



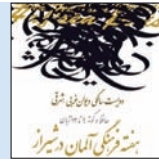
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Iran, Russia and Turkey reaffirm commitment to Syria's integrity

TEHRAN — Mohammad Javad Zarif, Sergey Lavrov and Mevlut Cavusoglu, respectively the foreign ministers of Iran, Russia and Turkey, issued a joint statement on Tuesday reaffirming commitment to Syria's territorial integrity.

The statement was issued after a trilateral meeting with UN secretary general's Special Envoy for Syria Geir

O. Pedersen in Geneva.

Following is full text of the statement published by the Iranian Foreign Ministry's website:

1. Reaffirmed the strong commitment of the Astana guarantors to the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic and emphasized that these principles should be respected by all sides. **→2**

Steps that Iran may take to reduce JCPOA commitments in next move

TEHRAN (MNA) — No official data has been released yet about Iran's fourth step to reduce its JCPOA commitments but some information can be inferred from the remarks made by some top Iranian officials.

According to Presidential Chief of Staff Mahmoud Vaezi, a committee has been formed to study the possible options for

the intended step and the conclusions will be reported to President Rouhani for endorsement and implementation.

Ali Akbar Salehi, chief of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI), told reporters on October 23 that the fourth step will be announced by the president on the set deadline i.e., on November 7. **→2**

Iraq's Hadi al-Amiri responds to Muqtada al-Sadr

TEHRAN — Muqtada al-Sadr, leader of the al-Sadr bloc, warned on Wednesday that Iraq may turn into another Syria or Yemen if Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi does not resign.

He declared that his parliamentary bloc will not ally with the parties who refuse to push for the resignation of the prime minister. Sadr made the remarks in reference to Hadi al-Amiri, head of the Badr Organization and leader of

the Fateh Alliance.

On Tuesday, Sadr also asked al-Amiri to help him introduce a vote of no confidence in Abdul-Mahdi.

Al-Amiri holds the second-largest number of seats in parliament behind the al-Sadr bloc.

"I hoping for you to leave with your dignity intact but if you've refused, then I call on Hadi al-Amiri to help oust you as premier immediately," **→13**



EDITORIAL

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The future of Lebanon after Hariri resignation

After nearly two weeks of mass protests in Lebanon, Prime Minister Saad Hariri submitted his resignation to President Michel Aoun on Tuesday evening, suggesting that he is out of point to fix the country's problems.

"I have reached a dead end, and we need a big shock to counter this crisis," Hariri said. "My call to all the Lebanese is to prioritize the interest of Lebanon, the safety of Lebanon, the protection of civil peace, and the prevention of economic collapse before everything else."

Lebanon has been rocked by 13 days of massive demonstrations against the political class, spurred by outrage over corruption and a deep economic crisis. The protests, which started Oct. 17 with anger over a proposed tax on WhatsApp calls, have stopped traffic on highways in Beirut and around this country of 6 million as thousands of demonstrators set up tents and occupied streets and squares. Banks and schools have been closed for more than 10 days.

The political mechanism in Lebanon has envisioned legal solutions for the current situation, and Hariri's resignation cannot be seen as a political deadlock for the country. However, the behavior of political actors in Lebanon will undergo changes.

With his resignation, Hariri has practically shifted the responsibility of economic problems onto Michel Aoun and his supporters, including Hezbollah. These economic problems are in fact rooted in sectarian system and the corruption of traditional politicians coupled with their affiliation to some Western and regional Arab countries.

Hariri's reluctance to meet people's demands may keep him and his supporters away from popular protests for a short period of time, but will definitely undermine his position in the political future of Lebanon.

Saudi Arabia, which has been a long-time supporter of the Hariri family, has abandoned Hariri for various reasons, one of which is his lack of personality stability. The traditional supporter prefers to follow its goals by Samir Geagea, former leader of the Phalange Party and current leader of the Lebanese Forces party. **→7**

Lebanese army urges anti-govt. protesters to open blocked roads

TEHRAN — Saad al-Hariri is ready to return as prime minister of a new government, a senior official familiar with his thinking said, on condition it includes technocrats and be capable of quickly implementing reforms needed to stave off economic collapse.

Hariri's resignation on Tuesday has left Lebanon with a political vacuum at a moment of acute crisis with reforms urgently needed to ward off even deeper financial problems in one of the world's most heavily indebted states.

Meanwhile, the Lebanese army has called on demonstrators to unblock roads following the resignation of Prime Minister Saad Hariri in the aftermath of about two weeks of anti-government protests nationwide.

In a statement released on Tuesday, the army

command acknowledged the Lebanese people's right to "peaceful demonstration and expression of opinion in public squares only."

The army urged "all demonstrators to initiate the opening of all closed routes to restore life back to normal, in implementation of the law and the rules of public order."

Also on Wednesday, Lebanese troops managed to clear the Jal al-Dib highway, north of Beirut, after briefly scuffling with demonstrators, Press TV reported.

The Al Jadeed TV network aired footage showing soldiers trying to pick up a vehicle blocking the highway before it drove off.

At the Ring Bridge, which connects east and west Beirut, a security officer tried to persuade crowds to clear the way to nearby hospitals.

The Beirut-based Daily Star newspaper reported that protesters had agreed to open the roads and voluntarily removed tents set up on the Jal al-Dib highway.

Prime Minister Saad Hariri stepped down on Tuesday, surrendering to one of the demands of the protesters, who accuse the ruling political elite of dragging the country to economic collapse.

Hariri said he had reached a "dead end" in trying to resolve the crisis that has paralyzed Lebanon for two weeks.

The protests began on October 17 when the government proposed imposing a tax on Whatsapp calls, along with other austerity measures.

The protests have compounded Lebanon's already serious economic woes. Banks kept their doors shut on Wednesday. **→13**

Rights groups slam Bahrain for torturing 9 female activists in detention

TEHRAN — Rights groups have slammed the Bahraini regime over the detention and mistreatment of nine female activists, saying that the United States and Britain are complicit in Manama's human rights abuses.

According to Press TV, the report, prepared by the London-based Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD) and Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB) last month, was presented during a congressional panel event in Washington, DC, on Tuesday.

The 138-page report examines the cases of nine female political prisoners all arrested, interrogated, and convicted between February 2017 and January 2019.

Speaking during the panel, ADHRB Legal

Officer Bridget Quitter said the women had been targeted as part of Bahrain's "systematic" crackdown on free speech.

"The ill-treatment and torture, coercive interrogation tactics, unfair trial, substandard conditions of detention are not merely coincidental, but part of a systematic repression of the Bahraini population," she said. "These women were targeted for their opinions or those of their relatives."

The study revealed that the women had been arrested without search warrants, some of which took place during "highly militarized police raids." The women faced physical, psychological and sexual abuse during their interrogation, according to the report.

Of the nine women, three are still held in prison

in dire conditions, such as being denied access to medical care. The other six have been released after serving their prison terms.

Speaking on Tuesday, Quitter explained that the female activists had been convicted based on forced confessions, and even threatened with rape and death if they refused to comply.

"They were subjected to rights violations from the moment of their arrest, through their interrogation and torture, unfair trials and detention in conditions which fail to meet international standards," Quitter said.

The report also highlighted how Manama had been using "broad interpretations of counter-terror laws" to facilitate the conviction of the female activists, going as far as revoking citizenship in a number of cases. **→13**



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Saffron harvest underway in western Iran

Farmers in western province of Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari are harvesting saffron from around 200 hectares of land under cultivation. The harvest season begins in mid-October and continues till early November.

It is predicted that 800 kilograms of saffron will be produced in the province.

Production of saffron in Iran is forecast to reach 430 tons in the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 19, 2020).



ARTICLE

Martin Love
Political analyst from
North Carolina

A short rant after a personal visit to Syria

So, is there some kind of looming military confrontation between Russia and the United States in eastern Syria around Syria's oil fields, which the U.S. in a pirate role has more or less claimed as its own and seems to be all about looting the oil there? Which never did belong to the U.S. but nevermind, the U.S. has been raping, stealing and killing around the world for decades in the name of "empire", and more than ever since the dawn of this current bloody century. This confrontation may be ahead. What is galling most is that the outcry against the brazen U.S. theft ought to be universal.

The only good in any of this is that there ought to be absolutely no question any longer that what the U.S. has been about in recent decades has not been the seeding of "democracy" or "human rights" or anything of that sort anywhere with its 800 plus military bases scattered across the globe and its pretensions of "exceptionalism".

One thing you can say about Donald Trump: he seems to be more honest than the two Bush screwball warmongers, Clinton, and Obama. At least he is not trying to hide bald faced aggression, theft and rapine, mostly in the service to Zionists but also for the Military Industrial Complex, which so dominates the U.S. economy now that weeding it out, if it is ever accomplished, is going to cause economic pain never before experienced in the U.S., but that all to a good cause if it can ever occur. The smart people in the U.S. are hoping for an economic depression as soon as possible to throttle the rush towards more U.S. threats in the Middle East. Currently, this seems to be the only brake to the madness.

Trump has by one report applied more than 8000 "sanctions" against other countries and individuals since he trashed the JCPOA in 2018, affecting 39 countries representing a full third of humanity. Think about that. If Iran or any other country feels particularly set upon by the U.S., maybe it's time for all countries subject to sanctions to accept them as just more obstacles to overcome, like say a particular spell of horrible weather that cannot be controlled. Until, anyway. **→7**

Iran staying in Syria upon Damascus request, Zarif says

Zarif and Lavrov condemn U.S. military presence around Syrian oil fields

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Tuesday that Iran is staying in Syria upon the Syrian government and people's request. "We will be in Syria as long as the Syrian government and people want. Russia and Iran are in Syria's soil at the invitation of Damascus," IRNA quoted Zarif as saying in a joint press conference with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and Mevlut Cavusoglu, the Turkish foreign minister, after a ministerial meeting in the Astana format in Geneva.

Zarif also said that formation of a Syrian constitutional committee is a "challenging process".

He noted that the committee should be formed and guided without any foreign interference.

According to Sputnik, Zarif said that the Syrian territory "should be controlled only by government, armed forces of Syria, and that no threat should emanate from neighboring countries".

Elsewhere, Zarif joked about the United States staying in Syria to protect the oil fields there, saying President Donald Trump is at least honest about Washington's intentions.

"Well, it seems that the United States is staying to protect the oil and at least President Trump is honest to say what the United States intends to do," the chief diplomat remarked.

Lavrov, in turn, said that the return of U.S. forces to Syria, after their transfer to Iraq, was "under the pretext of protecting oil deposits" from the Daesh terror group.

According to Press TV, Lavrov further reminded the U.S. of the illegality of any exploitation of a sovereign country's natural resources.

"The essence is that any illegal exploitation of natural resources of a sovereign state without its consent is illegal and that is the view that we share," he said. "Our U.S. colleagues are aware of our position and we will defend that position."

■ **Turkey says Syria resources belong to its people**
Separately, Fahrettin Altun, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's communications director, stressed Syria's right to its own oil reserves, saying, "Syria's natural resources belong to Syrians."

"Oil or other types of revenue should be used for reconstruction efforts including local infrastructure, support for civilians, IDPs (internally displaced persons), and refugees. Just as Syrians should be able to determine their own political future, they should also be allowed to decide how the resources of their own land should be spent," Altun tweeted.

Russia's Foreign Ministry on Saturday said the U.S. has no right to seize oil fields currently controlled by Kurdish forces in the eastern Syrian area of Deir el-Zour, Deutsche Welle reported.

The condemnation came amid reports that a U.S. military convoy of a dozen vehicles was moving south towards the site.

An unnamed U.S. military official confirmed to AFP news agency that the Pentagon began reinforcing its presence in Deir el-Zour, which boasts rich oil fields.

"This, what Washington is doing now — capturing and maintaining control through the use of arms over oil fields in eastern Syria — that is, to put it simply, international, state-sponsored banditry," said Russian General Igor Konashenkov.

The tension comes as Kurdish-led forces were forced to retreat from parts of the northeast border, as laid out by a cease-fire deal struck bilaterally between Russia and Turkey.

FM says excluding Iran will not work

By staff and agency

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Tuesday that Washington's policy to exclude Iran "from any regional arrangement — whether in Syria, Afghanistan or Yemen — will just not work".

Speaking on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference in Doha, Zarif told Al Jazeera that the United States' sanctions against Iran have "failed".

He reiterated Iran's initiative to resolve regional crises through the "Hormuz initiative".

At the United Nations' summit in New York in late September, Iran officially unveiled proposal for regional security, officially called the Hormuz Peace Endeavour (HOPE).

"Based upon the historical responsibility of my country in maintaining security, peace, stability and progress in the Persian Gulf region and Strait of Hormuz, I would like to invite all the countries directly affected by the developments in the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz to the 'Coalition for Hope', meaning Hormuz Peace Endeavor," President Hassan Rouhani told the UN delegates.

■ **'Iran would not accept a zero-sum game approach'**

Zarif also said that Iran would not accept a "zero-sum game" approach to solve a worsening crisis following a U.S. decision last year to abandon the 2015 nuclear deal.

He said that Iran is ready to engage with the international community including the U.S. over its nuclear program, however, that Tehran would not take part in discussions that did not take into account the Iranian interests.

Referring to U.S. President Donald Trump's insistence on the need for a new agreement, Zarif said Iran was "not afraid of deals or meetings" but added that "everyone is required to live up to their own commitments".

"The survival of any agreement depends on each party gaining something from it," he said.

Cabinet okays free higher education for the physically challenged

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — In a session on Wednesday, the council of ministers, chaired by President Hassan Rouhani, approved three regulations related to supporting the rights of physically challenged persons, the president.ir reported.

The regulations are related to those disabled persons looking for job and getting free higher education.

The council of ministers also approved the executive guidelines for trading authorized movable cultural-historical and artistic properties.

Another thing that approved by the cabinet was mandating the Ministry of Interior to temporarily sign security and law enforcement cooperation agreement between Iran and the Republic of Kyrgyzstan.

Leader advises Lebanese, Iraqis to prioritize security above all

Ayatollah Khamenei says U.S., Western spy services inciting unrest in regional states

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei on Wednesday advised protestors in Iraq and Lebanon to prioritize restoration of security to their homeland over any other thing.

"I suggest the empathetic people in Iraq and Lebanon to prioritize restoration of security and tranquility to their countries," the Leader said at the graduation ceremony of Army cadets at Khatam al-Anbia Air Defense Academy in Tehran.

He further said that righteous demands of the people in Iraq and Lebanon can only be materialized within legal frameworks.

Ayatollah Khamenei called on officials, elites and all walks of the life in the two countries to keep vigilance against enemies' plots, emphasizing that insightfulness is the only way to counter the conspiracies.

"If a society lack security there will not be any chance for fulfilment of cultural, economic, research and scientific activities, therefore, maintaining security is an extra-ordinary valuable duty which must be remarkably admired," the Leader remarked.

Touching upon the enemies' plan to spread unrest in some regional countries, Ayatollah Khamenei said, "The organizers of these evil acts have been identified. The U.S. and Western spy services along with financial support of some reactionary



countries in the region are behind these incidents (in Iraq and Lebanon)."

"The enemies had resorted to such a plot against our country too, but fortunately our nation came to the scene in time and wisely, in the meantime, the country's armed forces were well prepared and foiled that plot," the Leader pointed out.

Iraq and Lebanon have been the scene of protests in recent days.

At the start of October, street protests erupted in several Iraqi cities over unemployment and a lack of basic services.

The protests resumed on Friday after a pause of about two weeks. The gatherings have turned violent at some points over the past days, with conflicting unofficial reports of fatalities.

In Lebanon, the protests first began on October 17, hitting Lebanon at a time of

Iran to take fourth nuclear step if remaining parties fail to honor obligations: government

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Mahmoud Vaezi, the presidential chief of staff, confirmed on Wednesday that Iran will take the fourth step to reduce commitments under the 2015 nuclear deal, known as the JCPOA, if the remaining parties fail to honor obligations by the scheduled deadline.

The remaining parties to the JCPOA are the E3 — Britain, Germany and France — the European Union, Russia and China.

"A committee is studying this issue. We will definitely take the fourth step if we do not achieve what we are seeing in the talks by the end of the two-month deadline," he told reporters.

U.S. President Donald Trump quit the multilateral deal in May 2018 and imposed the toughest ever sanctions on Iran.

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 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, devise 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).

Vaezi told reporters on October 23 that Iran will take fourth step to reduce commitments under the JCPOA if no concrete action is taken by the remaining parties to protect Iran from the U.S. sanctions.

The current deadline comes to an end in early November.

'We should avoid self-inflicted sanctions'

Vaezi also said that Iran should use the opportunity to join the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) in order to avoid self-inflicted sanctions.

He said those inside Iran who oppose joining the FATF should accept the responsibility for their actions.

The Paris-based Financial Action Task Force (FATF) said on October 18 that it has 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, Reuters reported.

The general consensus in the Expediency Council is against approving the FATF.

Gholamreza Mesbahi-Moghadam, a member of the Expediency Council, told ISNA in an interview published on October 14 that the council has set aside studies to approve bills related to the FATF.

"Palermo and CFT will help the United States to identify the ways we circumvent the sanctions. We will not tighten sanctions by our own hands," Mesbahi-Moghadam remarked.

One of the actions Iran is required to take to appease the FATF is to ratify the CFT, the convention combatting the financing of terrorism.

Talking in a cabinet meeting on October 23, President Hassan Rouhani called on the Expediency Council to approve FATF related bills.

"It is our pride that we fight terrorists and counter corruption, therefore we should not allow allegations of money laundering against our banking system," Rouhani stated.



He added, "This hurts our country."

■ **'Washington uses terrorists as winning card'**

On the death of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the founder and leader of Daesh (ISIL) terrorist group, Vaezi said Washington uses terrorists as "winning card".

"Death of Baghdadi is not end of Daesh. Daesh was created by the United States and it [the U.S.] supported the group when needed and now, near the elections [the 2020 U.S. presidential elections], they took this action [killing Baghdadi]," opined Vaezi who acted as the second-ranking diplomat in the 1980s and early 1990s.

Trump announced on Sunday that Baghdadi had died during a "dangerous and daring" nighttime operation in Syria.

"Last night the United States brought the world's number one terrorist leader to justice," Trump said while addressing the media at the White House on Sunday.

The U.S. president said the Daesh leader blew himself up, dying "like a dog," and "like a coward" after American forces trapped him inside a dead-end tunnel.

Iran, Russia and Turkey reaffirm commitment to Syria's integrity

1 → They reiterated their strong determination to combat terrorism in all forms and manifestations and to disrupt separatist agendas in the Syrian territory;

2. Welcomed the formation the Constitutional Committee and its convening in Geneva on 30 October 2019 as a result of the decisive contribution of the Astana guarantors and the implementation of the decisions of the Syrian National Dialogue Congress in Sochi and appreciated in this regard the efforts of the UN Secretary General's Special Envoy for Syria;

3. Expressed their conviction that the launch of the Constitutional Committee proves that there could be no military solution to the Syrian conflict and reaffirmed their commitment to advance viable and lasting Syrian-led and Syrian-owned, UN-facilitated political process in line with the UN Security Council resolution 2254;



4. Reaffirmed their determination to support the work of the Constitutional Committee through continuous interac-

tion with the Syrian parties and the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Syria in order to ensure its sustainable and effective work;

5. Expressed their view that the work of the Constitutional Committee should be governed by a sense of compromise and constructive engagement without foreign interference and externally imposed timelines aimed at reaching general agreement of its members that would enable the outcome to receive the widest possible support by the Syrian people;

6. Stressed the importance of the broader settlement process moving forward to increase humanitarian assistance to all Syrians throughout the country without preconditions and discrimination, to facilitate safe and voluntary return of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) to their original places of residence in Syria as well as to build confidence and trust between the Syrian parties.

Steps that Iran may take to reduce JCPOA commitments in next move

1 → Although no official announcement has been made by the government about the details of the fourth step, the following can be deducted from the remarks and statements made so far:

■ **Increasing enrichment level, having secondary circuit of the Arak reactor operational**

According to Salehi, Iran will unveil a chain of 30 IR6 centrifuges within the next days.

As he said, Iran is to add up to 45 percent to its enrichment capacity i.e., about 3,500 SWU will be added to the current 5,600 SWU capacity.

"Iran had 2,300 kilograms of enriched uranium before JCPOA and the figure now stands at 1,700 to 1,800 kilograms," Salehi said, noting that the country is snapping back to its pre-JCPOA level.

The country was expected to take such measures in the 8th year of the implementation of the nuclear deal but it is now increasing both the purity and capacity of the enrichment.

This can be translated as Iran's warning to Europeans.

Accordingly, some experts believe that Iran will unveil the said chain in its fourth step of reducing nuclear commitments.

Regarding the Arak heavy reactor, Salehi announced that the secondary circuit of the project, which is its major part, besides its refueling machine will come online in near future.

■ **Unveiling IR7, IR8 & IR9 centrifuges**

In addition to Salehi's remarks, those by President Rouhani also suggest some information.

In his press conference on October 14,

Rouhani announced that IR7, IR8, and IR9 centrifuges will be unveiled and become operational in the near future.

Experts assume that regarding Iran's third step, when IR5, IR4, IRM2, and IRM6 modern centrifuges became operational for research purposes, Rouhani's remarks may refer to what Iran is to do in the fourth step.

Considering all the statements of senior senior officials, the fourth step may include: unveiling chain of 30 IR6 centrifuges, increasing enrichment level, running the secondary circuit of the Arak heavy water nuclear reactor as well as installing its refueling machine, besides unveiling IR7, IR8, and IR9 centrifuges.

In 2015, Iran and six major powers (five member states of the United Nations Security Council — Russia, the United States, France, the United Kingdom and China — and Germany) agreed on the Joint Comprehensive

Plan of Action, which particularly stipulated the removal of sanctions imposed on Tehran over its nuclear program.

On May 8, 2018, U.S. President Donald Trump announced Washington's unilateral withdrawal from the nuclear deal. Washington imposed previous sanctions on Iran and introduced new ones.

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

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

Banks in Malaysia close Iranians' accounts due to U.S. sanctions: report

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Banks in Malaysia are closing the accounts of Iranian individuals and companies because of U.S. sanctions, Reuters reported on Wednesday, citing a number of affected individuals.

According to the news agency, some Iranians and one embassy official said that there were "mass closure" of Iranians' bank accounts in the Southeast Asian country in recent months.

