and Islam.



Tehran center to review films from early Iranian animation pioneers

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — A selection of films from early Iranian animation pioneers will be screened during a special program at the Iranian Artists Forum in Tehran today.

The selection contains 14 animated films made by Jafar Tejaratchi, Esfandiar Ahmadi, Nosratollah Karimi, Delara Rasuli and Fereidun Farshbaf, an official of the Iran branch of the International Animated Film Society (ASIFA), Mehrdad Sheikhan, said in a press release on Wednesday.

“These movies are the very early Iranian animations that are considered to be the core of Iranian animation identity,” he said.

“Most of the films were made at the animated film workshops during the 1950s and 1960s, and contain examples of the very early techniques used in making animations,” he added.

Each screening will be followed by a review session, which will be attended by a number of experts on animated films.



“The Paternal House” gets green light for Iran screening

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — Veteran Iranian director Kianush Ayyari finally received the approval of cultural authorities to screen his movie “The Paternal House”, which was banned in the country for about ten years due to some allegedly violent scenes.

The film is about a young woman who is killed by her own father, with the aid of her younger brother nearly a century ago.

“Based on talks with Mr. Ayyari, some modifications, which cause no damage to the whole story, have been made to the film,” Mohammad-Mehdi Tabatabai, the director of Culture Ministry’s Supervision and Evaluation Office, told the Persian service of ISNA on Tuesday.

In an interview with ISNA, Ayyari also said that he has mixed feelings about the screening of his movie some ten years after its production.

“I don’t imagine that this film has gone stale, and likely can have as much of an impact on filmgoers as it would have had ten years ago, since issues of modern day life don’t enter into the film,” he noted.

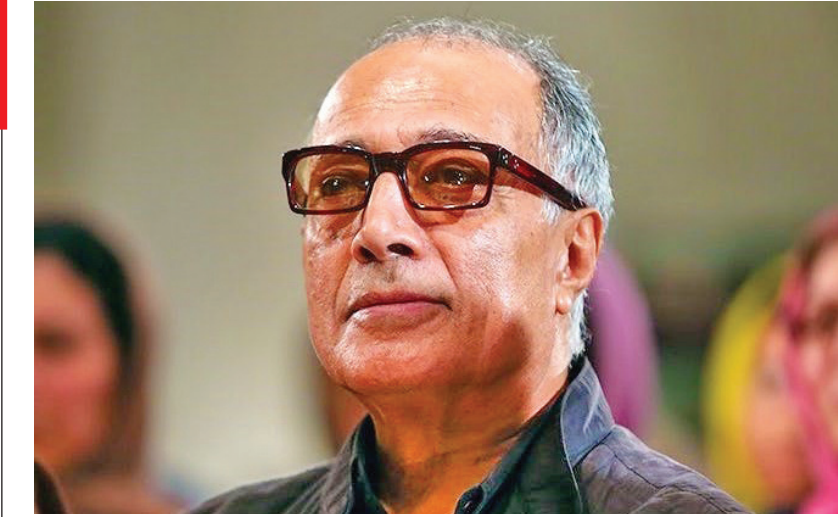
While the official ban on “The Paternal House” was for domestic screenings, the film was screened at several international events overseas, including the Revelation Perth International Film Festival in Australia in 2015.

In 2012, the Venice Film Festival picked the movie to compete in the Horizon section of the event. However, Iran threatened to boycott the festival due to the EU sanctions against Iran.



Nazanin Farahani acts in a scene from “The Paternal House”.

Paintings by Abbas Kiarostami to go on display at Tehran gallery



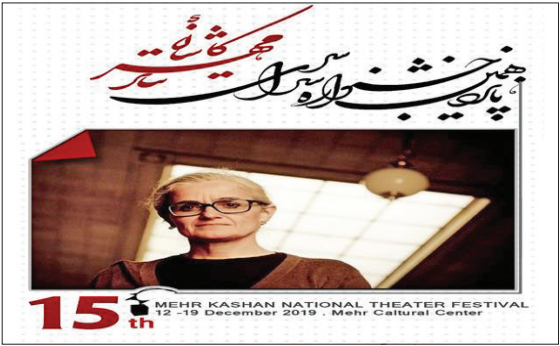
A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — A collection of rarely-seen paintings by legendary filmmaker Abbas Kiarostami will put on view in an exhibition at Tehran’s Golestan Gallery, which will open on November 8.

“Over 30 paintings mainly done in the years between 1980 and 2000 have been borrowed from private collectors to showcase during the exhibit,” Golestan Gallery owner Lili Golestan said in a press release published on Wednesday.

She said that the works will be on display for two weeks.

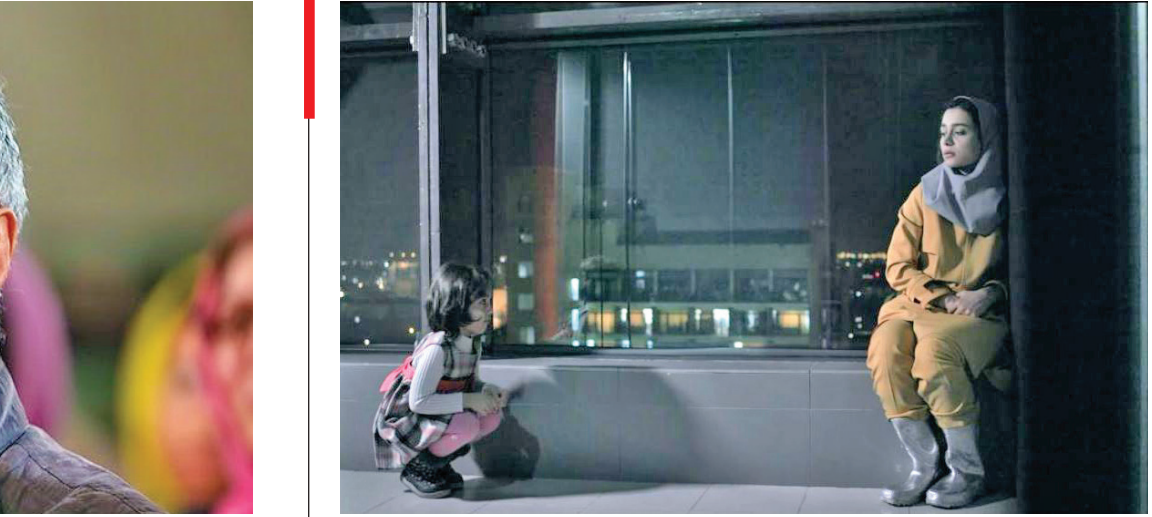
“Holding an exhibition of paintings by Kiarostami was discussed several times before his death, but Kiarostami always said that he has only a few paintings at home and does not have enough time to do more,” Golestan said.