The banks were being "more Catholic than the Pope", said university lecturer Behrang Samadi, who is among an estimated 10,000 Iranians living in Malaysia and learnt in August that his bank, CIMB, would close his 14-year-old account.

"In Western countries, there is no problem opening bank accounts," he added. "They are only sensitive about money transfers, especially in big amounts."

Samadi said he withdrew his money soon after the bank warned him of the closure within a month's time, though he was still able to access his account online on Sunday.

It was not clear if the account closures were linked to the tracking of a tanker of Iranian fuel oil offshore Malaysia this year, a development that annoyed the



United States.

Many Iranians said they knew of dozens of compatriots who had received notices from CIMB and RHB Bank.

"We regret to inform (you) that we are unable to continue the banking rela-

tionship," CIMB said in identical notices reviewed by Reuters.

The banks did not state a reason, but some individuals said bank officials attributed the move to tighter scrutiny after the sanctions.

CIMB and RHB declined to comment. Malaysia's central bank directed queries to the Association of Banks in Malaysia, which declined to comment.

Such matters depended on individual banks' own risk appetite and assessment, the central bank said this month in an email response to one Iranian's complaint that was viewed by Reuters.

But a July notification on the central bank's website refers to a statement by the Financial Action Task Force urging "enhanced due diligence" on Iranians by members of the global money laundering watchdog.

Iran's embassy in Kuala Lumpur said it was working to resolve the issue.

"We hope that by goodwill and cooperation of the Malaysian officials, the negotiations will yield a positive result," it told Reuters in an email last week, adding that Iranian companies had also been affected.

For now, Iranians in the Malaysian capital have been left wondering how to pay school fees or hospital bills.

"Without a bank account we need to use the ancient techniques, keeping money under the pillow or in teapots," said one of them, who sought anonymity. "It's not fair."

U.S., Saudis behind unrest in Iraq, Lebanon: advisor

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Hossein Amir Abdollahian, a senior foreign policy advisor to the Iranian parliament speaker, has blamed the United States and Saudi Arabia for the recent unrest in Lebanon and Iraq, saying the two countries' "political terrorism" will end in failure.

"Yesterday in Yemen, the U.S. and Saudi Arabia forced the prime minister to resign and created a government-less state which led to their failure and they are now stuck in Yemen's quagmire," Amir Abdollahian said in his Instagram account. "Today, they are creating a government-less state and unrest in Iraq and Lebanon."

"Without a doubt, the new version of 'political terrorism' will end in failure as well," he added.

Iraq and Lebanon have been the scene of protests in recent days.

At the start of October, street protests erupted in several



Iraqi cities over unemployment and a lack of basic services.

An official investigation found that a total of 157 people, including civilians and security forces, had been killed in

the first round of protests in the capital and other cities.

The protests resumed on Friday after a pause of about two weeks. The gatherings have turned violent at some points over the past days, with conflicting unofficial reports of fatalities.

In Lebanon, the protests first began on October 17, hitting Lebanon at a time of worsening financial crisis — banks were closed for a 10th day on Tuesday along with schools and businesses.

Embattled Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri submitted his resignation on Tuesday evening as people remained on the streets across Lebanon for anti-government demonstrations against the country's economic crisis.

Lebanese Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri said the resignation of the incumbent government led by Hariri would not solve the deep social and economic crisis in the country, and would further complicate the situation.

Zarif meets Swiss state secretary in Geneva



POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif met on Wednesday morning with Swiss State Secretary Pascale Baeriswyl in Geneva to discuss a range of issues, including the latest developments in the Middle East.

During the meeting, the two sides also discussed recent developments in Tehran ties, as well as the fate of the Iran nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), Tasnim reported.

Zarif travelled to Geneva for a ministerial meeting of the Astana Process for peace in Syria.

The chief Iranian diplomat also met with his Russian and Turkish counterparts and the United Nations Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Syria

Geir O. Pedersen on Tuesday.

The meeting of foreign ministers of the three member states of the Astana Process coincided with the inaugural meeting of the Syrian Constitutional Committee.

In a joint communiqué at the end of their meeting, Iran, Russia and Turkey stressed that Syria's long-awaited constitutional committee must work independently and far from any foreign interference in order to draw maximum support from all walks of the Syrian nation.

The Astana peace talks were launched on Jan. 23-24, 2017 with the aim of putting an end to the Syrian crisis.

Kazakhstan has hosted multiple rounds of talks on Syria since January 2017, backed by the three power brokers, most of which involved delegations from the Syrian government and opposition.

Army equips operational units with modern hand-launched drones



POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Brigadier General Kiomars Heidari, commander of Iran's Army Ground Forces, announced on Wednesday that a new domestically-made model of hand-launched drones, named Farpad, has been handed over to the operational units.

Pointing to the latest achievements by the army's self-sufficiency organization in planning and manufacturing drone systems, Heidari said, "The ground forces have manufactured a new model of hand-launched drones. This drone is not under research anymore. It has successfully passed field tests and has been handed over to the operational units."

"Farpad drone will be utilized in reconnaissance and monitoring missions at border lines and other relevant operations," Heidari stated, according to the

army's public relations.

The brigadier general further said, "The army is to equip mobile combat brigades and rapid reaction and intelligence units with Farpad."

"Farpad is equipped with automatic pilot system and portable ground control station. Farpad is also capable of participating in electronic wars. The drone is also capable of detecting targets via imaging."

The brigadier general added, "The army's ground forces enjoy long record in applying drones, and now, they own various drone systems, including radar-evading, night-flying, reconnaissance and combat drones."

Iran has recently made major breakthroughs in its defense sector and attained self-sufficiency in producing military equipment and hardware despite facing sanctions and economic pressure.

Al-Nujaba urged the Iraqi protesters to comply with the advice of Iraqi Shiite authorities to not allow the Ba'athist and Americans to infiltrate peaceful demonstrations.

The Iraqi Islamic Resistance movement also condemned the killing of Iraqi security forces and members of Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF).

The statement came as protests escalated in the Iraqi capital Baghdad and other cities.

Iranian ambassador, Hakim call for dialogue to resolve regional crises

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iranian Ambassador to Baghdad Iraj Masjedi met on Tuesday with chief of the National Wisdom Movement of Iraq Ammar Hakim in Baghdad, where the two sides stressed that dialogue and peaceful means are only remedies to the ongoing crises in the regional countries.

The two sides discussed regional developments as well as the current situation in Iraq.

"The regional countries would benefit from talks

and not conflicts," Masjedi and Hakim said during the meeting, Fars reported.

"Everyone's interest lies in using the tool of talks and keeping the region away from any conflict that could affect regional and global security," Hakim said.

In a relevant development on Monday, Iraq's Islamic Resistance Movement Al-Nujaba denounced Washington's destructive role in Iraq, blaming the U.S. for being behind corruption and chaos in the country.

eral Mohammad Pakpour announced late last month that the IRGC forces had engaged in over 50 clashes with the terrorists at the Iranian borders and killed tens of militants since late March.

"Over 50 cases of attack have happened in the past 6 months which have led to clashes and considerable tolls have been inflicted on the terrorists' operational teams at the Northwestern and Southeastern borders of Iran," General Pakpour told FNA.

He also added that several Takfiri and terrorist teams in the Western borders of Iran have been dismantled completely by the IRGC Ground Forces and tens of terrorists have been killed in the past three years.

General Pakpour underlined that security and tranquility prevails at the Iranian borders despite all moves made by the terrorist groups due to the intelligence superiority and preparedness of the IRGC Ground Force's units.

Tehran calls on Lebanon to preserve unity

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iran's Foreign Ministry has called on Lebanon's officials and political figures to preserve their unity and rapport in the aftermath of Prime Minister Saad Hariri's resignation.

In a statement on Tuesday evening, Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi expressed the hope that the Lebanese nation and government would successfully get through such serious and sensitive juncture with rapport.



Mousavi also stressed the need for stability in the friendly and brotherly country of Lebanon.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran emphasizes the need for the solidarity, unity and rapport among all Lebanese clans, parties and characters in order to maintain the country's stability and security and to respond to the legitimate demands of the Lebanese people at a calm atmosphere," he said, according to the Foreign Ministry's website.

Hariri submitted his resignation to President Michel Aoun on Tuesday after 13 days of continuous protests.

"I have reached a dead end today. I will head to the Baabda Palace to submit the government's resignation to President Michel Aoun," Hariri said as he addressed the Lebanese nation in a televised speech on Tuesday evening.

"Posts are not important; what's important is the country's dignity and safety," he added, calling upon people from all strata of the Lebanese society to preserve the stability and security of the country.

Hariri highlighted that he wants to make a "positive shock," saying, "No one is bigger than his country."

He also told Lebanese political parties that "it is our responsibility to protect Lebanon".

Under the constitution, Hariri's cabinet would stay on in a caretaker capacity until a new government is formed.

The protests first began on October 17, hitting Lebanon at a time of worsening financial crisis — banks were closed for a 10th day on Tuesday along with schools and businesses.

Earlier in the day, Lebanese Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri said the resignation of the incumbent government led by Hariri would not solve the deep social and economic crisis in the country, and would further complicate the situation.

Three key ministers to attend Majlis national security committee

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, Interior Minister Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli and Defense Minister Amir Hatmi are to attend the Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Committee next week to respond questions by legislators.

The committee is supposed to review a bill of cooperation protocol on countering organized crimes in the Caspian Sea which is an appendix to the sea's security cooperation agreement, a plan on the government's commitment to provide support for anti-hegemonic powers research and scientific centers and also a plan on punishing those managers who act in line with sanctions against Iran.

The above-mentioned ministers will attend the committee on Monday and Tuesday to respond any possible questions by the lawmakers sitting on the committee.

Intelligence Ministry disbands currency smuggling gang in northwestern Iran

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — The Iranian Intelligence Ministry announced on Wednesday that it has dismantled a team of currency smugglers in the northwestern province of West Azarbaijan.



The ministry's public relations announced that the armed gang was committing illegal trade and smuggling currency in the cities of Boukan, Mahabad, Urmiya and Tehran.

It added that the members, who had already been identified, were under close monitoring of the intelligence forces in West Azarbaijan.

The ministry further said that the gang was ultimately dismantled via several smart operations.

"Five main members of the band, including the band leader were arrested through coordination with judiciary officials. A large amount of currency, a number of guns, an amount of fake dollar notes, fake plate of vehicles and several vehicles used for smuggling currency were seized in the operations," the ministry explained.

TEHRAN (FNA) — Commander of the Iranian Border Guards Brigadier General Qassem Rezaee on Wednesday underlined that full security prevails at all borders of the country.

"We do not have any security concern at the borders as a result of cooperation and companionship of the people," General Rezaee said in a meeting in the Northwestern province of West Azarbaijan on Wednesday.

Commander: Full security prevailing along Iranian borders

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	309660.8
IFX	3927.58

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	46,657 rials
GBP	54,024 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$61.35/b
WTI	\$55.55/b
OPEC Basket	\$61.65/b
Gold	\$1,494.75/oz
Silver	\$817.94/oz
Platinum	\$924.50/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

Tajikistan to host exclusive expo of Iranian goods

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iran’s Ambassador to Dushanbe said an exclusive exhibition of Iranian goods and services is going to be held in Tajikistan’s capital in near future, IRNA reported.

Speaking in a trade committee meeting of Mashhad Chamber of Commerce on Wednesday, Mohammad-Taqi Saberi said after several rounds of talks and negotiations the Tajik side has agreed to host the exhibition which is expected to be held in December.

Iranian companies active in various areas including food industry, agricultural products, minerals and mining industries, construction materials, banking services, transportation and tourism will participate in this exhibition.

Iran already has a permanent exhibition of its goods and services called “Almas” in Dushanbe.

Iran’s permanent exhibition was opened in May 2017.

Confectionery, paints, pistachios, cement, aluminum oxide, medicines, poultry, biscuits, as well as engineering services are among Iran’s top exporting commodities and services to Tajikistan.

Singapore’s Central Bank sees uneven economic growth this year and stabilization in 2020

Singapore’s economic growth will remain uneven through the end of the year, with weakness concentrated in trade and manufacturing, before halting its downtrend in 2020, the central bank said.

According to scmp.com, the city state’s prospects are in line with the path of the global economy, which should “stabilize” next year, the Monetary Authority of Singapore said in its Macroeconomic Review on Wednesday.

The domestic economy “could experience fits and starts for the rest of the year, and into 2020”, the MAS said.



MAS managing director Ravi Menon said last week that the current cycle should bottom out toward the end of 2019 as the downturn appears to be confined to the trade and manufacturing sectors.

The central bank elaborated on that view in its report on Wednesday, showing inflation will remain subdued while the labor market will soften.

The MAS, which uses the exchange rate as its main tool, eased policy in October for the first time since 2016. The move was a “measured adjustment” given that economic growth, business costs and consumer prices are expected to stabilize rather than decelerate further, the MAS said in its report.

A “more aggressive easing of policy is unwarranted at this juncture”, it said, although risks to growth and inflation are tilted to the downside.

The MAS reiterated it is prepared to adjust policy if the outlook weakens significantly.

The services industry remains resilient for now and will continue to be a key support for growth, the central bank said.

The outlook for the trade sector is “uncertain”, with prospects also depending on a recovery in the global electronics cycle.

Singapore’s labor market has weakened and wage growth is likely to slow into next year, the central bank said. The latest data shows retrenchments are on the rise, companies are cautious about raising wages, and unemployed people are taking more time to find new work.

“Hiring sentiment has become more restrained amid the economic slowdown,” according to the report.

“Looking ahead, domestic wage growth should ease as the labor market softens, even while sluggish demand could limit the pass-through of cost increases to consumers.”

Iranian banks obliged to set up anti-money laundering units

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Central Bank of Iran has obliged all the country’s banks and credit institutions to establish anti-money laundering units, IRNA reported on Wednesday.

As per the law, anti-money laundering and terrorism financing units are required to regularly review and evaluate transactions and operations in the banks and credit institutions.

Banks and credit institutions are required

to execute identification processes to classify their customers based on their risk levels according to CBI anti-money laundering and terrorism financing regulations, and implement identification procedures appropriate to this risk levels.

The Central Bank of Iran, as the regulator of all financial and credit institutions in the country, has been taking all necessary measures to provide the said institutions with the required infrastructures and to monitor their

IMIDRO carries out mining excavation on 102,000 sq.m of land

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO) carried out mining excavation work on 102,000 square meters of land across the country in the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20, 2019), IRNA reported.

IMIDRO spent 974 billion rials (over \$22.5 million) on the mentioned excavation operations which included exploration, identification and prospecting operations for iron ore, coal, bauxite, gold and copper.

Back in August, IMIDRO head had announced that exploration operations were started in 300,000 square meters of land across the country.

According to Khodadad Gharibpour, the country’s private sector has invested 11.3 trillion rials (about \$269.04 million) in the mining sector since last December up to August.

“This amount of investment is a turning point in the private sector’s contribution to the development of the country’s mining



industries,” Gharibpour said in an IMIDRO deputies meeting.

Earlier in October, head of Geological Survey and Mineral Explorations of Iran (GSI) also announced that 60 new areas were going to be opened and awarded to the private sector for mining exploration and excavation.

“In line with the organization’s new approach regarding the contribution of private sector in the country’s large-scale exploration activities, we are planning to award new areas for mining exploration, so that the private sector would be able to enter mining activities in a fair and transparent environment,” Alireza Shahidi said.

France faces up to China’s Africa challenge with Paris business forum

By Christina Okello

France is stepping up its push for influence on the African continent, with its flagship B2B event, Ambition Africa, which kicks off Wednesday for its second year. It comes as competition from China and other players for the African market is rife.

French companies are looking to expand their operations in non-European markets, and Africa with its fast growing population is a perfect choice.

But its African push won’t be easy.

The “only sectors where France still has some influence is in the services, port management and telecoms sectors,” comments Antoine Glaser, author of the book Arrogant like a French man in Africa.

To stand out in a market dominated by China, French companies are trying to reposition themselves as a source for sustainable development products and services.

“France is carving out a niche market around sustainability and water management because it’s the only area where it can compete. The rest, like infrastructure and construction have been taken over by the Chinese,” Glaser told RFI.

French companies like Veolia and Suez

have managed to secure contracts for water and electricity in countries like Gabon; and this year’s Ambition Africa forum is built around topics focusing on urban development and Africa’s energy mix, in the run-up to the Africa-France summit on sustainable African cities in July.

■ Bilateral trade forward

The two-day event will gather hundreds of industry experts, entrepreneurs, and business leaders for discussions on how to move bilateral trade forward.

It comes at a critical juncture for France, amid fears of recession, and increased competition for the African market.

The “economic and social situation in the country is dire,” says François Ndengwe, chairman of the African Advisory Board, which advises institutions on good governance.

A report by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) earlier this year warned that the French economy was slowing down due to global uncertainty and social unrest.

For Ndengwe, Paris is stepping up its engagement with Africa because it has to find a new consumer market.

The continent “offers opportunities for

France to improve its economic situation,” he said, pointing to the country’s high public deficit and stubborn unemployment.

However, Paris is “handicapped” because of its reputation as a former colonial power, which will make it “difficult to convince in particular the youth and African entrepreneurs that it is coming with a new view,” he warns.

Ndengwe regrets that the conference skirts over the issue of the controversial CFA currency.

■ To yield substantial growth

“It is the elephant in the room,” he comments. “But unless there is a frank discussion on the issue of the CFA currency there will be no progression in francophone countries,” he reckons, arguing that two centuries of bilateral trade with France has failed to yield substantial growth for the former French colonies.

Today, France is pledging a real win-win partnership with the continent, and is using tools like Ambition Africa, which aims to make France a hub for African trade, to get its point across. Another weapon is its diaspora community.

What’s behind Macron’s courting of the African diaspora?

“France is trying to mobilize its citizens



of African origin, particularly those who are skilled and have been trained at its top companies, and use them as ambassadors in their countries of origin,” comments for his part Antoine Glaser.

“These men and women are today being promoted to top positions and are being used as the face of France’s strategy on the continent to help it win new markets,” he told RFI.

The renewed interest in the African market is likely to be welcomed by the continent’s leaders, keen for foreign investment. However, critics will be watching closely to see what transpires from France’s African push in terms of concrete jobs and training, beyond slick PR.

(Source: en.rfi.fr)

Indian economy is on a decline. So why are IMF and World Bank’s growth forecasts so high?

By Justin Sandefur and Julian Duggan

As of late last year, official data suggested India was the fastest-growing major economy in the world. But serious doubts have begun to emerge about the true state of the economy. The head of the government’s own think tank has expressed alarm at a liquidity crisis that he called “unprecedented in the last 70 years,” and analysts are debating the causes and depth of an ongoing economic slowdown.

Nobody was surprised earlier this month when the World Bank lowered its 2019 growth projection for India to 6 percent from 7.5 percent just four months earlier, and the IMF followed suit, dropping its 7 percent forecast from July down to 6.1 percent.

But given the state of affairs in India’s economy to date in 2019, the immediate question for the World Bank and IMF isn’t why they lowered their forecasts, but why they still remain so high.

We looked at the growth of leading economic indicators from official Indian government sources for April to September 2019, which corresponds to the first six months covered by the IMF’s new forecast.

Several key indicators are not just slowing, but in absolute decline, including non-oil imports (-6.6 percent in current dollars), non-oil exports (-1.6 percent in current dollars), and the index of production of capital and infrastructure goods (-3.5 percent up to August 2019).

■ Showing positive growth

Other indicators show positive growth, but far below the 6 percent benchmark that the World Bank and IMF project for the economy as a whole: the aggregate index of industrial production is up just 2.5 percent, the index of manufacturing put up just 2.1 percent, and receipts from



the goods and services tax are up just 1.6 percent in real terms. Growth in toothpaste sales is slowing, car sales have declined for 11 consecutive months, and reports suggested declines in underwear sales.

The IMF’s 2019 growth forecast for India looks optimistic given other key indicators for the first half of the fiscal year

Growth of non-oil imports and exports are expressed in current dollars, downloaded from the government of India, Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics.

GDP is measured in real Indian rupees, deflated with the official CPI. The 2018 growth rate is taken from the World Bank WDI. The index of industrial production is taken from Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation and ends in August rather than September 2019.

The failure of GDP to track imports has been cited as evidence of manipulation of official growth rates, particularly in the case of China.

A recent paper by John Fernald, Eric Hsu, and Mark Spiegel of the San Francisco Fed shows that the correlation

between GDP and imports is higher in countries with better statistical systems (0.9 for the U.S.), and that imports — which can be verified using the export data of third parties — are a better predictor of other leading economic indicators than is GDP in China’s case.

■ The banking system

In India’s case it is not just imports, but also exports, industrial production, tax revenues, and the banking system all pointing in the same downward direction.

The latest indicators from April to September 2019 reinforce doubts about India’s official GDP that made a big splash in Delhi earlier this year.

In June, Arvind Subramanian, former Chief Economic Advisor to the government of India and our former colleague here at the Center for Global Development, published a Harvard working paper (and a follow-up paper) suggesting that technical changes in national accounts methodology in 2011 had led India to significantly exaggerate its official GDP growth rate ever since. Rather than 7 percent growth from 2011-12 through 2016-17, Subramanian suggested the true rate might have been closer to 4.5 percent. That discrepancy is, as they say, big, if true.

Official government of India sources dismissed Subramanian’s analysis out of hand, and some independent analysts have questioned whether the recent divergence of GDP growth from growth in other indicators was a sufficient basis to abandon the official figures. But other analysts have looked at the data and reached broadly similar conclusions as Subramanian. Whichever numbers you believe, the core mystery posed by Subramanian remains: How is India growing so fast if, as the government’s own statistics show, a long list of other major economic indicators have slowed or even reversed?

(Source: theprint.in)

Offering oil at IRENEX continues: NIOC

ENERGY

TEHRAN — National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC)'s representative in Iran Energy Exchange (IRENEX) said that the company will continue offering oil at IRENEX after a few week of hiatus due to technical problems.

"The process of offering crude oil and gas condensate will be ongoing on a regular basis, and the recent interval has been due solely to customizing and updating the process to match the market conditions and future offerings will be announced soon," Amir-Hossein Tebyanian told Shana on Wednesday.

The official noted that since offering oil and gas condensate in the stock exchange is naturally affected by market conditions and "we should therefore not have unrealistic expectations regarding the oil sales through this platform."

The national budget law for the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 21) obliges the Oil Ministry to offer at least two million barrels of light crude oil, two million barrels of heavy crude oil and two million



barrels of gas condensate at the international ring of Iran Energy Exchange (IRENEX) every month. However, the process has been facing a break in the past few weeks.

Offering crude oil and gas condensate at IRENEX is to materialize the objectives of

"Resistance Economy" for diversifying methods of selling these products and benefitting from the capabilities of private sector for exporting them.

National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) offered light crude oil at IRENEX first on

October 28, 2018, just few days before new U.S. sanctions on Iran's petroleum sector took effect (November 4).

Offering gas condensate at IRENEX came after the successful offering of crude oil at this market. And then the turn came to heavy crude. Offering heavy crude at IRENEX came after NIOC offered light crude at this stock market in eight round.

Now, after nearly one year, the released reports show that sales of these products has not been so successful and welcomed, as according to the representative of NIOC at IRENEX, just about one million barrels of light crude and 70,000 barrels of heavy crude have been sold at IRENEX since the second Iranian calendar month of Ordibehesht (began on April 21), although the products have been regularly offered at IRENEX on a weekly basis.

IRENEX Managing Director Seyed Ali Hosseini believes that policymaking and execution are not integrated; and it is the reason behind the slow trend of the trades in IRENEX.

Oil slips as trade concerns outweigh drop in inventories

Oil prices fell on Wednesday as a possible delay in resolving the U.S.-China trade war overshadowed a drop in U.S. crude inventories.

As per reuters.com, Brent crude was down 7 cents, or 0.1%, at \$61.52 a barrel by 0735 GMT, having fallen to as low as \$61.32.

U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude was down 15 cents, or 0.3%, at \$55.39 a barrel after reaching a low of \$55.16.

U.S. crude inventories fell 708,000 barrels in the week ended Oct. 25 to 436 million, compared with analysts' expectations for an increase of 494,000 barrels, according to data from the industry group, the American Petroleum Institute.

The "market has largely ignored the decline in U.S. crude inventories and assumed the demand side will remain weak in the foreseeable future as the global cyclical slowdown deepens," said Margaret Yang, market analyst at CMC Markets in Singapore.

"Fading optimism over a U.S.-China phase-one deal further weighed on oil prices as trade risks are set to rise," she said. The United States and China were continuing to work



on an interim trade agreement, but it may not be completed in time for U.S. and Chinese leaders to sign it next month, a U.S. administration official said.

The latest potential setback in the negotiations stalled a rally in global share markets.

Investors are also awaiting the outcome of the Federal

Reserve's two-day policy meeting this week. The Fed looked set later on Wednesday to nudge along a U.S. economy that is being hampered by slowing investment and weak growth overseas. It would be the third cut this year.

A rate cut would help support oil prices as a stronger economy typically implies higher demand for crude, while falling inventories suggest the market is coming into balance.

Russia's deputy energy minister also said on Tuesday it was too early to talk of deeper output cuts by OPEC and its allies, adding to the pressure on the market.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and other producers including Russia -- a grouping referred to as OPEC+ -- have cut oil output by 1.2 million barrels per day to support prices since January.

In the United States, gasoline stocks dropped by 4.7 million barrels, compared with analyst expectations for a drop of 2.2 million barrels, and distillate stocks were down by 1.6 million barrels, versus an expected fall of 2.35 million barrels.

Still, crude stocks at the Cushing, Oklahoma, delivery hub for WTI rose by 1.2 million barrels, the API said.

Consensus on oil price is that it remains range-bound



Last week saw a surprise increase in the oil price of 5.2 percent, from its low point on Tuesday to its high of \$61.9 per barrel on Thursday. The price opened slightly lower at \$61.1 in Monday's early European trading.

According to hellenicshippingnews.com, the development surprised because it happened the week after the International Monetary Fund (IMF)/World Bank's annual meeting, which gave a gloomy economic outlook. The IMF's global economic growth forecast for this year was downgraded to 3 percent, while the World Bank maintained its at 2.6 percent. This means that the world economy is teetering on the brink of a recession.

Both institutions define the start point of a global recession as when average growth slows to 2.5 percent, as this signifies that several of the major Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development economies will have entered into recession.

The IMF quoted trade wars, Brexit and geopolitical tensions as the main culprits for the global slowdown. Indeed, it looks like Germany entered a technical recession in the third quarter. The rest of the euro-zone performed above expectations, but the slowdown in China cannot be ignored. We can also see the onset of a slowdown in the U.S. economy.

The talk of recession and the localization of supply chains due to trade wars keeps the demand outlook for oil bleak. In its monthly oil market report, the International Energy Agency (IEA) lowered its demand forecasts for 2019 and 2020 by 0.1 percent to 1 million barrels per day (bpd) this year and 1.2 million next year.

After the Sept. 14 attacks on Abqaiq and Khurais, Saudi Aramco had restored its production by the end of the month. It looks set to do the same for capacity by the end of November. The fallout from the attacks temporarily dampened the outlook.

■ The non-OPEC production

However, the IEA still foresees the increase of 1.8 million bpd of non-OPEC production to hit international oil markets this year, which will go up to 2.2 million next year, meaning there will be a supply overhang if OPEC+ production stays at current levels.

So what was behind last week's oil price increase? The U.S. Energy Information Agency reported that U.S. crude inventories dropped by 1.7 million barrels, which was in stark contrast to analyst consensus that foresaw an increase of 2.2 million barrels.

■ The world crude balance

While the world crude balance may be in deficit, it is gloomy demand outlook and the impending non-OPEC wall of supply that outweighs any other considerations. The situation was not helped by a statement from Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak that there have so far been no consultations regarding deepening the 1.2 million bpd cut, which OPEC+ had decided on in June in Vienna in order to balance markets.

There are observers who think that the geopolitical premium is not sufficiently reflected, especially after last month's attacks on Abqaiq and Khurais. While they may have a point, markets will decide the actual price level and markets traditionally act on data that can be forecasted with some certainty. Geopolitical events are considered outliers and will be priced in as and when they occur.

This means that the price outlook is muted. At last week's S&P Global Platts conference, nearly 50 percent of attendees surveyed thought that the price level would stay between \$55 and \$65 per barrel.

Why do these surveys and the general outlook matter now? For one, OPEC+ will meet at the beginning of December and it needs to decide where to take the production cuts going forward. Part of the evaluation will have to consider whether a higher price can offset lower volumes and the sacrifice in market share.

Senegal enters the LNG race with significant offshore discoveries

At present when it comes to emerging LNG plays the eyes of the world are on Africa's eastern coast and the activities around Mozambique, but that could be about to change. While not currently amongst the continent's top oil and gas producers Senegal plans to alter that in the coming years. On the back of some substantial deepwater finds the West Africa nation is predicted to become a hot spot during the next decade for relatively low-cost LNG clusters.

As per africanews.com, Senegal, where oil was discovered in 1961, expects all its offshore projects to come online between 2022 and 2026.

According to the International Monetary Fund, between 2014 and 2017, oil and gas reserves worth more than 1 billion barrels of oil and 40 trillion cubic feet of gas, most of it shared with Mauritania, were found. Two large fields in Senegal are currently being developed -- Australia's Woodside Energy is developing the SNE field and BP/Kosmos Energy the Greater Tortue Ahmeyim project.

BP took the final investment decision (FID) on the Mauritania-Senegal FLNG plan late last year. The Greater Tortue Ahmeyim LNG project will produce around 2.5 million tonnes per year, with first gas expected in 2022. There are expansion plans for a hub on Yakaar-Teranga and one on Birallah. The Orca well, which is expected to be spudded in October, would go to supporting the Birallah hub and the first phase will provide domestic gas and data for the producers. Senegal launched a development plan in 2014, with Kosmos saying gas from the offshore fields would go to supporting this.

In September Kosmos Energy and its partners BP and confirmed that the Yakaar-2 appraisal well has encountered approximately 30 meters of net gas in a similar high-quality Cenomanian reservoir to the Yakaar-1 exploration well, continuing the 100 percent success rate of wells targeting the inboard Mauritania/Senegal gas trend.

■ In a phased approach

According to Kosmos the results from the well prove that the Yakaar-Teranga resource base is world-scale and has the potential to support an LNG project that provides significant volumes of natural gas to both domestic and export markets.

Development of Yakaar-Teranga is expected in a phased approach with Phase 1 providing domestic gas and data to optimize the development of future phases. It will also support the country's "Plan Emergent Senegal" launched by the President of Senegal in 2014. Kosmos has said it intends to sell down its stake in the project. It is seeking a

carry for its development costs, in order to focus on its expertise in exploration.

The SNE Deepwater Oil Field is located in the Rufisque, Sangomar and Sangomar Deep Blocks, which cover a combined area of 7,490km² within the Senegalese portion of the MSGBC Basin. The field is one of the world's largest oilfields discovered in the last decade and is being developed in a joint venture between Cairn Energy (40%), Woodside Energy (35%), FAR (15%) and Petrosen (10%), with Woodside Energy the project operator.

When Cairn drilled the first deep water wells offshore Senegal in 2014 it made two basin opening discoveries, one of which, the SNE field, the largest global oil discovery of 2014. Since then, the region has evolved from a frontier basin to an emerging oil play attracting the attention of the global industry. Last year significant progress was made on the development with a number of key milestones achieved. Woodside assumed the role of operator and the Joint Venture (JV) is targeting a final investment decision in H2 2019 and first oil in 2022.

■ Other reservoirs and fields

The planning is for the field to be developed through a stand-alone Floating Production Storage Offloading (FPSO) vessel facility with a capacity of around 100,000 bopd, with 23 subsea wells and supporting subsea infrastructure. It will be designed to allow subsequent SNE development phases, including options for gas export to shore and for future subsea tiebacks from other reservoirs and fields.

Early this year approval in principle for the technical basis of the project along with confirmation that the license covering the development area would be extended to allow for the conclusion of FEED and to mature financing activities during 2019 prior to Exploitation License award.

The "region has now evolved from a frontier to an emerging hydrocarbon opportunity attracting the attention of the global industry," Eric Hathon, Exploration Director at Cairn Energy, said. "In the last three years we have operated three safe and successful drilling programs and laid the foundation for a multi-phase development plan."

"We are committed to delivering lasting and social economic benefits in Senegal, including, energy security and revenues, employment, development of an infrastructure and social investment," Hathon continued. "Cairn's belief is that the discovery and development of sustainable oil production will greatly benefit the national economy and local population."

The worst oil trades ever made

By Alex Kimani

It's a poorly kept secret that honesty is the rarest commodity in financial circles. Greed, insider dealings, questionable ethics and all manner of corporate malfeasance are rampant on Wall Street.

That's why the Obama administration instituted crippling Dodd-Frank regulations a decade ago.

That said, it's easy to assume that only big and powerful Wall Street bankers like Wells Fargo, BofA and JPMorgan Chase are able to manipulate the markets to any appreciable degree. Yet, history is littered with cases where everything came together at just the right time and order thus allowing a single trader or small group of traders to rock the markets.

You really don't have to look very far to find the evidence.

Nobody here is accusing the POTUS of market manipulation, but stock markets move when president Trump tweets prolifically.



It's not Trump's usual Twitter activity that's been roiling the markets this time around; rather, some mysterious wagers in the stock markets -- some revolving around Trump's events -- have been leaving traders in shock and awe due to their precision and timing.

Take the case of a trader or group of 'prescient' traders who appear to have had foreknowledge of the Saudi Aramco drone attacks and made huge profits by correctly anticipating the stock market rout.

The said trader or traders sold short 120,000 S&P e-minis -- basically futures contracts linked to the S&P 500 index -- on Friday, September 13, just before the close of business at the Chicago Mercantile Exchange or CME.

A few hours later, drones attacked large swathes of Saudi Arabia's oil infrastructure, crippling production and sending oil prices soaring. When the CME opened again on Sunday night for pre-trading, the S&P 500 tanked 30 points thus helping the trader or traders to book a handsome \$180 million in profits in a matter of days.

■ The lucky trader

Here's how the math works: A single one-point up or down by the S&P 500 is worth \$50 in an e-mini contract. A 30-point movement is, therefore, worth \$1,500 per contract. The lucky trader or traders who bought the 120,000 e-minis were, therefore, able to realize a return of \$180 million.

On September 11, the Beijing government announced it would lift tariffs on a range of American-made products. On the same day, President Trump returned the favor by announcing he would postpone tariffs on some Chinese goods. As expected, the markets reacted positively to the news with the S&P 500 jumping 47 points.

Coincidentally, someone had bought 82,000 e-mini contracts the previous day, just before the close of business. The lucky trader was left sitting on a cool \$190 million for a single day's work.

Still, these two trades pale in comparison to the trader or traders who purchased a huge amount of September e-minis just before another major market-moving event took place.

On June 28, a trader bought 420,000 September e-minis representing 40 percent of the day's trading volume in that month's e-minis. A day later, the president announced the intermittent trade negotiations were "back on track."

The S&P 500 gained 84 points over the following week, leaving the trader of group of traders with a very fat \$1.8 billion in profits.

One longtime CME trader who has told Vanity Fair that he's never seen anything quite like it since September 11, 2001 when Al Qaeda cashed in before launching attacks:

"There is definite hanky-panky going on, to the world's financial markets' detriment. This is abysmal."

Whereas it's not possible for us to establish the identity of the e-mini traders who seem to be manipulating the market, there have been well-documented cases of foolhardy traders who lost their shirts after pushing the envelope too far out of sheer greed.

One is Einar Aas, formerly one of Norway's wealthiest men. Last year, Aas lost everything after engaging in some over-ambitious energy plays.

Aas had opened positions in the Nasdaq Stock Exchange that were too huge in relation to the liquidity of the market. On September 10, there were extraordinary price changes in the German and Nordic power markets that wiped out Aas' capital and put a \$133 million hole, or 68 percent of its capital, in Nasdaq's contingency fund that's used for derivative trading in the European energy market.

■ To pay the balance

Nasdaq banned Aas from the exchange, covered \$8.2 million of the losses itself and ordered members of the commodity clearing operation to pay the balance or risk being declared in default.

Aas was able to cut a deal with his creditors thus narrowly avoiding bankruptcy.

If the most damage you have done while drunk was to ruin a party, wake up in a ditch three states away or maybe get arrested for DUI, then go easy on yourself; you've got nothing on Steve Perkins.

Back in 1992, oil trader Steve Perkins went on a golfing retreat over the weekend, fully funded by his employer PVM Oil Futures. Come Monday morning, Perkins decided to extend the bender and continued hitting the bottle till the wee hours of Tuesday morning, before starting to trade in his badly inebriated state.

Although oil brokers are only supposed to make trades on behalf of their clients, Perkins decided to do it for himself using the company's money. He purchased 7.13 million barrels of Brent over a 19-hour period -- representing 69 percent of Brent volume traded on the day -- at a cost of \$520 million.

Consequently, oil prices shot up from \$71.40 a barrel to \$73. His befuddled trades lumbered PVM Oil Futures with losses of \$9.7 million though, incredibly, Perkins claims not to remember anything about that fateful night.

He got off rather lightly, too -- a 72,000-pound fine and a 5-year ban from participating in any regulated market activity.

(Source: oilprice.com)

By Saeed Sobhani

TEHRAN — The President of the United States of America remains deeply concerned about former President Barack Obama. This fear is clearly evident in Trump's stance on Obama. Trump is well aware that Biden's run for the presidency could lead to Obama directly entering the election scene (to support Biden). Obama, however, was generally unhappy about Biden's run for the presidency next year.

Obama also played an important role in the Republican defeat in the House of Representatives during the congressional campaigns of the year. Obama's speeches against Trump at the time caused many American voters to turn their votes to the detriment of Trump and the Republican Party. Trump is worried that this time around, Obama will repeat the trend next year.

■ **Trump: G7 Con and Obama's netflix deal are the same thing**

Vanityfair reported that If Donald Trump were a normal human being, which of course he is not, he would have announced the next G7 will no longer be held at his own hotel and moved on to more pressing issues, like the grease fire he started in Syria, the Democratic impeachment inquiry, and the general business of running the country. Instead, because he's a pathological narcissist who thinks it's so unfair that he received some bad press for selecting his for-profit resort for a giant intergovernmental summit of world leaders, he's quite obviously going to spend the next several months—if not longer!—complaining about the whole thing. The never-ending bitching and moaning will likely go down on Twitter, in press conferences, during rallies, and, if we had to guess, while visiting wounded soldiers at Walter Reed or the parents of children lost to gun violence. The long monologues will undoubtedly touch on "PRESIDENTIAL HARASSMENT," during which obvious lies will be prominently featured, and on Monday, we got a taste for what he's got in store.

Speaking at a cabinet meeting that was intended to be a discussion about the administration's "successful rollback of the abuses and the high cost of the bloated regulatory state," the president almost immediately moved to air his grievances. After ranting about the negative reaction to his catastrophic decision to pull out of northern Syria and give Turkey the greenlight to invade, which has led to our once-Kurdish allies being slaughtered and the escape of ISIS prisoners—"I'm the one who did the capturing," Trump insisted—he moved onto the most important issue of the day. "I'm very good at real estate," he said, talking up his Miami resort that he claims needs no promotion, adding that the summit "would have been the best G7 ever," if only people had been cool with him collecting millions from foreign leaders, which is the actual definition of an Emoluments Clause violation, a Constitutional ban he described as "phony."

Trying to make the argument that he in no way profits from the presidency, even though he 100% does and then some, Trump reminded the group assembled that he gives away his presidential salary, naturally botching the history of his predecessors. "They say George Washington may have been the only other president to do that," he rambled. "See whether or not Obama gave up his salary. See whether or not all of the other of your favorites, your other favorites gave up their salary. The answer is no." In fact, George Washington was paid \$25,000 for his presidential duties, while Herbert Hoover and John F. Kennedy both donated their paychecks to charitable causes. Later, Trump insisted that him collecting bags of cash from six other foreign governments was the same thing as Barack Obama being paid by U.S. publisher and movie studio after he left office. "Obama made a deal for a book. Is that running a business?" he said. "I'm sure he didn't even discuss it while he was president. He has a deal with Netflix. When did they start talking about that?" Then he claimed that Obama had tried and failed 11 times to secure a meeting with North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un, which of course, never happened at all. Trump repeated his lie that Kim Jong Un wouldn't take Obama phone calls, saying he asked Obama if he tried to call, and Obama said no, but: "Actually, he tried, 11 times. But the man on the other side, the gentleman on the other side, did not take his call. Lack of respect."

■ **Schumer asks intelligence officials to protect whistle-blower from the president**

If you had "lawmaker sends letter detailing concern that president of the United States will violate the Whistleblower Protection Act and harm a CIA official" on your 2019 bingo card, congratulations:

The Senate Minority leader asked both the acting director of national intelligence and the inspector general on Monday afternoon to outline what "specific steps" they are taking to protect the whistle-blower. Schumer said his understanding is the unidentified individual is receiving some security but said that he fears "safety risks may intensify in the event that the whistle-blower's identity is disclosed."

"In light of the president's ill-advised statements, his lack of respect for the rule of law and his well-documented habit of condoning violence by his supporters, I am concerned that he may disclose the whistle-blower's identity or cause it to be disclosed by others in the administration," Schumer wrote in a letter to acting DNI Joseph Maguire and IG Michael Atkinson. "If that were to happen, it will be your responsibility to take immediate action to protect the whistleblower from both workplace reprisal and threats to his or her personal safety."

In fairness, you can kind of see where Schumer is coming from, given Trump's past statements that "we must determine the whistle-blower's identity," the one suggesting the U.S. execute the whistle-blower's sources, and the one today in which he told reporters, "Do we have to protect a whistle-blower who gives a false account? I don't know. You tell me." (There has been no evidence to suggest the account was false and plenty backing up its credibility.)

In Tribute to Cummings, Obama Hints at Rebuke of Trump
Also New York Times reported that The former president said that Representative Elijah E. Cummings showed that "you're not a sucker to have integrity."

Former President Barack Obama, who has remained largely silent amid the convulsive impeachment debate now gripping the nation, offered a tribute to a late Democratic congressman on Friday that sounded to some listeners like an implicit rebuke of President Trump.

Speaking at a service for Representative Elijah E. Cummings, who died last week, Mr. Obama never mentioned the president by name but seemed to draw a contrast between his successor and the congressman whom Mr. Trump denigrated last summer. Mr. Obama said that Mr. Cummings showed that being strong meant being kind and that being honorable was no flaw. "There's nothing weak about kindness and compassion," Mr. Obama told a packed hall at New Psalmist Baptist Church in Baltimore, which Mr. Cummings, a Democrat, represented in the House for the past 25 years. "There's nothing weak about looking out for others. There's nothing weak about being honorable. You're not a sucker to have integrity and to treat others with respect."

A spotlight on the people reshaping our politics. A con-

Donald Trump still afraid of Obama!



versation with voters across the country. And a guiding hand through the endless news cycle, telling you what you really need to know.

Warming to his topic, Mr. Obama pointed to a sign behind him referring to "the Honorable" Mr. Cummings. "This is a title that we confer on all kinds of people who get elected to public office," he said as the largely African-American and Democratic audience responded with knowing applause and laughter. "We're supposed to introduce them as honorable. But Elijah Cummings was honorable before he was elected to office. There's a difference. There's a difference if you were honorable and treated others honorably outside the limelight."

At the funeral for Representative Elijah E. Cummings, former president Barack Obama and former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton were among the prominent politicians who spoke. CreditCredit...Justin T. Gellerson for The New York Times

As chairman of the House Committee on Oversight and Reform, Mr. Cummings, 68, had become a major thorn in Mr. Trump's side and was one of the leaders of the drive to impeach the president for abuse of power. Last summer, Mr. Trump lashed out at Mr. Cummings, calling him "racist" and "a brutal bully" who had done "a very poor job" representing a district that he described as a "disgusting, rat and rodent infested mess."

Mr. Obama was part of an all-star lineup of speakers and guests at the Friday's service, including former President Bill Clinton, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Speaker Nancy Pelosi, former Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr. and Senator Elizabeth Warren.

But much of the attention was focused on the 44th president, who has largely avoided weighing in lately on his successor even as Mr. Trump lately has repeatedly accused Mr. Obama of illegally spying on him while in office and blamed the former president for various policy setbacks.

Mr. Obama made no reference to any of that, but did call on his audience to step up as Mr. Cummings did. "People will look back at this moment," he said, "and ask the question: What did you do?"

New York Times reoported in other article that When a half-dozen Democratic donors gathered at the Whitby Hotel in Manhattan last week, the dinner began with a discussion of which presidential candidates the contributors liked. But as conversations among influential Democrats often go these days, the meeting quickly evolved into a discussion of who was not in the race — but could be lured in.