Kiarostami was a graduate of the Academy of Fine Arts at the University of Tehran.



A poster for Italian theater expert Claudia Castellucci’s workshop during the 15th Mehr Kashan National Theater Festival.

Iranian shorts competing in Richard Harris film festival



A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iranian shorts “Cleaner” and “Are You Volleyball?!” have been selected to be screened at the Richard Harris International Film Festival, which is currently underway in Limerick, Ireland.

Directed by Mohammadreza Miqani, “Cleaner” is the story of a public toilet cleaner, who is concerned about her pregnancy test on a normal day of her work.

“Are You Volleyball?!” by Mohammad Bakhshi is about a group of Arab asylum seekers, who arrive at an English speaking country border and can’t keep going. They have arguments with border guards every day until a deaf-mute boy becomes the catalyst for better communication between the two groups.

The Richard Harris International Film Festival will come to an end on October 28.

Claudia Castellucci to hold workshop at Kashan theater festival

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — Italian theater expert Claudia Castellucci is scheduled to hold a workshop during the 15th Mehr Kashan National Theater Festival, which will be held in the central Iranian city from December 12 to 19, the organizers announced on Wednesday.

Over 15 Iranians and five Italians from Castellucci’s own troupe will attend the six-day workshop, which will be on body, action, rhythm and the effect of nature on theater.

Participants will give a joint performance, which will be directed by Castellucci, during the closing day of the festival in Kashan. In addition, they will then move to Tehran to stage

the same performance at Molavi Theater on December 20.

Sixty-year-old Castellucci has already held several workshops and performances in Iran.

She along with her brother Romeo and two siblings Chiara and Paolo Guidi established an experiential theater company in 1981.

The company, which is named “The Societas Raffaello Sanzio” and has performed in various venues across Europe, is based near Bologna, Italy where it has its own theater.

Castellucci is also the author of “The Theater of Societas Raffaello Sanzio”, which is about the background and development of the company.

Sculptor transforms Rome’s dead trees into art

ROME (Reuters) — Andrea Gandini, a 22-year-old Roman sculptor, is making a growing name for himself by turning the Eternal City’s dead tree stumps into much-admired pieces of art.

Gandini, who began his tree carvings around five years ago, chipped away at his 66th stump in the huge Villa Pamphili park on Friday.

He has plenty of raw material to work with. Rome is known as one of the greenest cities in Europe, with its 313,000 trees filling its many parks and lining the streets in the city center.

However, many were planted nearly a century ago and are now weak or dying. Seeing how they were neglected made Gandini want to act.

“I had been sculpting wood since I was a kid, in my garage. Then I chose to carve a stump that was out on the street. That is how I chose to start carving stumps in Rome,” he said, as he worked on his latest creation.

He said he liked to meet people while working and had no personal claim to the faces, animals and other artwork carved out the stumps.

“It takes me about a week to finish one

sculpture, then it becomes everyone’s. It’s a passion and a bit of a fixation,” he added, as passers-by stopped to admire his work and take photos with their phones.

Gandini maps the stumps on his website, and the sculptures are becoming a tourist attraction. Tour guides even include his work in their packages.

“Stumps are not very well considered but they have the right features that make them perfect for carving,” he said. “Rome has many stumps that are waiting to become pieces of art.”

Despite the popularity of his work among

locals and tourists, the Rome authorities have been less enthusiastic.

Although there is no law that forbids people from carving dead tree stumps, police have threatened to ban him from historic areas using tough new rules drawn up in recent years to maintain decorum.

Gandini says he loves nature and it hurts him to see the trees become a safety hazard.

They often fall and smash cars during storms, and city hall says some 86,000 need to be specially maintained or chopped down.

“If nothing changes in ten years there will be hardly any trees left,” Gandini said.

Disney’s Marvel to create exclusive podcasts for SiriusXM

NEW YORK (Reuters) — Walt Disney Co’s (DIS.N) Marvel Entertainment said on Tuesday it would create exclusive weekly podcasts for satellite radio company SiriusXM Holdings Inc (SIRLO) and its online music service Pandora starting next year.

The slate of programs will include five new series on popular Marvel characters such as Wolverine,

Hawkeye, Black Widow and Star-Lord.

“Audio is the next natural step to bring the Marvel Universe to fans around the world,” said Dan Buckley, president of Marvel Entertainment.

SiriusXM bought Pandora Media Inc in a \$3.5 billion deal last year amid growing competition from streaming rivals Spotify Technology SA (SPOT.N) and

Apple Inc’s (AAPL.O) Apple Music.

Sirius XM, controlled by media mogul John Malone’s Liberty Media Corp, has built a name by offering more than 175 channels to car drivers, but has largely trailed Spotify and Apple in mobile and streaming content.