Would Hillary Clinton get in, the contributors wondered, and how about Michael R. Bloomberg, the former New York mayor? One person even mused whether Michelle Obama would consider a late entry, according to two people who attended the event, which was hosted by the progressive group American Bridge. It's that time of the election season for Democrats. "Since the last debate, just anecdotally, I've had five or six people ask me: 'Is there anybody else?'" said Leah Daughtry, a longtime Democrat who has run two of the party's recent conventions.

With doubts rising about former Vice President Joseph R. Biden's ability to finance a multistate primary campaign, persistent questions about Senator Elizabeth Warren's viability in the general election and skepticism that Mayor Pete Buttigieg, of South Bend, Ind., can broaden his appeal beyond white voters, Democratic leaders are engaging in a familiar rite: fretting about who is in the race and longing for a white knight to enter the contest at the last minute.

It is a regular, if not quite quadrennial, tradition for a party that can be fatalistic about its prospects and recalls similar Maalox moments Democrats endured in 1992, 2004 and in the last primary, when it was Mr. Biden who nearly entered the race in October. But the mood of alarm is even more intense because of the party's hunger to defeat President Trump and — with just over three months to go before voting starts in Iowa — their impatience with finding Mr. or Mrs. Right among the current crop of candidates. "There's more anxiety than ever," said Connie Schultz, a journalist who is married to Senator Sherrod Brown of Ohio, another Democrat who some in the party would like to see join the race. "We're both getting the calls. I've been surprised by some who've called me."

"I can see it, I can feel it, I can hear it," Mitch Landrieu, the former New Orleans mayor, said of the unease within the party. He said he thinks Mr. Biden is best positioned to defeat Mr. Trump but called the former vice president's fund-raising "a real concern."

Mr. Biden's lackluster debate performances and alarmingly low cash flow — he has less than \$9 million on hand, not even half of some of his rivals — has fueled the Democratic disquiet. But if the causes of the concern are plain to see, what exactly can be done about it is less clear.

And even some of those being wooed acknowledge that it can be hard to discern between people just being nice and those who genuinely want them in the race. Mrs. Clinton and Mr. Bloomberg have both told people privately in recent weeks that if they thought they could win, they would consider entering the primary — but that they were skeptical there would be an opening, according to Democrats who have spoken with them.

Former Secretary of State John F. Kerry, who associates say has wondered aloud about whether he should have run and has found it hard to watch Mr. Biden's missteps, has also been urged to get in. But he still thinks the former vice president, who was once his longtime Senate colleague, is the party's best nominee. Another Obama administration official who weighed a campaign at the start of the year, former Attorney General Eric Holder, is considering a last-minute entry but has conceded it may be too late, according to a Democrat familiar with his thinking.

Mr. Brown, who nearly entered the race earlier this year, said the pressure on him to reconsider from labor leaders, Democratic officials and donors has "become more frequent." And Deval Patrick, the former Massachusetts governor, who also weighed a campaign run before deciding not to, said he too has been nudged by friends to reconsider. "It's nice to be rumored about," he said, before notably refusing to rule out a last-minute entry. "Don't ask me that question," he said.

But Mr. Patrick suggested an 11th-hour bid was highly unlikely and had a message for increasingly angst-ridden Democrats: "Everybody needs to calm down, it's early. It's so early."

The chances that another major contender decides to run are remote: While Mrs. Clinton and Mr. Bloomberg have both been encouraged to enter the race, Democrats close to them believe the only scenario under which they'd consider running is if Mr. Biden drops out or is badly weakened.

Neither is likely to take place before the end of this calendar year, at which point the filing deadline to be on the primary ballot in large Super Tuesday states like California and Texas will have passed. But that's not stopping the speculation, which has only grown of late thanks in part to the 2016 Democratic nominee's public comments.

Mrs. Clinton, after largely staying in the background of the Democratic primary, has been more vocal this month, promoting a book she wrote with her daughter and taunting Mr. Trump on Twitter. She also opened a feud with Representative Tulsi Gabbard of Hawaii by claiming the long-shot candidate was being supported by the Russians, as a potential third-party spoiler in the general election. Democrats who have recently spoken with Mrs. Clinton say she shares the same concerns other party elites have about the field — worried about Mr. Biden's durability, Ms. Warren's liberal politics and unsure of who else can emerge to take on Mr. Trump. But these people, who spoke anonymously to discuss private conversations, say she enjoys the freedom that comes with not being on the ballot.

Mr. Bloomberg is said to be more eager to find a way into the race — and chatter about his potential candidacy has only grown among Democrats who work on Wall Street and are concerned about Ms. Warren's rise. He raised some eyebrows recently by putting off a fund-raising request from one third-party Democratic group until he knew about his own intentions, according to two Democrats familiar with the conversation. But the former New York mayor has flirted with presidential runs before, only to pull back. Friends say he recognizes his long odds at this stage of the race and his advisers suggest he will play a significant financial role in the 2020 race without his name on the ballot.

Still, it's unlikely that the what-if musing, particularly among the party's class of donors, elected officials and strategists, will quiet down as long as Mr. Biden is struggling and Ms. Warren, the Massachusetts senator, is surging. "With Trump looming, there is genuine concern that the horse many have bet on may be pulling up lame and the horse who has sprinted out front may not be able to win," said David Axelrod, a former adviser to President Barack Obama.

While much of the daydreaming about a last-minute entry comes from pro-business Democrats, it is not confined to the wealthy. Mr. Brown and Ms. Schultz noted that they were hearing from a broad range of people but declined to offer any names. He said he was staying out of the race and had no regrets. The Ohio senator said he was confident Democrats would eventually rally behind their nominee, but he warned the party not to embrace a single-payer health care plan that eliminates private insurance. "I think it'll be a hard sell to the public if we go into the general election for 'Medicare for all,'" said Mr. Brown, citing the risk of alienating union workers who would lose their negotiated plans.

One longtime Democrat who originally sought to entice Mr. Brown into the race, Randi Weingarten, the president of the American Federation of Teachers, could not help letting out a loud "oy!" when asked about the possibility of another candidate joining the sprawling field. "For as long as I have been in politics, I've heard Democrats fretting about their presidential contenders," said Ms. Weingarten. Indeed, for some Democrats, the grass is always greener outside their field.

There were multiple stages of the 1992 primary when Bill Clinton's candidacy was seen as doomed, either because of his own vulnerabilities or because of the third-party threat of H. Ross Perot. Would-be Democratic saviors that year included Gov. Mario Cuomo of New York, former Senators Lloyd Bentsen of Texas, Sam Nunn of Georgia and Al Gore of Tennessee, and Representative Richard Gephardt of Missouri.

In the 2004 race, Mr. Gore was again sought after as a potential candidate. That race evolved along similar lines to the current primary, with Democrats desperate to oust an incumbent Republican (George W. Bush) but nervous that their front-runner into the fall (Gov. Howard Dean of Vermont) would prove unelectable as the nominee. That time, a candidate did come in relatively late in the race, Wesley K. Clark, a retired general, but he gained little traction and Mr. Kerry ultimately won the nomination.

At this time four years ago, it was Mr. Biden who some Democrats were hoping would join the race to offer the party another option besides Mrs. Clinton and Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont. Mr. Biden, of course, decided not to run. But now it's his own candidacy that's prompting a familiar call for the cavalry, or at least one horse-bound white knight. "If Biden were surging, I doubt you would be hearing this," said Harold Ickes, a longtime Democratic consultant. "This shows a restlessness among a lot of people."

■ **Democrats Can Calm Their 2020 Election Anxiety By Accepting That There's No One Else**

NPR reported that It's happening again. Democrats are wringing their hands, wondering who else might be out there? Michelle Obama? Sherrod Brown? Mike Bloomberg? Hillary Clinton? Oprah? Democrats do this mental gymnastics nearly every election cycle — is there anyone not running for president who is better than who is running and can definitely win in a general election? Some real talk, though, after conversations with veteran Democratic strategists — as a Trump administration official might put it: "Get over it."

"This is the field," said Jamal Simmons, a former adviser to the Democratic National Committee during Barack Obama's 2008 presidential run. "There were 24 candidates who were running. So Democrats had a lot of choices."

These campaign veterans, not connected with any current campaigns, are more optimistic about the group than many others in the Democratic establishment. They say, sure, there are vulnerabilities, but there are always vulnerabilities with candidates in every election cycle. What's more, they say, the top candidates are showing strength against Trump nationally and in key states, for the most part, they are getting better as candidates and are "talented, hard-working, telegenic, smart, and inspiring," said a former Obama official and campaign veteran who did not want to be named in order to speak openly about the field.

"My one concern is this trend to lurch outside the mainstream on a handful of issues," this Democrat said, pointing to policies like decriminalization of border crossings, "Medicare for All" as a replacement to private health insurance and packing the Supreme Court.

"Democrats win when we are the party of common sense," the Obama official said, noting that Hillary Clinton and Obama made sure not to adopt policies outside the mainstream in the 2008 primary race. "Some of these ideas are going to scare all those suburban women that delivered us 2018."

This hand-wringing seems to happen every presidential election.

Democrats took back the House in 2018 by flipping more than three dozen seats held by Republicans, many of which were in right-leaning districts. With Democrats in the House going down the impeachment path, some in the party are holding their breath to see how that plays with the general-election electorate. So far, independents have flipped and started to trend with Democrats on at least approving of the impeachment inquiry.

"This hand-wringing seems to happen every presidential election — perhaps more acute this time because of the threat Trump poses to our country and the strong desire to beat him," said Karen Finney, a Democratic strategist who worked on the 2016 Clinton campaign and was an adviser to Stacey Abrams during her bid for Georgia governor in 2018.

There are undoubtedly vulnerabilities of the current field. Former Vice President Joe Biden, who led in national polls for most of this year, has stumbled in debates; his fundraising has been unimpressive; and young voters have little affection for him. Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren is seen as too liberal by some, especially because of her support for Medicare for All as a replacement to private insurance. And there's the complication of no woman ever having been president of the United States. (Whether Warren's gender would help or hurt her is an arguable point worthy of another column.)

Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders retains a loyal following, and he continues to be a fundraising juggernaut with the love and admiration of young progressives. But his favorability ratings with a general-election electorate are not good, as a recent NPR/PBS NewsHour/Marist poll found. And nothing polls worse for a characteristic of a candidate, an NBC/WSJ poll found, than a socialist or someone older than 75.

There is buzz again around South Bend, Ind., Mayor Pete Buttigieg after a strong debate performance and a sizable bank of cash on hand (\$30 million). While he favors more poll-tested policy positions, he has less experience on the national stage, is the mayor of a town of only about 100,000 people, has had his own challenges during his tenure winning over people of color that have translated to this campaign — and he's only 37 years old. This week, pieces in both the New York Times and Washington Post put the concerns of some high-profile Democrats on full display. "There's more anxiety than ever," Connie Schultz, the journalist and spouse of the aforementioned Ohio Sen. Brown, told the Times. (She also noted that there are calls for her husband to reconsider.)

The anxiety is palpable to former New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu: "I can see it, I can feel it, I can hear it," he noted in the Times. "You can imagine much stronger candidates," Elaine Kamarck, a longtime DNC member, told the Post. She prefers a more moderate figure like Brown, who has said being in favor of Medicare for All as a replacement to private insurance is a bad idea, because it's unpopular in a place like Ohio.

Kamarck also floated Adm. William H. McRaven, who was in charge of the raid that killed Osama bin Laden. McRaven penned an op-ed in the Times last week, headlined, "Our Republic Is Under Attack From the President."

But running a late-entry military leader into the Democratic primary has been tried before. In 2004, nervous Democrats urged Gen. Wesley Clark to launch an ill-fated campaign, because they didn't like that someone viewed as too liberal was ahead (Gov. Howard Dean of Vermont) and the other leading candidate was seen as too uninspiring (John Kerry).

Kerry, of course, won the nomination but lost in the general election. Sound like familiar concerns? Nothing is perfectly symmetrical, though. The country then was in the middle of a war, with a president asking Americans to "stay the course" three years after the country's worst terrorist attacks in its history on Sept. 11. George W. Bush's approval rating in the last Gallup poll before Election Day was still 48%. It eventually hit 57% in early 2005 before nosediving, as the Iraq war spiraled. That and an economic collapse led to Obama's 2008 victory. The Clark experiment, launched in September 2003, failed. Just ask Simmons. He was part of that campaign. ➔7

Peace in the Middle East by 2024?

By Robert David Steele

TEHRAN — Robert David Steele, a former Marine Corps infantry officer and CIA spy as well as an activist for Open Source Everything Engineering (OSEE), regularly answers questions for Tehran Times.

It has been a pleasure as well as an honor for me to be published by Tehran Times and the American Herald Tribune as well as the Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC). I was discussing my views on Middle East peace with Dr. Andrey Kortunov (Director General of RIAC), and three observations emerged from that conversation: his view that the Russians have tried everything they could to facilitate peace in the Middle East, and are at a loss for what else they might do without hurting President Donald Trump in passing; and my view that on the one hand, President Trump has such a mediocre intelligence community, such a mediocre communications staff, and such a hostile media environment totally controlled by the Deep State, that he has lost the narrative battle in the USA; and on the other, my long-standing concern that the Iranian, Turkish, and Egyptian leaders are being too cautious – too slow to see that peace in the Middle East is possible by 2024, starting with the restoration of Palestine to the Palestinians.

■ What Is the Challenge?

I created the above collage to illuminate several points that I do not believe are appreciated in either the USA or the Middle East.

01 Free energy and unlimited desalinated water are the cultural, economic, and political game changer. In the context of free energy not only does the Saudi regime lose all of its illicit financial advantage, at the same time that nuclear energy becomes too costly – too dangerous – to warrant further consideration by the Iranian regime; but this sets the stage for shared prosperity that will facilitate co-existence among the Sunni and Shi'ite populations.

02 Wahhabism is a scourge that must be purged. This is not negotiable. At the same time, Qatar should understand that it can be invaded and its “leaders” hung to die on any given day. If Qatar does not cease to sponsor terrorism and agitation, it should join the Saudi leadership in Hades.

03 Palestine must be restored to the Palestinians. This also is not negotiable. Israel is an invented state and Zionism is a criminal, genocidal, apartheid cancer on humanity (not to be confused with Jews, most of whom do not want Israel to exist and most of whom reject Zionism and its evils).

04 It is clear to me that there has not been sufficient appreciation around the world – and in the USA – for the fact that there is a direct relationship between President Trump’s utterly brilliant award of the Medal of Freedom to Miriam Adelson; his master stroke of temporarily moving the US Embassy to Jerusalem; and Miriam Adelson destroying the Benjamin Netanyahu regime by publicly denouncing Netanyahu’s wife as crazy and Netanyahu himself as her servant. All of this led to Netanyahu’s not being able to form a government today.

05 Jerusalem and Mecca continue to demand some form of international solution that disconnects as quickly as possible the Zionist regime and its armed personnel from Jerusalem, and the Saudi regime and its armed personnel from Mecca. In my view, the Vatican should lose its diplomatic status world-wide as part of the same international agreement. Countries may choose to be governed by religion, but religions may not assume the rights and privileges of countries.

06 Once the Zionists are dealt with, the Kurds become easier to deal with. The Kurds have been co-opted by the Zionists. The Kurds have been armed, financed, trained, and directed by the Zionists to destabilize every country where they have a presence. Turkey is absolutely correct to consider the Kurds a national security issue. At the same time, the Kurds are absolutely correct to wish for their own country. Just as Palestine has a right to exist, so also do the Kurds have a right to exist, but only in peace.

07 The USA can best help achieve Middle East peace by reducing the size of its secret intelligence community by up to 70%; by closing all US military bases in the region; and by terminating all financial support for the invented illegitimate state of Israel.

■ Obstacles to Progress on Peace in the Middle East

The US public remains the center of gravity for terminating the Zionist cancer and restoring Palestine, while Turkey remains the center of gravity for accepting the inevitability of a Kurdish country, perhaps one that begins as a unified Kurdish Autonomous Zone that is – if not disarmed, at least on probation such that any armed incidents and particularly any armed incursions outside the Zone during the ten year probation period will nullify and terminate the international acceptance of a potential Kurdish state.

Russia has three major problems centered on Israel, and most usefully, these problems are shared with the USA and potentially of concern to China.

01 A quarter of the population of Israel has roots in the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), which is to say, not just from Russia but from the “stans,” and many of them are militant and thus opposed to a Palestinian right of return that I personally consider not only essential, but something that should be funded by Europe.

02 Zionist leaders appear to be deeply connected to Russian criminal gangs and oligarchs as well as US criminal gangs and oligarchs (e.g. Lex Wexner, the man who funded the Jeffrey



Epstein pedophilia political and financial blackmail network).

03 Zionist operatives have captured the government of India and have penetrated virtually every other government worldwide. The only force more powerful and embedded than the Zionists is the Freemasons, with the Knights of Malta and Opus Day in the third position.

Russia has the same problem with its media that the US does, albeit from a different perspective.

The US media is treasonous – totally controlled by the Deep State via the CIA Covert Action Staff and the domestic arm of the National Clandestine Service (a domestic arm that is illegal and not supposed to exist) and incapable of telling the truth about anything including President Trump’s strategically brilliant and historically rooted decision to honor his campaign promise and get US troops out of Syria.

The Russian media, particularly Russian media in English (Russia Today, Sputnik, Strategic Culture) is simply incompetent. They may mean well, but between Washington bureau chiefs that do not even show up for work, and poorly-educated apparatchiks that have no idea what it means to educate the public holistically, Russian communications to the USA are just as bad as the mediocre communications of the staffs that continue to fail President Trump: the WH staff, the GOP staff, the campaign staff.

China appears to be displaying great caution with respect to Israel, a caution I attribute to three factors:

01 China is busy taking over Israeli ports and have their own considerable agenda for the future there; despite its investment in a Jewish Autonomous Zone adjacent to the Russian Jewish Autonomous Oblast, China may not be ready to discuss with the Zionist leadership their need to evacuate elsewhere.

02 China may not yet appreciate that Zionism is over in the USA and soon will be over in the Middle East – China should note that when Elizabeth Warren attacks Israel over the settlements, she is saying two things: first, that she does not need Zionist money, and second, that all the Jewish votes are hers for the taking because they are anti-Zionist and anti-war.

03 Because of the above, China may not realize that the best possible course it might take on the Middle East is to agree to a state visit to Iran within the next year, by all three of the global leaders (Xi, Putin, Trump), because this gives our President “cover for action” in visiting privately with the Supreme Leader as well as publicly with the others. Just as China made possible the unification and denuclearization of the Koreas, so also can China have a salutary effect in advancing what I consider to be inevitable: peace in the Middle East rooted in the restoration of Palestine, the end of Wahhabism, and reconciliation between Sunnis and Shi’ites as well as the creation of a peace-loving Kurdistan.

We have a public education problem. This is a problem common to the leaders of China, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Russia, Syria, Turkey, and the USA!

■ Questionable Assumptions?

There are those in the West who question the assumption that Israel can be uninvented, and those in the East who forcefully challenge the possibility of a Kurdish state being put together from bits and pieces of four other long-standing states (Turkey, Syria, Iran, Iraq).

Let’s take the easy one first, the invented state of Israel. Here I will just point to Shlomo Sand’s book, The Invention of the Land of Israel, a book that totally destroys the nationalist mythology and documents how Israel’s theft of Palestine was in fact based on bribery and blackmail and lies; and Henry Kissinger, who for all his flaws understood history: “In 10 years, there will be no more Israel.” That was in 2002. Add to that the historical forces that overturned apartheid in South Africa and the fact of vastly more concentrated and neo-Nazi apartheid and genocide including ghetto walls that would make a Nazi proud – combined with the resistance of

the Palestinians and the ethical and practical inclinations of all the surrounding countries that see Zionist Israel as the source of most evil in the region (the Saudis and Qatar running a poor second and third) and I have to conclude, Yalla yalla bye bye Zionist Israel?

The Kurds are a bit harder but none the less probable. There are 5,000 secessionist movements around the world, 27 in the USA alone, with Catalan being the most current and most violent. It is in my view inevitable that Catalan will at a minimum achieve a fully autonomous status, and it is also my view that some form of Kurdistan is inevitable, particularly if Iran and Iraq take the lead in offering to cede land to a provisional state of Kurdistan with a ten year “peace probation.” Turkey must decide if ceding a portion of land is a good deal against the certainty of decades of violence and cultural confrontation going into the future. Among the many books that support my view on this point are Vaclav Havel’s Power of the Powerless, and Jonathan Schell’s Unconquerable World.

Let’s go two steps further and add two more questionable assumptions. First, that extraterrestrials have neutralized nuclear weapons, as I said here in Tehran Times in my interview with Javad Heirannia, “Full Disclosure: Extraterrestrials, No Nuclear War, End of the Deep State?,” and second, that free energy will become a global good, which in turn enables unlimited desalinated water at the same time that it negates the risk and cost of nuclear energy – this creates infinite wealth that makes possible infinite peace.

I believe – and several others vastly more intelligent than I also believe – that in 2012 we began a 1,000 year period of peace and prosperity and that in the next ten years we will see more positive change than others have seen in the past two hundred years. If airplanes went from a hundred meter flight in 1903 to a supersonic Concorde in 1976, and if we are about to experience, as I believe a period of “full disclosure” of previously secret technologies including anti-aging as well as free energy, then I am predicting that we will see, in the next twenty-five years, both a mass awakening and elevation of consciousness and intelligence within humanity; and the public revelation of a previously secret inter-galactic trading network reserved for the 1%, now available for the benefit of all.

It is not for me to say, “and so this will be,” but rather for the leaders of the Middle East, in consultation with Xi, Putin, and Trump, to say, “this is how we wish it to be.”

Do We Need a Middle East Peace Command Based in Istanbul?

From where I sit, the creation of a Middle East Peace Command, based in Istanbul, jointly funded by China, Russia, and the USA, and jointly staffed with leadership elements from Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and Turkey, is the logical next step. Kurdish and Palestinian leadership elements should be welcomed, along with religious leaders including the former Bishop of Jerusalem and the Middle East.

Such a Command, with the traditional administrative, intelligence, operations, and logistics structure, could bring together in one place both the existing and new negotiations teams, and for the first time ever, a shared grip on the facts, the true costs, and the possibilities.

No one has ever done this. A Command capable of integrating and leveraging holistic analytics, true cost economics, and Open Source Everything Engineering (OSEE). A Command capable of calling out US media outlets, in particular, that are controlled by the Zionists and lying to the American public. A Command capable of providing each of the leaders – both regional (who have primacy) and global (who are in a supporting role) with total access to all relevant facts, costs, and possibilities, information that can be easily shared with the public, the media, and leaders everywhere, because it will be open source information, not secret information.

Intelligence-driven peace? Intelligence with integrity and imagination for peace? Yes, please.

A short rant after a personal visit to Syria

1 → the further erosion and ultimately the rejection of U.S. influence globally. This latter may seem an impossible occurrence, but consider: has any country long maintained itself as a powerful entity when it has become universally reviled as a criminal hegemon interested almost exclusively in self-service though intimidation and militancy?



If this writer seems particularly “anti” American at this juncture, it’s because from October 14 through the 27th I was in Syria. I was in Damascus, Homs, Hama, Tartous, Latakia and Aleppo and points between with a small delegation of Mideast savants who have long been disgusted by U.S. foreign policies in the Middle East. I saw, just for example, the destroyed and formerly lovely Armenian Quarter in Aleppo. I saw the 50 plus percent of Homs residential blocks that are destroyed. I saw the destruction at the finest old suq outside of Iran in Aleppo, a literal wonder of the world, and frankly, so much more that we wept at times not merely at the damage to Syria, but over the warmth and kindness of the Syrian people towards visiting Americans. And all this while the U.S. military was allegedly preparing to kill the leader of ISIS holed up somewhere is still not fully liberated Idlib province. Does anyone believe the announced death of Baghdadi, and then that he was buried at sea like Usama ibn Laden? The U.S. government has been lying so much and for so long that anything it claims, under Trump, is met with profound skepticism. And Baghdadi, who may or may not be a Zionist plant, has now been killed multiple times! Obama managed to do it more than once.

Syria is amazing for all it has suffered and survived. So is the popular Assad government, which did nothing seriously wrong but maintain its independence for decades from U.S. and Zionist control...and prospered. Syria was, and has been, somewhat like Libya was before the U.S. and NATO bombed and murdered the most prosperous country in Africa. Syria was and remains independent and still offers its citizens benefits that far surpass what the U.S. offers its slaves. It was and may still remain a positive economic model for countries that refuse to succumb to the U.S. “Empire of Chaos”. It may also be a good political model: a secular country which allows its citizens to worship as they like – totally unlike most other Arab countries. In sum: Hats off in deep respect to Syria and its people.

The future of Lebanon after Hariri resignation

1 → The role of Hezbollah, which has always served as an anchor of stability, is expected to increase significantly, as Lebanon requires more self-sacrifice and political integrity than ever before. In this regard, Hezbollah has proved that it is able to act professionally to meet the country’s needs.



The experience gained from developments over the last two decades shows that Hezbollah’s considerable credibility and its clever leader, whose political expertise is obvious to all Lebanese, can weather the storms. Hezbollah can also be a determining factor in preventing the impact of trans-national plans on future developments in Lebanon.

Donald Trump still afraid of Obama!

6 → “Wes Clark was a product of Democratic hand-wringing, because of Howard Dean and John Kerry,” Simmons said. “All these Clinton people surrounded him and tried to build a campaign, and let me just say, it didn’t really work out so well.”

Clark’s campaign never really worked out for lots of reasons — he was a political novice, fundraising was difficult, his loyalty to the Democratic Party was questioned and he lacked a natural charisma and constituency. He wound up finishing third in the New Hampshire primary, far behind Kerry and Dean. He dropped out shortly after.

“History would sort of argue it’s too late” now for someone else to get in, Simmons said. In 2016, there was one narrative that would

never quite go away — whether one particular candidate would jump in and save the party from the Clinton email scandal.

Ironically, that was none other than Joe Biden, the man the party establishment is now so worried about because of his lackluster fundraising (just \$9 million cash on hand) and spotty debate performances.

Clinton did win 3 million more votes than Trump; they were just in some of the wrong places. In 2007 and 2008, some were apprehensive that a young, inexperienced black Democrat couldn’t beat a war hero. Obama, it should be remembered, went on to not only win the presidency once, but reelection as the only person to do so with at least 51% of Americans’ vote twice since Eisenhower. The last person to get

into the race this late and get the nomination was in 1992 when Arkansas Gov. Bill Clinton got into the race in October 1991. That’s the last time that worked, and we didn’t have email addresses,” Simmons said. “We were carrying cellphones around in duffel bags.”

What’s more, Clinton’s entry was after a sleepy summer in the primary when other potentially major candidates declined to run. Clinton himself faced party hand-wringing with rumors of infidelity highlighted by the Gennifer Flowers saga and because of accusations of being a Vietnam draft dodger.

All that said, an important point that shouldn’t be lost is that Democratic voters don’t seem all that dissatisfied with the field. The top candidates get very high favorability

ratings from Democrats, as the NPR poll has shown. And, as Pew found earlier this summer, two-thirds of Democratic voters (65%) had either an excellent or good impression of the field. That’s 14 points higher than 2016 on par with 2008. The dings and bruises of a primary, she argued, will be good for the eventual nominee.

“We can’t be afraid that our eventual nominee will get too beat up in a primary,” Finney said. “This is the time for the campaigns to deal with issues, because they will face the same attacks on a much larger, harsher scale in the general, so better to be prepared and know how to fight it.

“Look at how much stronger Obama was in 2008 after the primary.”

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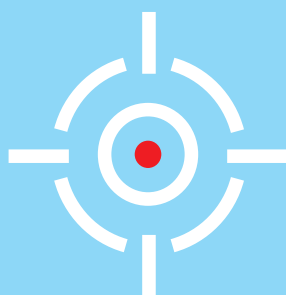
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NASA reveals ‘breathtaking’ selfie from Mars

NASA has revealed a “breathtaking” selfie taken by its Curiosity rover on Mars, as never seen before.

The image is actually made up of 57 individual pictures, all stitched together to make one that commemorates a breakthrough moment for the rover.

The experiment the lander can be seen to be conducting could help scientists understand whether life existed on the planet billions of years ago, when it would have been a more hospitable place to live.

It is the first time that NASA has asked the rover to conduct a chemistry experiment in the Glen Etive area of Mars, and only the second time it has performed the work at all.

In the image, in front of the rover, two holes in the ground can be seen – the one on the right is named Glen Etive 1 and on the left is Glen Etive 2. By drilling those holes, the rover is able to analyze the material inside, turning them into powder and dropping them into a portable lab it carries around inside its belly.

The picture also shows just how far the Curiosity rover has come. Behind it, 300

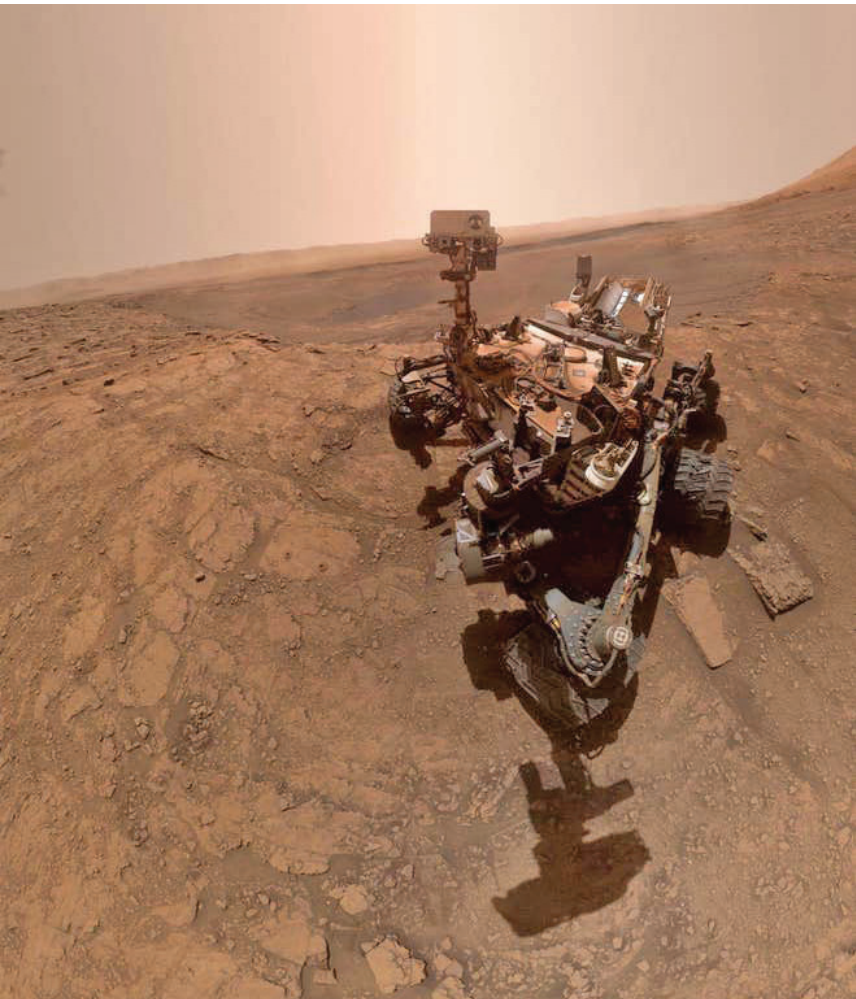
meters away, can be seen Vera Rubin Ridge, which Curiosity left almost a year ago, and beyond that can be seen the Gale Crater that Curiosity has spent much of its time exploring.

The experiment depicted in the image happened on 24 September, when the rover picked up the sample and placed it into the lab.

The SAM lab has 74 small cups, most of it can use to heat up the samples – allowing the rover to sniff the gases and understand what they are made up of. The new experiment saw it use the nine of the cups that are intended for “wet chemistry” experiments, however, which can be used to look for the carbon-based molecules that form the building blocks of life.

That data can then be sent back down to Earth to allow scientists to pick through them and learn about the ancient history of Mars – and whatever life might have called it home.

Since there are so few of those cups, researchers only use them when they are sure the possible findings will be important enough. That meant that the rover undertook only the second ever of experiments last month, despite having been on the planet since 2012.



“We’ve been eager to find an area that would be compelling enough to do wet chemistry,” said SAM Principal Investigator Paul Mahaffy of NASA’s Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, Maryland. “Now that we’re in the clay-bearing unit, we’ve

finally got it.”

Scientists won’t release the full results of the tests until next year, since the “data is extremely complex and takes time to interpret”.

(Source: The Independent)

Placing another piece in the dark matter puzzle

A team led by Prof Dmitry Budker has continued their search for dark matter within the framework of the “Cosmic Axion Spin Precession Experiment” (or “CASPER” for short). The CASPER group conducts their experiments at the PRISMA+ Cluster of Excellence at Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz (JGU) and the Helmholtz Institute Mainz (HIM). CASPER is an international research program that uses nuclear magnetic resonance techniques to identify and analyze dark matter.

Very little is known about the exact nature of dark matter. Currently, some of the most promising dark matter candidates are extremely light bosonic particles such as axions, axion-like particles or even dark photons. “These can also be regarded as a classical field oscillating at a certain frequency. But we can’t yet put a figure on this frequency – and therefore the mass of the particles,” explains Dmitry Budker. “That is why in the CASPER research program we are systematically investigating different frequency ranges looking for hints of dark matter.”

For this, the CASPER team is developing various special nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR) techniques, each targeted

at a specific frequency range and therefore at a specific range of dark-matter particle masses. NMR generally relies on the fact that nuclear spins react to magnetic fields oscillating at a specific “resonance frequency.” The resonance frequency is tuned via a second, usually static magnetic field. The fundamental idea of the CASPER research program is that a dark matter field can influence the nuclear spins in the same way. As the Earth moves through this field, nuclear spins behave as if they would experience an oscillating magnetic field, thus generating a dark matter induced NMR spectrum.

In the current work, first author Antoine Garcon and his colleagues used a more exotic technique: ZULF (zero- to ultralow-field) NMR. “ZULF NMR provides a regime where nuclear spins interact more strongly with each other than they do with an external magnetic field,” says corresponding author Dr. John W Blanchard. “In order to make the spins sensitive to dark matter, we only have to apply a very small external magnetic field, which is much easier to stabilize.” Furthermore, for the first time the researchers examined ZULF NMR spectra of 13C-formic acid with respect to dark-

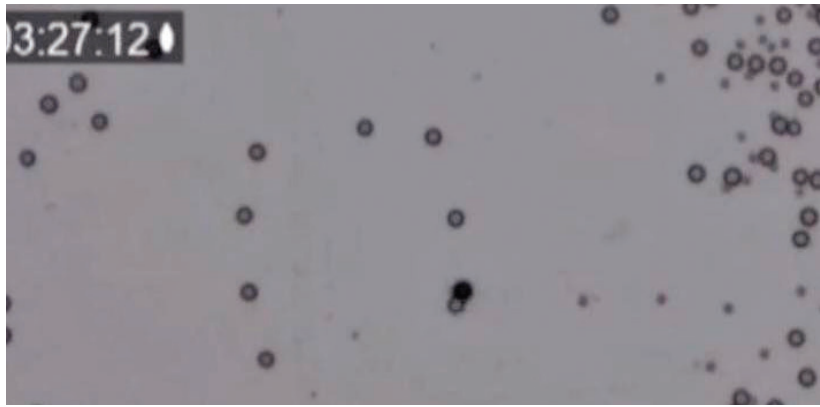
matter-induced sidebands, employing a new analysis scheme to coherently average sidebands of arbitrary frequency over multiple measurements.

This particular form of sideband analysis enabled the scientists to search for dark matter in a new frequency range. No dark matter signal was detected, as the CASPER team reports in the latest edition of Science Advances, allowing the authors to rule out ultralight dark matter with couplings above a particular threshold. At the same time, these results provide another piece of the dark matter puzzle and complement previous results from the CASPER program reported in June, when the scientists explored even lower frequencies, using another specialized NMR method called “comagnetometry.”

“Like a jigsaw puzzle, we combine various pieces within the CASPER program to further narrow down the scope of the dark matter search,” asserts Dmitry Budker. John Blanchard adds: “This is just the first step. We are currently implementing several very promising modifications to increase our experiment’s sensitivity.”

(Source: Science Daily)

Microscale rockets powered by acoustic waves could explore cellular environs



Scientists have developed a microscale rocket powered by acoustic waves and a bubble motor. Guided by magnets, the rocket could one day be used to explore cellular environs.

Fifteen years ago, scientists proved that tiny robotic vehicles could use chemicals as fuel to propel themselves. But the chemical of choice, hydrogen peroxide, is toxic, complicating the use of microscale vessels inside the human body.

More recently, while working to levitate one of their vessels using acoustic waves, the researchers realized high-frequency sound waves worked to move their tiny vehicles at surprisingly high speeds.

The team of scientists, including researchers from the universities of Pennsylvania, Penn State and San Diego, decided to build on the revelation.

In a new paper, published in the journal Science Advances, the researchers describe a microscale rocket with a rounded bottom, measuring 10 microns in length and 5 microns wide – about the size of a speck of dust.

Using laser lithography, a 3D printing technology, scientists created rounded cups on the rocket’s bottom. Each cup features an outer layer of gold and inner layers of nickel and a polymer. Exposure to a hydrophobic chemical triggers the formation of a bubble inside the rocket.

In aqueous environs, the rocket’s bubble responds to acoustic waves by converting the high-frequency oscillation

into forward motion. The rocket and its sound wave-powered bubble motor can be directed by external magnets.

Because each rocket has its own resonant frequency, members of a fleet can be driven independently of the others. In lab tests, scientists successfully directed the microscale rockets up tiny staircases and through 3D obstacle courses using tiny fins. Scientists were also able to precisely guide nanoparticles using the rockets.

“At this particular length scale, we’re right at the crossover point between when the power is enough to affect other particles,” Thomas Mallouk, a biochemical engineer at Penn and Penn State, said in a news release.

Researchers were also able to propel the rocket at varying speeds using different acoustic wave frequencies.

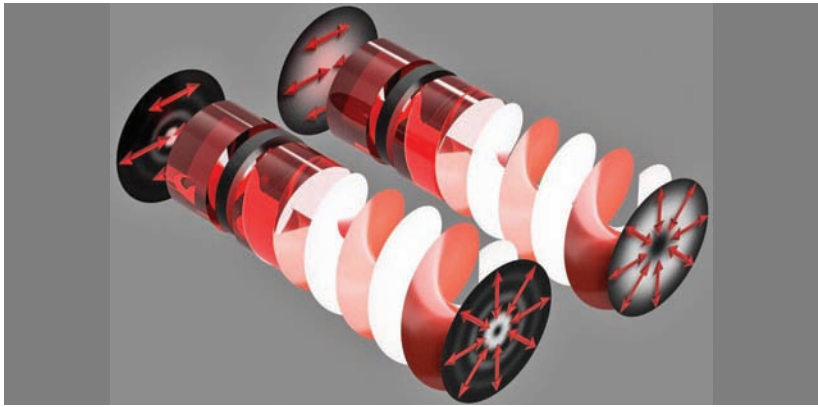
“If I want it to go slow, I can turn the power down, and if I want it to go really fast, I can turn the power up,” said Jeff McNeill, a graduate student who helped design the microscale bubble motor. “That’s a really useful tool.”

The research team is now working to grant the rockets additional technological tools – tools that could help them accomplish a variety of medical tasks inside the human body.

“We’d like to have controllable robots that can do tasks inside the body: Deliver medicine, rotorooter arteries, diagnostic snooping,” Mallouk said.

(Source: UPI)

Structured light to make communication technologies faster, more secure



By Brooks Hays

Communication technologies could soon deploy structured light to transport information faster and make data more secure, according to a new scientific review.

“What we really want is to do quantum mechanics with patterns of light,” Andrew Forbes, physicist at the University of the Witwatersrand in South Africa, said in a news release. “By this, we mean that light comes in a variety of patterns that can be made unique – like our faces.”

Forbes is the first of author of a paper – published Tuesday in the journal AVS Quantum Science – detailing the technological progress being made in the field of structured light.

Light can be structured to produce different images or patterns. Because each light pattern is distinguishable from the others, structured light can be used like an alphabet.

“The cool thing is that there are, in principle at least, an infinite set of patterns, so an infinite alphabet is available,” Forbes said.

Most quantum systems use polarization to distinguish light photons. Polarization only offers two values, limiting the amount of information that can be embedded in each photon. Using a patterned light alphabet allows for information to be carried at greater densities, according to the new research paper.

“Patterns of light are a route to what we term high-dimensional states,” Forbes said. “They’re high dimensional, because many patterns are involved in the quantum process. Unfortunately, the toolkit to manage these patterns is still

underdeveloped and requires a lot of work.”

Despite the potential of encoding alphabets based on patterns of light, “progress in harnessing high dimensional spatial mode entanglement remains in its infancy,” according to the newly published review.

Still, researchers are making advances. For example, scientists have demonstrated entanglement swapping using spatial modes of light, quantum states confined to spatially separated waveguides. Scientists have also improved the resolution of ghost imaging, allowing them to more precisely measure entangled photons. But hurdles remain.

“We know how to create and detect photons entangled in patterns,” said Forbes. “But we don’t really have good control on getting them from one point to another, because they distort in the atmosphere and in optical fiber. And we don’t really know how to efficiently extract information from them. It requires too many measurements at the moment.”

Forbes and his colleagues suggest further advances can be made using simpler tools to yield more complex quantum states. According to the paper, physicists can move beyond the strictures of two dimensions by combining the advantages of polarization and patterns to produce hybrid light states.

“Rather than two dimensions of patterns, hybrid states allow access to multidimensional states, for example, an infinite set of two-dimensional systems,” Forbes said. “This looks like a promising way forward to truly realize a quantum network based on patterns of light.”

Telescope tracks 35 million galaxies in Dark Energy hunt

By Pallab Ghosh

A super telescope has begun the most detailed survey of the Universe ever undertaken.

The aim of the five-year program is to shed light on Dark Energy - the mysterious force thought to drive an accelerated expansion of the Universe.

The instrument effectively contains 5,000 mini-telescopes. Each one can image a galaxy every 20 minutes.

In just one year scientists will have surveyed more galaxies than all the other telescopes in the world combined.

■ What is Dark Energy?

The Big Bang theory of the creation of the Universe originally predicted that its expansion would slow down, and that it would possibly begin to contract as a result of the pull of gravity.

However, in 1998, astronomers were shocked to discover that not only was the Universe continuing to expand, but that this expansion was also accelerating.

The most widely held view is that something is counteracting the pull of gravity - and that something has been termed Dark Energy.

It has been calculated that Dark Energy makes up most of the Universe. Indeed, the atoms that build planets, stars and galaxies probably account for just 5%.

Prof Ofer Lahav, from University College London, is taking part in the project. He said scientists still knew next to nothing about Dark Energy 20 years after its discovery.

“It is just embarrassing to live in a Universe where you only know 5% of it,” he told BBC News.

“The nature of Dark Energy, and what it is, may well lead to a revolution in physics - the whole of physics!”

■ What will the new project examine?

An international team of researchers will use a device called the Dark Energy Spectroscopic Instrument (DESI). It has been retrofitted on to the 4m Mayall telescope at the Kitt Peak observatory in Arizona, US.

Inside DESI are 5,000 optical fibers, each acting as a mini-telescope. This enables the instrument to capture light from 5,000 different galaxies simultaneously, precisely to map their distance from Earth, and gauge how much the Universe expanded as this light travelled to Earth.

In ideal conditions, DESI can cycle through a new set of 5,000 galaxies every 20 minutes.

The further DESI looks into space, the further back in time it sees. This is because of the time it takes for light to reach Earth. The instrument can see objects 10 billion light-years away, which are therefore 10 billion years in the past.

There have been other similar projects, but DESI will cover a much larger volume of space and will measure the acceleration of the expansion of the Universe three times more accurately than ever before. The team has drawn on previous surveys to create a guide map of the Universe from which 35 million galaxies will be selected as targets for DESI.

■ How does Dark Energy push the Universe apart?

The key seems to be a force called vacuum pressure which is caused by fluctuations in the fabric of space-time at a sub-atomic level. Calculations suggest that this vacuum pressure should be an unimaginably larger number (1 with 120 zeroes after it) than the force astronomers actually see pushing galaxies apart.

One possibility is that the vacuum pressure was much, much larger in the early Universe and now has dwindled to its current level.

If, however, astronomers discover that the vacuum pressure has stayed the same, then some more speculative theories come into play.

One suggests that our Universe is one of many in a massive “multiverse”. Ours has a tiny vacuum pressure while others may have the much larger pressure.

But matter - and ultimately life - can only exist in a Universe like ours, with a low vacuum pressure.

■ But could the answer lie elsewhere?

Another possibility is that the current theory of gravity is incomplete. Unlike other fundamental forces, it does not have an opposite force - akin to the positive and negative charges of electricity.

DESI is able to test the current theory of gravity, developed by Albert Einstein more than 100 years ago, in unprecedented detail because it can see so far back into the past.

Astronomers will be able to see, blow by blow and in exquisite detail, how gravity operated over that time to bring together particles to form the planets, stars and galaxies we see.

Spooky ‘face’ spotted in space by Hubble

Although it looks a bit like an eerie, floating face suspended in space, the optical illusion spotted by the Hubble Space Telescope is really the result of two galaxies colliding.

Hubble took the image in June as part of its snapshot program, using gaps in its observation schedule to take photos of other intriguing targets.

The two glowing eyes of the face each represent the center of a galaxy. Young blue stars help make up the outline of the face, while other groupings of new stars seem to sketch out a mouth and nose.

Galaxies aren’t the kindest of neighbors. They can crash into each other – or one can cannibalize parts of another that comes too close.

But this system was formed by a relatively rare, head-on collision. That means the ring we see that makes up the face is ephemeral, only lasting about 100 million years – a short time on the universal time scale. The ring formed when each galaxy’s disk, which is filled with gas, dust and stars, was pulled and stretched out by the collision.

This is the Arp-Madore 2026-424 system 704 million light-years from Earth, as noted in the “Catalogue of Southern Peculiar Galaxies and Associations.” The Arp-Madore catalog is the result of work published by astronomers Halton Arp and Barry Madore, who both searched for unique galactic interactions. Their combined work detailing thousands of galaxies was released in 1987.

Rings are rare because there are only a few hundred of them known in our corner of the universe. The circumstances that create them have to happen in a certain way for the ring to form.

And because the galactic centers of each one seen in the image appear to be the same size, that means the galaxies were equal in proportion before they collided. Usually, larger galaxies cannibalize smaller galaxies.

(Source: CNN)

Prehistoric site discovered in Iran dating to 3rd millennium BC

HERITAGE **TEHRAN** — A prehistoric site, estimated to date from the third millennium BC, has recently been discovered in Minab, southern Iran.

Found during a sand mine exploration, the site has so far yielded a broken imprinted bowl that dates from the same era, IRNA reported on Wednesday.



Talking to the news agency, a local tourism official, Abbas Noruzi, attached great importance to the new discovery saying, “Historical value of the site is similar to that of Mesopotamia, which is of great importance to historians.”

Mesopotamia is a historical region of Western Asia situated within the Tigris–Euphrates river system, in the northern part of the Fertile Crescent, in modern days roughly corresponding to most of Iraq, Kuwait, the eastern parts of Syria, Southeastern Turkey, and regions along the Turkish–Syrian and Iran–Iraq borders.

Located in Hormozgan province, Minab is known for having abundant date palms and being a fishing zone.

Airbus A220s ordered to slow down over engine incidents

The Airbus A220 should no longer use full power at high altitudes, Canadian and European air safety regulators have announced following several incidents with their engines, including one in which pieces came off in-flight.

In an emergency airworthiness directive issued over the weekend by Transport Canada and also transmitted by the EU’s Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) on Monday, airlines operating the aircraft are ordered to not exceed 94 percent of maximum output while above 29,000 feet.

The statement said the directive was issued following “several occurrences of engine in-flight shutdowns” with A220s operated by Air Canada, but there have also been several incidents with flights operated by Lufthansa’s subsidiary, Swiss.

During one Swiss flight, parts of the engine fell over France, and following incidents in September and October the airline halted all flights with the aircraft until they could be inspected.

The aircraft was designed and originally built by Canada’s Bombardier, but it had difficulty gaining enough orders.

It was subsequently bought out by Airbus, which has succeeded in getting airlines to place more orders for the aircraft, which offers similar fuel savings to the A320neo series but is somewhat smaller.

(Source: AFP)



ROUND THE GLOBE

Sangha Trinational

Sangha Trinational is a transboundary conservation complex in the North-western Congo Basin where Cameroon, the Central African Republic and the Republic of Congo meet.

Sangha Trinational encompasses three contiguous national parks totaling a legally defined area of 746,309 hectares. These are Lobeke National Park in Cameroon, Dzanga-Ndoki National Park in the Central African Republic and Nouabale-Ndoki National Park in the Republic of Congo.



Dzanga-Ndoki National Park is comprised of two distinct units. The parks are embedded in a much larger forest landscape, sometimes referred to as the TNS Landscape.

A buffer zone of 1,787,950 hectares has been established in recognition of the importance of the broader landscape and its inhabitants for the future of the property. The buffer zone includes Dzanga-Sanga Forest Reserve in the Central African Republic, which connects the two units of Dzanga-Ndoki National Park.

Natural values and features include the ongoing ecological and evolutionary processes in a mostly intact forest landscape at a very large scale. Numerous and diverse habitats such as tropical forests comprised of deciduous and evergreen species, a great diversity of wetland types, including swamp forests and periodically flooded forests and many types of forest clearings of major conservation importance continue to be connected at a landscape level.

This mosaic of ecosystems harbors viable populations of complete faunal and floral assemblages, including top predators and rare and endangered species, such as Forest Elephants, Gorillas, Chimpanzees, and several antelope species, such as the Sitatunga and the emblematic Bongo.

(Source: UNESCO)

Visit Tappeh Mill, one of the most ancient temples in Iran

TOURISM **TEHRAN** — Of the buildings that still remain from the early years of civilization, are the ancient temples. Given the importance of religion for the mankind, it’s not surprising that these spiritual sites were built using topmost architectural innovations of the time in imposing scales.

Tappeh Mill (literally - a mill hill), also known as the Bahram fire temple, is one of the oldest standing Zoroastrian temples in Iran. The monument sits majestically on the hill near Ghal’eh Noe Village not far from the city of Rey, southward of Tehran.

Some archaeologists say that the temple was built during the Sassanid era (224 to 651 CE), but it is not possible to find out the exact time of its foundation.

There is another opinion that the temple was built even earlier - during the Achaemenid era (550 BC–330 BC), and was destroyed during Alexander the Great’s conquest of Persia. That is why it is hard to conclude which Zoroastrian temple is the most ancient in the country.

Tappeh Mill is made of brick and mortar (clay, water and egg white). Inside, there is a large hall, divided into three parts. The sacred fireplace burnt in the eastern part of the temple with high vault (iwan) and four round columns. After more than a thousand years, geometrically patterned plaster reliefs, reliefs with floral and animal motifs still can be seen on the walls of the temple. Such a choice of images was dictated by the traditional design of



Zoroastrian temples of those times.

Despite the presence of protective structures, the temple was somewhat damaged due to strong winds in 2017. Now it is restored and welcomes tourists again.

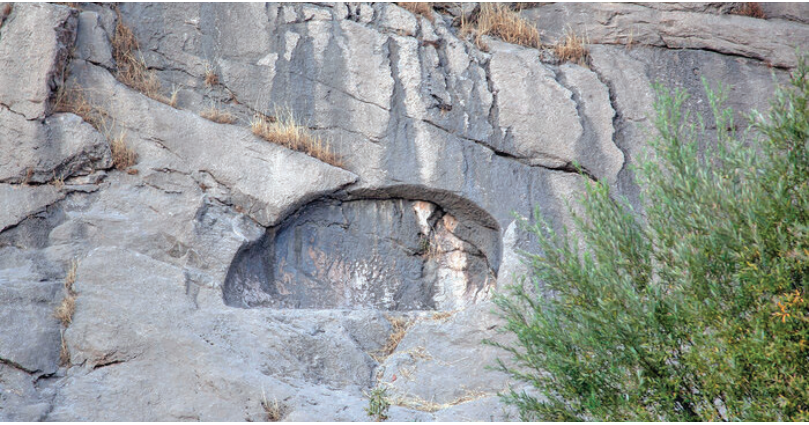
A Zoroastrian temple is a place to keep sacred fire, which cherished by special Zo-

roastrian followers wearing white clothes - a sign of their ritual purity. During the reign of the Sassanid Empire, Zoroastrianism became the state religion, as a result of which such temples were built in large numbers across the empire. However, after the advent of Islam, Zoroastrian

temples fell into decay.

Zoroastrianism still survives in some areas across Iran such as the city of Yazd. It is also practiced more prosperously in India, where the descendants of Zoroastrian Iranian (Persian) immigrants are known as Parsis, or Parsees.

Newly-found petroglyph in western Iran may have link to Mithraism



HERITAGE **TEHRAN** — A newly-discovered rock-carving in western Iran could have a link to Mithraism, a prehistorical religion inspired by Iranian worship of the Zoroastrian god Mithra.

Some Iranian archaeologists suggest that the carving was created by a follower of Mithraism as it depicts a simple portrayal of a human with his right hand raised and an object in his hand. But, experts say it needs much more study in order to date the petroglyph.

The petroglyph was found in western Kermanshah province on a mountain-side near Taq-e Bostan, an archaeological complex, which consists of a series of properties from prehistoric to historical periods such as imposing Sassanid-era bas-reliefs, Morad-Hassel Tepe, an ancient village, a Parthian graveyard and a Sassanid hunting ground.

It was found upstream of a spring, inside a niche measuring about two meters by two meters, carved some 50 centimeters deep into the mountainside, archaeologist Keyvan Moumivand told IRNA on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, a local tourism official has said that various archaeologists and teams

of experts must conduct researches on the rock-carving in order to determine its origins and to make a definitive comment on it.

Some experts say that existence of some Mithraism symbols in parts of the historical zone, including one nearby the bas-relief of Ardashir II, reinforces a possibility that the petroglyph being associated with Mithraism, IRNA reported.

Mithraism, was the worship of Mithra, an Iranian god of the sun, justice, contract, and war in pre-Zoroastrian Iran. Known as Mithras in the Roman Empire during the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE, this deity, according to Britannica Encyclopedia, was honored as the patron of loyalty to the emperor. After the acceptance of Christianity by the emperor Constantine in the early 4th century, Mithraism rapidly declined.

Taq-e Bostan is known for its bas-reliefs of Sasanid origin (3rd to 7th century CE). The carvings, some of the finest and best-preserved examples of Persian sculpture under the Sasanians, include representations of the investitures of Ardashir II (reigned 379–383 CE) and of Shapur III (383–388), the latter in a man-made cave carved in the form of an iwan (three-sided, barrel-vaulted hall, open at one end).

The Great Wall of Gorgan: longest ancient barrier between Central Europe and China



TOURISM **TEHRAN** — Stretched for almost 200 kilometers along northern Iran, the ancient Great Wall of Gorgan was constructed from 420s CE to 530s as a northern frontier of the then mighty Persian Empire, which was then ruled under Sassanids.

The wall was involved in a series of wars first against the Hephthalites or White Huns and later against the Turks.

Most parts of the gigantic monument are still hidden underneath the surface though some segments have so far been unearthed and even restored to former glory.

Iran’s Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts along with cultural heritage experts are making efforts to put the landmark monument on UNESCO World Heritage list in the years to come.

The wall is lined by 38 forts. It is the longest fort-lined ancient barrier between Central Europe and China, longer than Hadrian’s Wall and the Antonine Wall put together, according to UNESCO.

The gigantic barrier is also more than three times the length of the longest late Roman defensive wall built from scratch, the Anastasian Wall west of Constantino-

ple. The combined area of the forts on the Gorgan Wall exceeds that of those on Hadrian’s Wall about threefold.

UNESCO adds that the Gorgan Wall is remarkable not only in terms of its physical scale, but even more so in terms of its technical sophistication. In order to enable construction works, canals had to be dug along the course of the defensive barrier, to provide the water needed for brick production. These canals received their water from supplier canals, which bridged the Gorgan River via qanats. One of these, the Sadd-e Garkaz, survives to 700 m length and 20 m height, but was originally almost one kilometer long.

The Gorgan Wall and its associated ancient military monuments provide a unique testimony to the engineering skills and military organization of the Sassanian Empire. They help to explain its geographic extent, from Mesopotamia to the west of the Indian Subcontinent, and how effective border defense contributed to the Empire’s prosperity in the interior and to its longevity. These monuments are, in terms of their scale, historical importance and sophistication, of global significance.

Boeing chief to admit company made mistakes over 737 Max

The Boeing chief executive, Dennis Muilenburg, will admit on Tuesday that the aircraft manufacturer made mistakes, and pledge that accidents like the two 737 Max crashes that killed 346 people will not happen again.

He will appear at a congressional hearing on the anniversary of the crash of Lion Air flight 610 in Indonesia that killed 189 people. In March, after an Ethiopian Airlines 737 Max crashed, killing 157 people, the plane was grounded worldwide.

According to written testimony, Muilenburg will tell the Senate commerce committee: “We have learned and are still learning from these accidents, Mr Chairman. We know we made mistakes and got some things wrong.”

Muilenburg’s testimony, made public on Monday, said the company had made improvements to the now-grounded 737 Max airplane “that will ensure that accidents like these never happen again”. He added: “We also know we can and must do better.”

Muilenburg, who was stripped of his title as Boeing chairman by the board earlier this month, will also testify before the House of Representatives transportation and infrastructure committee on Wednesday.

The grounding of the 737 Max has forced US airlines to cancel flights up to January and February and has also affected European carriers such as Ryanair, which cut 30,000 flights and will fly 5 million fewer passengers than planned next year. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) is not expected to approve the 737 Max’s use until December at the earliest.



Southwest Airlines Boeing 737 Max aircraft parked in southern California after being grounded. Photograph: Mark Ralston/AFP via Getty Images

Muilenburg will tell the Senate he has flown on two demonstration flights testing the improvements made to the 737 Max. “When the 737 Max returns to service, it will be one of the safest airplanes ever to fly,” he said in his written testimony.

He conceded getting the plane back in the air “has taken longer than we originally expected, but we’re committed to getting it right, and return-to-service timing is completely dependent on answering each and every question from the FAA”.

He added “regulators should approve the return of the Max to the skies only after they have applied the most rigorous scrutiny, and are completely satisfied as to the plane’s

safety. The flying public deserves nothing less.”

Muilenburg also expressed “deepest sympathies to the families and loved ones” of those killed. He visited the Indonesian embassy in Washington on Monday to meet the country’s ambassador, offer condolences and pay respects to those lost on the flight.

Roger Wicker, the chairman of the Senate commerce committee, told Reuters last week the 737 Max “won’t fly unless 99.9% of the American public and American policymakers are convinced that it’s absolutely safe”.

Indonesian investigators reported last week that problems with Boeing’s design, the airline’s maintenance of the jet and pilot errors contributed to the Lion Air crash.

Muilenburg noted both crashes involved the repeated activation of a flight control software function known as MCAS after it received faulty sensor input.

Boeing’s development of that software has come under criticism from lawmakers and the company is adding safeguards to the system. Muilenburg said the changes would “eliminate the possibility of even extremely unlikely risks that are unrelated to the accident”.

Boeing has admitted few mistakes since the two fatal crashes. Earlier this month, the FAA questioned why Boeing withheld instant messages from a former pilot for months that raised questions about MCAS.

Representative Peter DeFazio, who chairs the House panel, has one main question for Boeing at Wednesday’s hearing: “How the hell did this happen?”

(Source: Guardian)

How Reuters aids U.S. government’s propaganda campaign against Iran

By Ali Radmanesh

TEHRAN — A 2013 Reuters report on Iran’s Setad has been cited in four books and was recently used to justify more sanctions on Iran by Mike Pompeo, but a look into the report’s sources and accuracy reveal questionable journalism and a clear agenda.

The first part of an article dissecting flaws in the Reuters report was published on the October 30 edition of the Tehran Times.

Here is the final part of the article: Instead of sticking to the facts known to every historian and Iranian, Reuters journalists use logically fallacious methods like appeals to emotion through empathy, false dilemmas, and good ol’ victimhood. For example, an article quotes Katirai’s daughter saying “I took my kids there every Friday to see the family” and “each corner of that house is a memory for us.” One may wonder whether these trite phrases can be applied in the same way to their former land holdings, perhaps “every single square meter is a memory for them” also, out of 7,500,000 square meters in total. Such colossal amount of land was highly uncommon even for the richest landlords, and since Katirais weren’t historically attested among noble or wealthy merchant families prior to the Pahlavi period, it is clear that they did not just keep the property due to the ties with the Shah’s regime, but they also gained it.

Other statements are less subtle and bear aggressive religious and political messages. “We know that Islam is a religion of peace, but how can a government that claims to be an Islamic government allow this to happen?” Katirai’s daughter had asked, and thus offered the false dilemma: either the Iranian government is not Islamic, or Islam is not a religion of peace. The third option, unoffered in the article but the most realistic one, is that she is a liar and demagogue. Additional evidence for it is yet another her claim that legal representatives refused to consider her father’s case solely because he did not belong to any of three constitutive minorities: Zoroastrians, Jews or Christians. This implies that all others, from Iranian Hindus to foreign-born East Asian communities, have no any legal rights. Utterly bizarre.

■ Legal and human rights “experts” Another group of people used as a reference in the Reuters article are self-proclaimed human rights “experts” and lawyers, all Iranian-born and living abroad. The first one is Naghi Mahmoudi who in the introduction claimed that Khamenei as the Supreme leader oversaw the creation of a body of legal rulings and executive orders that enabled and safeguarded asset acquisitions, as well as that no supervisory organization can question its property. The article represents him as a “lawyer” and uncritically accepts his allegations which serve as the basis for further elaboration.

In reality, Naghi Mahmoudi is only a pity political activist who has a history of lying and manipulating. Back in mid-2010, Mahmoudi and his colleague Javid Hustan Kian claimed to be defectors and “lawyers” of an Iranian woman sentenced to lapidation, but the whole case turned out to be a well-organized hoax, while they were disclosed as impostors and members of the MEK terrorist cult. In the meantime, he almost completely vanished from the media, held several pro-MEK speeches in Germany, and sometimes shared a propaganda material on Twitter, including ridiculous pan-Turkist claims that “40% of Iranians are Azeri Turks deprived of basic human rights.” Ironically, even Ali Khamenei was born into an Azeri family, as the Reuters article correctly mentions.

The biographical details of other informers are no less controversial. Ottawa-based Hossein Raeesi is a legal advisor to the IHRDC, a US government-sponsored organization blacklisted as subversive by the Iranian Interior Ministry, and London-based Mohammad Nayeri is a close associate of Shadi Sadr, an anti-Iranian activist who publicly advocated Arab separatism



in Iran. It is interesting that both of them, along with certain Beverly Hills-based Reghabi couple, complain about legal complications over the return of property, but at the same time, they confirm it is actually possible and feasible. It only takes time, and money, as everywhere. However, the informers could not agree on a precise legal fee, some of them claiming it is 20% while others even over 50%. Since both amounts are obviously extremely exaggerated and hardly provable, for this purpose two anonymous jump into the story and Reuters journalists use their testimonies as evidence. The first is an Iranian Shi’ite Muslim businessman now living abroad who put fee at 55%, and the second is alleged Nayeri’s client who recovered the house but had to pay 20% of the property’s assessed value, a religious payment called “khoms” mandated under Islamic law. No names, no documents, and no sense. To fill such logical gaps and inconsistent claims, journalists also used orientalist cliché of ubiquitous corruption.

■ Political circles Finally, the last group of informers consists of individuals more deeply involved in politics, comparing to the previous activists who operate under the guise of human rights. The Reuters article intentionally conceals the organizations they represent and introduces them as respectable scholars and politicians, allegedly authoritative on the subject. For example, three journalists first claim that they had identified “about \$95 billion in property and corporate assets controlled by Setad” and that amount “surpasses independent historians’ estimates of the late shah’s wealth,” and as an evidence for such comparison they further used statements by Abbas Milani who believes the estimate of the Shah’s fortune was “extremely exaggerated” and stood at “a billion dollars.” In other words, about \$3 billion in today’s money, or only a fraction of the worth of Setad’s holdings, Reuters concluded.

It is hard to enumerate how many manipulations this escapade contains. First of all, there are no “historians” here, but only one, namely Abbas Milani, who is far from “independent” because he is a member of the neo-conservative Hoover Institution, an advocate of multilateral crippling sanctions against Iran in the US Congress. His books are full of revisionist portrayal of the US role in the 1953 coup, support of the Pahlavi regime’s oppression, the 1979 Revolution and afterward, and he offers other contorted interpretations like a claim that “Iran went from politically moderate Monarchy to totalitarian Islamic Republic.” Milani’s statement about the Pahlavi fortune does not represent a historical consensus, nor a serious scholarly assessment, only utter whitewashing of the Shah’s financial crime.

Already in January 1979, the New York Times reported that the Pahlavi wealth is rivaled in the Middle East only by the holdings of the Sauds of Saudi Arabia and the al-Sabah dynasty in Kuwait, and according to bankers, the Shah’s personal portfolio is worth “well over \$1 billion.” New York bankers told journalists that “a substantial part of the \$2 billion to \$4 billion belongs to the Pahlavi family,” speaking

only of the sums that have been “transferred from Iran to the United States during last two years” [1977 and 1978]. The NYT article further states that “the accumulation of immense sums was made possible through the blurring of state funds and royal funds in Iran,” primarily the Pahlavi Foundation which the Shah controlled absolutely.

In 1958, the Shah formed the Pahlavi Foundation, declaring at the time that he was transferring 90% of his holding to the new institution, a combination of charitable organization and family trust. Documents proved the royal family’s penetration of almost every corner of the nation’s economy, including among other things 17 banks and insurance companies, an 80% ownership in the nation’s third-largest insurance company, 25 metal enterprises, 8 mining companies, 10 building materials companies, 45 construction companies, 43 food companies, and 26 enterprises in trade or commerce, and a share of ownership in almost every major hotel in Iran, or 70% of the hotel capacity. Some of these holdings are joint ventures with American corporations.

Behind a facade of charitable activities, the NYT article continues, “the foundation is apparently used in three ways: as a source of funds for the royal family, as a means of exerting control over the economy through the foundation’s holdings in key sectors, and as a conduit for rewards to supporters of the regime.” The transfer of billions of dollars out of Iran had started already in 1974, partly in the form of loans to members of his family that were never repaid, and numerous transactions from Iran were made through American corporations and banks as well as some New York investment houses. The additional uncounted resources were deposited in banks in Switzerland and other countries with strictly enforced bank-secrecy laws.

In the autumn of 1978, during the revolutionary turmoil, 64 members of the Pahlavi family have gone abroad. Like other wealthy Iranians, they all have made substantial deposits in Swiss bank accounts and bought luxury residences in Europe and North America. Of course, the court never revealed the true extent of its wealth, but Iranian and Western estimates place the fortune accumulated by the royal family, both inside and outside Iran, far above Abbas Milani’s “a billion dollars” claim. As New York bankers, Ervand Abrahamian and Michael Axworthy, both highly critical of the Islamic Republic but still regarded as authoritative historians of modern Iran in the West, offer a completely different picture.

According to Abrahamian’s monographies, the royal family’s total assets were estimated “anywhere between five and twenty billion dollars” (1982:437) or “in excess of \$20 billion” (2008:131). With inflation, that would equal up to \$60 billion by today’s currency. In Axworthy’s book, the capital that had been sent out of the country was “estimated around \$120 billion” (2013:297). This figure includes the comprehensive wealth of all Iranian emigrants, but there is no doubt that the majority was concentrated in hands of the ruling family.

In January 1981, the Iranian government

filed a \$36 billion lawsuit in New York against 65 defendants, most of them relatives of the Shah, in an attempt to recover stolen wealth. Reuters journalists mentioned this fact but in the context of denying figures. “The suit was dismissed,” their paragraph ends, and therefore imply that “claimed” figure must be false. It is again a gross manipulation because the New York courts did not deny the amount of money, they dismissed the proceedings on the ground of ‘forum non conveniens’ though they admitted that there was no alternative forum. According to the book by Trevor C. Hartley, Emeritus Professor of Law at the LSE, this was an abuse of the doctrine, for political reasons, the courts were determined to shield the Shah, and ‘forum non conveniens’ was the tool they chose (2009:238). After all, those are the same courts which recently ordered Iran to pay billions to relatives of 9/11 victims.

In addition to Abbas Milani, the Reuters article also quotes Mohsen Sazegara, introduced as a co-founder of the Revolutionary Guards who is now in exile in the United States, and David S. Cohen, then undersecretary of the Treasury for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence who also served as deputy director of the CIA. The former is a member of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy (WINEP), a subsidiary of the notorious American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), while the latter is a member of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies (FDD), a hawkish and neoconservative organization led by Mark Dubowitz that was intensively lobbying for the anti-Iranian and anti-Setad sanctions for years.

■ Agenda unveiled All of the above-mentioned lobbyists and their advocacy groups, along with three Reuters journalists, have the same agenda and are trying to convince the world that Iran’s Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei is the same as Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, while Setad is no different than the Pahlavi Foundation. There is, however, a serious problem with this picture. More precisely, there are no Khamenei’s jewels, crowns or designer clothes, no luxury cars or art collections, no luxurious villas or expensive estates, either in Iran or abroad. There are no rich members of the family, no foreign bank accounts, no documents, no independent experts, no New Yorker or Swiss bankers. There is absolutely nothing which proves their claim.

There is, indeed, the Reuters “investigative” article with fancy charts and listed properties. Only a few months before the publication of Reuters’ article, Washington imposed sanctions on Setad and some of its alleged corporate holdings, and the Treasury Department issued a press release containing boring numbers, hard charts, Persian-named properties and other dull text, incomprehensible for wider audiences. And that’s why the Reuters article jumped out.

Investigative journalism is when a report is built on the basis of the collected data, but here is an opposite case, all the details serve as buttress or decoration of the central point. In other words, when you take off all worthless tree charts, personal testimonies, stories of poor old ladies, allegations by fake human rights activists and lobbyists, and numerous other cliches, the only thing left standing is the official US press release and accompanying political rampage against the Iranian leadership. Nothing more.

Regarding Setad itself, as seen through the eyes of the US government, it serves as a useful bogeyman and has multiple purposes. Its first dimension is political-ideological because it follows the old discourse of bashing Iranian leaders and veterans, equalizing them with corrupt royal elites. Second, the economy of Iran is now being discussed under the guise of “Setad” name, a sort of trade name which sounds less offensive in public debates and official documents. Third and most important, it is a perfect tool for further targeting Iran’s economy and expanding sanctions, because any new emerging company can easily be declared as a Setad holding.

Media bias has real consequences

.By John R. Lott, Jr

TownHall — Media bias has real consequences. Ohio’s wealthiest supporter of the Republican party, Leslie Wexner, has withdrawn his support because he was ‘ashamed’ by President Trump’s response to the white supremacist rally in Charlottesville. Wexner announced his decision on Friday, just a day after former President Obama gave a speech in Ohio where he attacked Republicans who “try to shield and deflect oversight of [Trump’s] behavior.”

A lot of smart people seem to have fallen for the mainstream media’s lies about Trump’s comments. NBC News’ coverage of Charlottesville last year was all too typical: “On Tuesday [August 15th, 2017], Trump gave a freewheeling press conference at Trump Tower in Manhattan in which he doubled down on the remarks he made Saturday blaming ‘many sides’ after a car plowed through a group of counter-protesters who were demonstrating against an alt-right and white nationalist rally. He also equated white supremacists on the right to the ‘alt-left.’”

Obama kept repeating these claims in his speeches this month: “We’re supposed to stand up to discrimination, and we’re sure as heck supposed to stand up clearly and unequivocally to Nazi sympathizers. How hard can that be? Saying that Nazis are bad?”

Even as events were unfolding in Charlottesville on August 12 of last year, President Trump said: “we condemn in the

strongest possible terms this egregious display of hatred, bigotry and violence on many sides.” On August 14, Trump called neo-Nazis and other white supremacists “repugnant to everything we hold dear.”. He again elaborated the next day: “And you had people, and I’m not talking about the neo-Nazis and the white nationalists, because they should be condemned totally. But you had many people in that group other than neo-Nazis and white nationalists. OK? And the press has treated them absolutely unfairly.” All three of those quotes were given before the NBC News piece quoted above.

So where were the fact-checkers when Obama suggested that Trump has difficulty condemning Nazis?

Wexner was quoted after Obama’s talk: “I was struck by the genuineness of the man; his candor, humility and empathy for others.”

Obama attacks Trump for dividing Americans, when that is what the former president is doing himself. Trump hasn’t accused Democrats of sympathizing with monstrous, genocidal ideologies. In his Nelson Mandela Lecture in July, Obama talked of “rabid nationalism and xenophobia and doctrines of tribal, racial, or religious superiority” and “right-wing billionaires.” Trump has never called his opponents “rabid.”

Then there have been Obama’s usual, divisive attacks on Republican policies, which he thinks are all about “cutting taxes on the wealthiest Americans.” But even the liberal Tax Policy

Center pointed out, “The top 1% and 0.1% of taxpayers will see their share of income taxes rise in 2018.” The mainstream media won’t critically examine Obama’s oft-repeated policy claims, which frequently carry the implication that Republicans don’t care enough about the poor, minorities, or women.

If Trump wanted to appeal to racists, why would he take such pride in continually reminding everyone that under his administration the US now has record-low unemployment rates for blacks, Hispanics and women?

It’s surreal for Obama to attack Trump for wanting to “use the criminal justice system as a cudgel to punish our political opponents.” Obama’s IRS systematically went after political opponents, and his FBI and Department of Justice spied on Trump’s presidential campaign.

Many apparently still believe that candidate Trump made fun of a disabled NY Times reporter. In fact, Trump made a type of gesture that he often used to make fun of people floundering away when faced with tough questioning. Trump used the same gesture to make fun of Sen. Ted Cruz and even himself.

The media’s false statements have gotten completely out of control. Unfortunately, the narrative that Trump has trouble condemning white supremacists is just one of many that the media repeats on so many different topics. It isn’t surprising that even many very smart people, such as Mr. Wexner, sometimes get taken in.

What you think is controlled by what you watch, which is controlled by the elite

By Michael Snyder

ACTIVISTPOST — Why do you believe what you believe? Some people have a really solid answer to that question, but much of the population never thinks much about deeper questions such as this. In fact, for most Americans it is simply easier to let others do their thinking for them. Today, most of us spend multiple hours each day absorbing information through a screen, and most of the content that is fed to us through our televisions, phones, tablets and computers is controlled by the elite. And if you allow anyone to feed information into your mind for several hours every day, it is going to have a dramatic impact on how you view the world.

When I was younger, one of my favorite movies was The Matrix, and I think that it is a really good metaphor for what is going on in our society today. In the film, nearly the entire human population was plugged into a system which continuously fed a computer-generated reality into their minds that wasn’t real at all. Later on, I eventually came to realize that we are willingly doing the same thing to ourselves. Our personal interactions with one another are extremely limited, but we willingly “plug in” to the enormous matrix of news, information and entertainment that the elite have constructed for many hours each day.

According to numbers that were released earlier this year, the average American spends more than three hours watching television and more than three hours on mobile devices every single day...

It’s official: This year marks the first time that Americans will spend more time staring down at their phones and tablets than they will watching television.

The average U.S. adult will spend three hours and 43 minutes on mobile devices this year, according to EMarketer Inc., which is eight minutes longer than the three hours and 35 minutes that will be spent in front of the TV.

If Americans from previous generations could visit our society right now, they would probably be horrified that we are all constantly staring at our screens like some sort of zombies.

And perhaps it wouldn’t be so bad if we were feeding our minds healthy things, but instead most of what we are absorbing is garbage that has been produced by the elite.

Today, nearly all of the news, information and entertainment that Americans consume is produced by a small cluster of giant corporations. The following summary of the current state of affairs comes from Wikipedia:

In the United States, movie production has been dominated by major studios since the early 20th century; before that, there was a period in which Edison’s Trust monopolized the industry. The music and television industries recently witnessed cases of media consolidation, with Sony Music Entertainment’s parent company merging their music division with Bertelsmann AG’s BMG to form Sony BMG and Tribune’s The WB and CBS Corp.’s UPN merging to form The CW. In the case of Sony BMG, there existed a “Big Five” (now “Big Four”) of major record companies, while The CW’s creation was an attempt to consolidate ratings and stand up to the “Big Four” of American network (terrestrial) television (this despite the fact that the CW was, in fact, partially owned by one of the Big Four in CBS). In television, the vast majority of broadcast and basic cable networks, over a hundred in all, are controlled by eight corporations: Fox Corporation, The Walt Disney Company (which includes the ABC, ESPN, FX and Disney brands), National Amusements (which includes CBS Corporation and Viacom), Comcast (which owns NBCUniversal), AT&T (which owns WarnerMedia), Discovery, Inc., E. W. Scripps Company, Cablevision (now known as Altice USA), or some combination thereof.[92]

When you have an almost totally monopoly on news, information and entertainment, it is not too difficult to manipulate a society. At this point, most of the population is made up of extremely pliable “NPCs” that are more than happy to go along with whatever “societal norms” are set by the elite. The term “sheepie” has been used to describe those that allow the elite to do their thinking for them, and we need to do what we can to help those individuals wake up and to get them to start thinking for themselves.

Let me give you an example of the immense power of the media. One recent survey found that those who watch Fox News tend to think that the U.S. economy is in great shape, while those who watch MSNBC tend to be quite pessimistic about the economy...

American voters face the same set of economic facts, from low unemployment to the risks from a trade war, but the survey’s index of overall sentiment – at 108 just above the 100 line that separates positive from negative impressions of the economic outlook – masked the huge divide between those who approve of Trump, whose views measured a far rosier 136, and those who disapprove of the president, with a reading of 88.

The results, weighted by factors like age, race and sex, to be nationally representative, were similarly skewed based on media consumption. Viewers of conservative-leaning Fox News registered 139 for current sentiment about the economy; viewers of MSNBC, an outlet often critical of Trump, registered 89. Readers of the New York Times sat in the middle at 107, near those who get their news from Facebook (110) and Twitter (112).

But the truth is somewhere in between. We haven’t officially had a recession in recent years, but the U.S. economy has definitely not been “booming” either. In fact, we haven’t had a full year of 3 percent GDP growth since the middle of the Bush administration. That is the longest stretch of slow growth in American history by a very wide margin, and now it appears that the next recession is rapidly approaching.

And without a doubt, tens of millions of American families are deeply struggling right now. As I noted yesterday, 50 percent of all American workers make less than 33,000 dollars a year, and a survey that was just released found that 70 percent of Americans “have cried about money”...

Pass along the tissues, because Americans aren’t afraid of letting the tears roll when it comes to finances.

Seven in 10 Americans said they have cried about money in their lifetimes, according to a recent online survey of 1,004 Americans by Compare Cards.com. Many cited worries over their job or making ends meet.

And household debt, which peaked at \$13.86 trillion in the second quarter, weighed the heaviest on Americans. Almost a third admitted to crying over this looming concern, according to the survey.

One of the reasons why my articles upset so many people is because I just don’t follow the herd.

In this day and age, it is absolutely imperative that we all learn to think for ourselves. Because if you don’t actively take control, the elite will be more than happy to do your thinking for you.

Question everything. Everyone that is feeding you news, information and entertainment has an agenda, and in most cases it is not a positive agenda.

We are in a battle for hearts and minds, and the elite have an overwhelming edge because of the colossal system that they have created.

But we have the truth on our side, and in the end the truth shall prevail.

Migratory birds return to Shadegan wetland

ENVIRONMENT d e s k **TEHRAN** — Shadegan wetland in southwestern province of Khuzestan has come back to life by heavy rainfall and is now hosting flocks of migratory birds, Mehr news agency reported on Wednesday.

Shadegan wetland covers 530,000 hectares, 400,000 hectares of which has been designated as a Ramsar site (defined by the Ramsar Convention for the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands, recognizing the fundamental ecological functions of wetlands and their economic, cultural, scientific, and recreational value).

The wetland feeds on Marun and Karun rivers both crossing Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad province, but after dam construction over the Karun river the wetland went dry not receiving its water right.

After the torrential rains and flooding started on March 19, the wetland has been saturated.

Khuzestan province's department of environment chief, Rahim Mojadami, said as the temperature drops in their habitat, the migratory birds come to spend the winter in Shadegan international wetland.

This year, the number of migratory birds will increase due to above-normal rainfall and good nutrition, he added.

The favorable weather conditions of Khuzestan province have attracted many birds, including ducks, storks, flamingos and other aquatic birds to winter here, he concluded.

Based on the latest data published by National Drought Warning and Monitoring Center affiliated to Iran's Meteorological Organization, during the last crop year (started September 23, 2018), precipitation in Khuzestan province increased to 523.3 millimeters from 204.1 millimeters in the previous water year, demonstrating a 156.4 percent rise. The amount also raised by 63.9 percent in comparison to the long-term average of 319.3 mm.

Ancestral home of all human beings discovered by scientists

Scientists have pinpointed a fertile river valley in northern Botswana as the ancestral home of all human beings.

The earliest anatomically modern humans (Homo sapiens) arose 200,000 years ago in a vast wetland south of the Zambezi river which was the cradle of all mankind, a new study has revealed.

This lush region – which also covered parts of Namibia and Zimbabwe – was home to an enormous lake which sustained our ancestors for 70,000 years, according to the paper published in the journal Nature.

Between 110,000 and 130,000 years ago, the climate started to change and fertile corridors opened up out of this valley. For the first time, the population began to disperse – paving the way for modern humans to migrate out of Africa, and ultimately, across the world.

Lead researcher Professor Vanessa Hayes, a geneticist at the Garvan Institute of Medical Research in Australia, said: "It has been clear for some time that anatomically modern humans appeared in Africa roughly 200,000 years ago.

"What has been long debated is the exact location of this emergence and subsequent dispersal of our earliest ancestors."

Professor Hayes and her colleagues collected blood samples from study participants in Namibia and South Africa and looked at their mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA).

As mtDNA is passed almost exclusively from mother to child through the egg cell and its sequence stays the same over generations, making it a useful tool for looking at maternal ancestry.

(Source: The Independent)

WORDS IN THE NEWS

British prime minister urges action on Africa

(February 6, 2002)

The British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, is going on a five-day trip to Africa. He has warned that the West could face new terrorist threats unless African poverty is relieved. This report from Nick Robinson:

The warning couldn't be clearer, Africa could be home to the next Afghanistan, says the British Prime Minister, producing another failed state which becomes dependent on drugs and terrorism with consequences felt on the streets of the West. Tony Blair's all too aware that as he sets off on another foreign trip, many in Britain are waiting to **mock** his **missionary zeal** and his presidential style. He's seeking to remind people that **self-interest**, not just **altruism**, justifies engagement abroad. And this trip's being presented not as **a solo effort**, but as part of a **concerted** international initiative leading up to a possible **Marshall Plan** for Africa to be agreed at a G-8 summit in June.

The British Prime Minister talks in terms of a deal - developed countries offering debt relief, trade and aid, plus diplomatic and military support in return for African initiatives to resolve regional conflicts, build strong political and economic institutions and to attract private investment. This is a trip **fraught with** political risk; **expectations in Africa are running high** after Mr. Blair memorably described the continent as **a scar** on the conscience of the world and insisted that the international community could heal it.

Words

to mock: to make fun of something or someone
missionary zeal: great enthusiasm for an idea that makes you want to get other people to support it
self-interest: the attitude of always wanting to do what is best for yourself rather than for other people
altruism: thinking of the needs and happiness of other people rather than yourself

a solo effort: trying to do something alone without other people
concerted: done by a group of people working together in order to achieve a particular result

Marshall Plan: An American plan which gave economic help to rebuild western Europe after the 1939-45 World War

fraught with: filled with
expectations in Africa are running high: if expectations are running high, then people are expecting a lot

a scar: a permanent mark on skin or something

(Source: BBC)

WFP to celebrate 32 years of presence in Iran

By Faranak Bakhtiari

TEHRAN — The United Nations World Food Program (WFP) will celebrate its thirty-two years of presence in Iran during a ceremony which will be held on November 8.

Over 500 participants including ambassadors, UN representatives, Iranian artists and WFP partners will attend the event.

"We provide assistance to over 30,000 refugees in Iran, 6,500 of whom are children who are also provided with free education," Negar Gerami, WFP representative in Iran, said in a press conference held in Tehran on Wednesday.

"During the past 30 years, we have provided the vulnerable refugees with food packages, however, we changed to an in-kind transfer of 9 kilograms of wheat flour and 10 dollars in cash to be spent on food of their own choice," she added.

Gerami expressed appreciation toward those who have made efforts and contributions to help end hunger.



Asiatic cheetahs in Pardisan Park to undergo semi-captive breeding

ENVIRONMENT d e s k **TEHRAN** — Two Asiatic cheetahs, kept in captivity at Tehran's Pardisan Park, will be transferred to protected areas of central Yazd province for semi-captive breeding, Kiumars Kalantari, deputy chief of the Department of Environment (DOE), has said.

"Breeding of endangered species is one the main goals of the department, however, after the artificial insemination failure on female Asiatic cheetah, we will practice semi-captive breeding," he stated.

"We decided to send Asiatic cheetahs to Yazd province as a pilot project, in case of success, other provinces also will undergo researches to determine the climate characteristic for cheetah reproduction," he explained.

He went on to say that the project of transferring the endangered species from Pardisan Park to Yazd protected areas is in the preliminary phase, YJC reported on Sunday.

Persian cheetah population seems to be in trouble
Female Asiatic cheetah, Delbar, and the male one, Kushki are living in the capital for past few years.

In 2015, the female Asiatic cheetah once became pregnant naturally but sadly lost her cub.

Last year (March 2018-March 2019), Delbar was physically prepared for mating with Kushki (the male Asiatic cheetah in captivity), however, possibly due to Kushki's old age, the two didn't breed.

Delbar underwent artificial insemination earlier this

year (starting on March 21), which turned out unsuccessful.

Natural mating has been already tried for Asiatic cheetahs kept in captivity, which sadly failed. Now, artificial insemination is considered to be the major option for fertilize the female Asiatic cheetah, nonetheless, the chance of pregnancy and survival of the cubs is extremely low.

This is while, Alireza Jourabchian, Conservation of the Asiatic Cheetah Project founder, told Tasnim that unfortunately, mismanagement severely affected conservation projects.



Healthy diet means a healthy planet, study shows

Eating healthy food is almost always also best for the environment, according to the most sophisticated analysis to date.

The researchers said poor diets threaten society by seriously harming people and the planet, but the latest research can inform better choices.

The analysis assessed the health and environmental impacts of 15 foods common in western diets and found fruit, vegetables, beans and wholegrains were best for both avoiding disease and protecting the climate and water resources. Conversely, eating more red and processed meat causes the most ill health and pollution.

There were a small number of foods that bucked the trend. Fish is generally a healthy choice but has a bigger environmental footprint on average than plant-based diets. High-sugar foods, such as biscuits and fizzy drinks, have a low impact on the planet but are bad for health.

The effect of bad diets on health in rich nations is well known, as is the need to slash western meat consumption in order to tackle the climate breakdown and other environmental crises. But this is the first study to consider both together in detail.

Michael Clark at the University of Oxford, who led the research, said: "Continuing to eat the way we do threatens societies, through chronic ill health and degradation of Earth's climate, ecosystems and water resources.

"Choosing better, more sustainable diets is one of the main ways people can improve their health and help protect the environment."

Some farming groups argue only intensively produced meat is seriously damaging to the environment. But Clark said replacing any meat with plant-based food makes the biggest difference. "How and where a food is produced affects its environmental impact, but to a much smaller extent than food choice," he said.

Marco Springmann, also at Oxford and part of the study team, said: "We now know pretty well that predominantly plant-based diets are much healthier and more sustainable than meat-heavy diets. But sometimes there is still confusion among people about what foods to choose."

The scientists hope more detailed information will help consumers, policymakers and food companies make better choices. The researchers are currently working on new types of food labels to see if information on

health and environmental impacts changes people's selection of food.

The research, published in the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, assessed plant-based foods including fruits, vegetables, legumes, nuts, potatoes, refined grains and wholegrain cereals, and sugar-sweetened beverages, and animal-based foods such as raw and processed red meat, chicken, dairy products, eggs and fish.

Using data from other studies on the diets and health outcomes of tens of millions of people, mostly in developed western nations, they calculated the health impact of eating one extra portion of each food on heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes and colorectal cancer.

The environmental harm for each food, from greenhouse gases to water use to pollution, was calculated relative to a portion of vegetables. Producing unprocessed red meat had the highest impact for all environmental indicators and was many times worse than pulses.

The researchers said foods with medium environmental impacts or not significantly associated with ill health, such as refined grain cereals, dairy, eggs and chicken, could help

Assisting 86.7 million people in around 83 countries each year, the World Food Programme (WFP) is the leading humanitarian organization delivering food assistance in emergencies and working with communities to improve nutrition and build resilience.

As the international community has committed to end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition by 2030, one in nine people worldwide still do not have enough to eat.

WFP's efforts focus on emergency assistance, relief and rehabilitation, development aid and special operations mostly in conflict-affected countries.

During the past three decades, WFP has been taking an active role in Iran, providing food assistance to the most vulnerable Afghan and Iraqi refugees who had to flee from their homeland due to conflicts and insecurity.

WFP has also organized lifesaving missions during emergency operations in the past to the survivors who were in need of food after earthquakes in Bam and Qazvin.

Asiatic cheetah born in captivity will never learn the skills to survive in nature and will not be able to reproduce in nature, thus a captive breeding plan cannot be considered as a measure to prevent the extinction of the cheetahs, he lamented.

The world's fastest mammal, capable of reaching speeds of 120 kilometers per hour, once stalked habitats from the eastern reaches of India to the Atlantic coast of Senegal, once their numbers have stabilized in parts of southern Africa, but they have practically disappeared from northern Africa and Asia.

The subspecies "Acinonyx jubatus venaticus", commonly known as the Asiatic cheetah, is critically endangered, according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature, with fewer than 50 believed to remain in Iran.

Roads fragmenting cheetahs' habitats are the main threats for the species, while guard dogs and stray dogs, drought spells, decreasing population of the prey species to support the cheetahs, and habitat loss are also other factors endangering the sparse population of the cheetahs in the country.

Majid Kharrazian-Moqaddam, director of aquatic wildlife and biodiversity office at the Department of Environment, said in August 2018 that over the past 16 years, some 42 Asiatic cheetahs have been killed in the country.

In spite of ongoing conservation efforts, the species' population has been shrinking during the past years.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A < > > >

Flood responsible for 61% of natural disasters

Flood is the leading natural disaster being responsible for 61 percent of the total natural disasters happened in the country, according to studies conducted over the past four decades in Iran.

Natural disasters in the country affect about 40 million people accounting for half of the country's population, Mohammad Esmail Motlaq, director general for risk management at the Ministry of Health has said. After flood, 28 percent of the hazards in the country are related to earthquakes, 3 percent to storm, and landslides and forest wildfires constitute 3 percent of the disaster, he added, IRNA reported on Wednesday.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“-ic, -ics”

- **Meaning:** of or pertaining to
- **For example:** Some fruit juices taste a bit **acidic**.

PHRASAL VERB

Hive something off

- **Meaning:** to sell one part of a business
- **For example:** It is part of a growing trend for television contractors to hive off their advertising sales.

IDIOM

Bury your head in the sand

- **Explanation:** to refuse to face the unpleasant reality by pretending that the situation doesn't exist
- **For example:** It's no good burying your head in the sand. We've got a problem on our hands.

سیل عامل ۶۱ درصد مخاطرات کشور است

سیل عامل ۶۱ درصد مخاطرات کشور بر اساس مطالعات انجام شده در چهار دهه گذشته ایران، بوده است.

محمد اسماعیل مطلق مدیرکل مدیریت خطر بلایا وزارت بهداشت، درمان و آموزش پزشکی گفت: ۴۰ میلیون نفر از ۸۰ میلیون جمعیت ایران زیر تاثیر مخاطرات و بلایا هستند.

به گزارش روز چهارشنبه ایرنا مطلق افزود: پس از سیل، ۲۸ درصد مخاطرات در ایران را زمین لرزه، سه درصد توفان و سه درصد دیگر خطرهای ناشی از رانش زمین و آتش سوزی جنگل ها شامل می شود.

Iraq's Hadi al-Amiri responds to Muqtada al-Sadr

➤ al-Sadr told the embattled premier in a Twitter post, according to Al Jazeera.

Al-Sadr had earlier called on Abdul-Mahdi to come to parliament and announce "early elections under the supervision of the United Nations," a call which the premier refused, citing constitutional and operational challenges.

"To answer brother Abdul-Mahdi, I thought asking you to call an early election would preserve your dignity but as you have refused, I invite brother Amiri to work with me on withdrawing confidence from you immediately," Sadr said.

Accepting Sadr's invitation, Amiri said, "We will work together to achieve the interests of the Iraqi people and save the country as required by the public interest."

■ Crowds descend on Baghdad square defying curfew

Meanwhile, the Iraqi capital Baghdad has become the scene of the largest rally since a second wave of anti-government demonstrations began in several cities last week.

Tens of thousands of Iraqi protesters



gathered on Baghdad's central Tahrir Square on Tuesday for a fifth successive day of protests driven by public discontent with economic hardship.

Blaring horns and lighting fireworks, the demonstrators, many draped in Iraqi flags, took to the streets brimmed with cars, taxis, motorcycles and tuk-tuks.

The protesters were defying army orders to clear the streets between midnight and 6:00 a.m. local time.

Security forces stationed on Jumhuriya bridge, which links Tahrir Square to the Green Zone, lobbed tear gas at the protesters.

At the start of October, street protests

erupted in several Iraqi cities over unemployment and a lack of basic services.

An official investigation found that a total of 157 people, including civilians and security forces, had been killed in the first round of the rallies in the capital and other cities.

The rallies resumed on Friday after a pause of about two weeks. The gatherings have turned violent at some points over the past days, with conflicting unofficial reports of fatalities.

In a bid to placate the protesters, the parliament on Monday passed measures, including reduced salaries for officials, the formation of a committee to draft constitutional amendments, and the dissolution of all provincial and local councils outside the semi-autonomous Kurdistan Region.

However, the measures have apparently failed to satisfy the protesters, with trade unions representing teachers, lawyers and dentists declaring strikes.

A similar protest was also held in the holy city of Najaf on Tuesday, which was joined by prominent Shia cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, the leader of Iraqi parliament's largest bloc.

Chile protests sharpen as calls for constitutional change grow

TEHRAN — Protesters in Chile rejected President Sebastian Pinera's political concessions as major demonstrations continued across the country demanding greater equality and constitutional changes.

Central Santiago was covered in smoke on Tuesday evening as a fire raged by the hill in Santa Lucia during unrest against social inequality and police violence.

According to Al Jazeera, thousands more gathered in the streets in cities across the country, from Puerto Montt in the south to Antofagasta in the north.

In the coastal town of Valparaiso, demonstrators gathered to the sound of banging pots after another volatile night during which police fired tear gas.

Protests erupted again on Tuesday despite Pinera's decision to reshuffle his cabinet on Monday, as part of his moves to quell a weeklong uprising against his administration.

Pinera replaced one-third of his cabinet, including Andres Chadwick, the right-wing interior minister who was heavily criticized for calling protesters "criminals" last week. Chadwick, who is Pinera's cousin, was

openly supportive of Augusto Pinochet's regime during Chile's dictatorship that ended in 1990.

"Chile has changed and the government, too, has to change to confront these new challenges in these new times," Pinera said as he announced the replacement of his cabinet, which also includes the finance and labor ministers.

"These measures won't solve all our problems but they are an important first step. They reflect the firm will of our government and the strong commitment of each of us in favor of a socially more just and equitable Chile."

But the cabinet changes fell flat as new protests erupted after the announcement.

What started as a demonstration against a four percent increase in Santiago's metro rail fare earlier this month has evolved into a wider dissent against decades of growing inequality.

Many protesters say they are angry with the "neoliberalism" that has led to poor public services, including the almost complete privatization of pensions, health and education.

WhatsApp sues Israeli firm for allegedly helping to hack phones

TEHRAN — WhatsApp has sued Israeli surveillance firm NSO Group, accusing it of helping government spies break into the phones of roughly 1,400 users across four continents in a hacking spree targeting diplomats and senior government officials among others.

In a lawsuit filed in federal court in San Francisco on Tuesday, messaging service WhatsApp, owned by Facebook Inc, accused NSO of facilitating government hacking sprees in 20 countries - including Mexico, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain.

In a statement, WhatsApp said 100 civil society members had been targeted, calling it "an unmistakable pattern of abuse". NSO has denied the allegations.

"In the strongest possible terms, we dispute today's allegations and will vigorously fight them," NSO said in a statement.

"The sole purpose of NSO is to provide technology to licensed government intelligence and law enforcement agencies to help them fight terrorism and serious crime."

WhatsApp said the attack exploited

its video calling system in order to send malware to the mobile devices of a number of users. The malware would allow NSO's clients - said to be governments and intelligence organizations - to secretly spy on a phone's owner, opening their digital lives up to official scrutiny.

WhatsApp is used by some 1.5 billion people monthly and has often touted a high level of security, including end-to-end encrypted messages that cannot be deciphered by WhatsApp or other third parties.

NSO's spyware has repeatedly been found deployed to hack journalists, lawyers, human rights activists, political dissidents and rivals.

According to a New York Times report last year, the UAE had asked NSO to hack into the phones of the Qatari emir and a Saudi prince among other political and regional rivals.

The spyware was also implicated in the gruesome killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi, who was dismembered in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul last year, Al Jazeera reported.

Turkey rejects U.S. resolution on 'Armenian genocide'

TEHRAN — Turkey rejected the U.S. House of Representatives' official recognition of the "Armenian genocide" a century ago, warning it risks harming ties "at an extremely fragile time" for international and regional security.

In a landmark move on Tuesday, the House approved a resolution calling the early 20th-century killing of Armenians by Ottoman Turks "genocide". The chamber voted 405 to 11 in support of the measure, Al Jazeera reported.

"The resolution which has apparently been drafted and issued for domestic consumption is devoid of any historical or legal basis," Turkey's foreign ministry said in a statement after the vote.

"The resolution itself is also not legally binding," the statement said.

"As a meaningless political step, its sole addressees are the Armenian lobby and anti Turkey groups ... The debate on the events that occurred in 1915 belongs to the realm of history, not politics."

On Wednesday morning, Turkey summoned the U.S. ambassador to the country over the resolution.

■ 'Great atrocities'

U.S. politicians delivered a two-punch rebuke to Turkey on its national day, with the genocide measure passing alongside a bill that imposes sanctions over Ankara's assault on Kurdish-controlled territory in northeastern Syria, which was made possible by the withdrawal of American troops.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said she was honored to join her colleagues "in solemn remembrance of

one of the great atrocities of the 20th century: the systematic murder of more than 1.5 million Armenian men, women and children by the Ottoman Empire".

Previous efforts to pass similar legislation failed because of Turkish diplomatic opposition.

Although Turkey accepts that many Armenians died in ethnic fighting and deportations between 1915-17 during World War I, it has rejected the label of genocide.

Turkey says both Armenians and Turks died as a result of World War I, but contests the figures, putting the death toll in the hundreds of thousands.

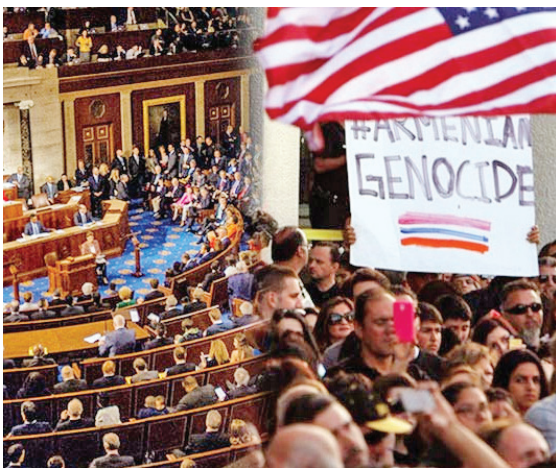
Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu condemned Tuesday's vote, saying it was "null and void".

"Those whose projects were frustrated turn to antiquated resolutions. Circles believing that they will take revenge this way are mistaken. This shameful decision of those exploiting history in politics is null&void for our Government and people," Cavusoglu tweeted.

In 2017, newly inaugurated U.S. President Donald Trump criticized the killings as "one of the worst mass atrocities of the 20th century", but in keeping with long-standing U.S. practice, he stopped short of using the word genocide.

Before being elected in 2008, Trump's predecessor Barack Obama had pledged to recognize the "genocide", but ultimately did not do so during his two terms in office.

Armenia's Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan hailed the House move, tweeting it was a "bold step towards serving truth and historical #justice that also offers



comfort to millions of descendants of the Armenian Genocide survivors".

The House also passed a bipartisan measure that imposes sanctions on senior Turkish officials involved in the decision to launch the country's military campaign in Syria, and a Turkish bank with ties to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

It also requires the Trump administration to penalize Turkey's procurement of a Russian-made missile-defense system known as the S-400.

A similar sanctions bill was introduced in the U.S. Senate, but no vote has been taken.

she said.

Trump himself said in a tweet that "today's backtracking is an admission that this process has been botched from the start."

Democrats launched an impeachment inquiry in September after a whistleblower alleged the Republican president pressured Ukraine to investigate his main Democratic rival, former U.S. vice president Joe Biden.

That request by Trump, and accusations he conditioned nearly \$400 million in military aid to Ukraine on the political favor, form the basis of the impeachment inquiry that now threatens his presidency.

Lebanese army urges anti-govt. protesters to open blocked roads

➤ According to the constitution, Hariri's cabinet would stay on in a caretaker capacity until a new government is formed.

■ Berri 'tried to persuade Hariri not to resign'

In remarks published Wednesday by local daily Al Joumhouria, Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri said he had tried to dissuade Hariri from quitting.

"We tried everything to contain the situation ... and I personally worked to persuade Hariri not to resign, but we hit [a dead end] due to his insistence" to resign, he said.

Berri also called for stopping "everything that might ignite tensions and push [people in the] streets to face off against each other."

"The situation is delicate and sensitive, and what happened should be addressed wisely. ... Wisdom and communication among the Lebanese components is what is required to solve issues," he added.

Syria government raps 'occupation', opposition urges justice as peace panel opens

TEHRAN — Syria's government condemned what it called the occupation of its land while the opposition demanded justice and peace on Wednesday at the opening of a U.N.-backed panel meant to usher in reconciliation after 8-1/2 years of foreign backed war.

According to Reuters, the first meeting of Syria's Constitutional Committee, composed of government and opposition members as well as civil society, is a step forward in what the United Nations says will be a long road to political rapprochement.

The 150-member committee is designed to pave the way for political reform and free and fair, U.N.-supervised elections in Syria, where the war has killed hundreds of thousands of people and forced millions to flee since March 2011.

The government, Syrian opposition and civil society groups each have 50 members serving on the panel. Each delegation includes Kurds, but there is no representation from the SDF militia or its main Kurdish YPG component.

A sub-group of 45 is charged with drafting a new constitution or revising the 2012 one.

"This is an historic moment," Pedersen said, while recognizing that it was not easy for the delegations to sit in the same room and the "road ahead will not be easy".

"But the fact that you are here sitting together face-to-face ready to start a dialogue and negotiations is I believe a powerful sign of hope for Syrians everywhere, both inside and outside the country."

UK heads for December election amid Brexit impasse

TEHRAN — British voters are set to decide the fate of Brexit after parliament backed a general election on December 12 that is likely to be the most momentous for a generation.

An election bill passed by 438 to 20 MPs succeeded in doing what the complex issues surrounding the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union have singularly failed to do during more than two divisive years of wrangling - unite all the main parties, Al Jazeera reported.

The leaders of the country's two largest parties - Conservative Prime Minister Boris Johnson and Labor opposition leader Jeremy Corbyn - welcomed the move, but the stakes for both could not be higher.

"This is a high-risk strategy for Boris Johnson in keeping with the whole of his premiership, which has been high-stakes poker - and hasn't worked out particularly well for him so far," said Mark Shanahan, head of the department of politics and international relations at the University of Reading.

The fate of Brexit could now be in the balance as the UK's political parties gear up for a rare winter campaign - an election has not been held in December since 1923 - to decide the country's direction for generations to come.

Rights groups slam Bahrain for torturing 9 female activists in detention

➤ "Bahrain has created a system which whitewashes and conceals human rights abuses," Quitter said.

The Al Khalifah regime has been mounting a heavy-handed security crackdown since a popular uprising began in the country in mid-February 2011.

The protest campaign is demanding that a just system representing all Bahrainis replace the Al Khalifah ruling dynasty.

Enjoying extensive assistance from the Saudi kingdom and the backing of London and Washington, however, the Manama regime has sought to crush any perceived threat to its authoritarian rule.

The report, which was presented on Capitol Hill on Tuesday, also revealed that UK-funded and trained "oversight bodies" have "consistently whitewashed" Bahrain's human rights abuses. London actively ignores that "taxpayer money" is being used to support such initiatives, it added.

The report also said that the U.S. government provides "funding, training, and assistance to Bahraini government bodies implicated in human rights abuses."

The rights groups have called on Bahrain to release the three remaining female prisoners and urged the U.S. and UK to cooperate in improving human rights conditions in the country.



U.S. House Democrats unveil Trump impeachment resolution

TEHRAN — Democrats in the U.S. House of Representatives have unveiled a measure that formally lays out the next steps in their impeachment inquiry of President Donald Trump.

The House of Representatives Rules Committee released the text of the resolution Tuesday. The proposal could be voted upon by the full House, which is controlled by Democrats, as soon as this week.

According to Press TV, the proposal was previewed on Monday by House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

The resolution comes as pressure grows on Democrats to make Trump's impeachment inquiry more open, in-

cluding holding public hearings with key witnesses in the Ukraine affair that has overwhelmed the White House.

Under the proposal, the House Intelligence Committee is authorized to have public hearings on its impeachment probe.

The committee and other panels investigating Trump would forward their findings to the House Judiciary Committee, which could also conduct hearings before making decisions about filing any articles of impeachment.

To date, all witness testimony in the month-long inquiry has been taken behind closed doors, leading Republicans to condemn the process as secretive and

illegitimate.

If the president "refuses to cooperate" unlawfully with congressional requests, Democrats say that the measure authorizes the House to "impose appropriate remedies, including by denying specific requests by the President or his counsel."

White House press secretary Stephanie Grisham said in a statement that the resolution proves that the impeachment process has been an "illegitimate sham" in the five weeks since it started.

"This resolution does nothing to change the fundamental fact that House Democrats refuse to provide basic due process rights to the Administration,"

Tour of California cancelled for 2020

The Tour of California, a race started in 2006, will disappear from the cycling calendar in 2020, its organizers announced, adding they hoped this was a “hiatus,” not the end of the road “This has been a very difficult decision to make, but the business fundamentals of the Amgen Tour of California have changed since we launched the race 14 years ago,” said Kristin Klein, president of the Tour of California in a statement released by parent company AEG late Tuesday.

The stage race, which became a World Tour event in 2017, was won last May by Slovenian Tadej Pogacar.

The race has crowned some renowned winners including, in 2018, Colombian Egan Bernal, who went on to win the Tour de France this year.

“We are very proud of the work we have done to increase the relevance of professional cycling, particularly in the United States, it has become more challenging each year to mount the race,” Klein said

Both Klein and American Cycling Federation President Bob Stapleton said they hoped to revive the race in 2021.

“We are actively assessing every aspect of our event to determine if there is a business model that will allow us to successfully relaunch the race in 2021,” said Klein.

The statement quoted Stapleton as saying: “We stand ready to help rally additional support and resources in the hopes of resuming this event in 2021.”

(Source: AFP)

Sources: Mourinho open to Arsenal job

Jose Mourinho would be interested in the Arsenal manager’s job if it became available, sources have told ESPN FC.

Boss Unai Emery is coming under increasing pressure at the Emirates following a mixed start to the season.

There are no immediate plans to dismiss the Spaniard, who takes his team to face Liverpool in the Carabao Cup fourth round on Wednesday, but Mourinho would be open to talking to the club if the position became vacant.

Mourinho is based in London after being sacked by Manchester United almost a year ago.

The 56-year-old, who has also been linked with a return to Real Madrid, has been working as a pundit but has made no secret of his desire to return to management.

Sources have told ESPN FC that the chance to win trophies with three Premier League clubs would appeal to Mourinho, who won three titles with Chelsea, but he would need assurances from the board that funds were available to allow a serious challenge at silverware.

He was at the Emirates to watch Arsenal’s 3-2 win over Portuguese side Vitoria Guimaraes in the Europa League on Thursday, during which Nicolas Pepe, a player he recommended to United while he was at Old Trafford, scored twice.

Emery has come under fire following a run of one win in four Premier League games, including throwing away a two-goal lead to draw 2-2 with Crystal Palace on Sunday.

His handling of Mesut Ozil has also been questioned after freezing out the German midfielder.

Emery finished fifth in his first season after replacing Arsene Wenger, missing out on a place in the Champions League following defeat to Chelsea in the Europa League final.

They are fifth after 10 games of this campaign, four points adrift of the top four.

(Source: ESPN)

Clasico issues a ‘state problem’ - La Liga chief

La Liga president Javier Tebas has said the Clasico between Barcelona and Real Madrid is a ‘state problem.’

The date for the clash between the country’s two biggest clubs was moved by the Royal Spanish Football Federation to Dec. 18 due to political and social unrest in Catalonia.

The two clubs wanted the game to go ahead as scheduled at the Camp Nou on Oct. 27 but La Liga requested the Spanish FA move the game, citing “exceptional circumstances beyond our control.”

“The Clasico issue is a state problem,” Tebas told reporters during a Movistar + event. “I don’t see it as only a Barcelona problem.”

La Liga had initially suggested reversing the fixture and playing it at the Bernabeu instead of Camp Nou.

“We wanted to reverse the fixture of the games in order to delay [the game in Barcelona] as much as possible,” Tebas said. “Dec. 18 has not been chosen with La Liga being in agreement.”

Spain will have general elections on Nov. 10, and Tebas added: “Until Dec. 18 many things are going to happen in Spain and I hope they are all positive for the game, and the safety in Barcelona.”

Tebas defended La Liga’s decision to request the game be moved after Barcelona were unhappy the league did not consult them before turning to the Spanish FA. Barca CEO Oscar Grau said playing the Clasico on Dec. 18 is potentially worse than the original date of Oct. 27.

“That is a personal opinion,” Tebas said. “What we knew from the police and from our information was the it was dangerous to play on the [Oct.] 26. I don’t know what data Barcelona have to say that this date [Dec. 18] could be more dangerous.”

(Source: Soccernet)

Valverde: Lionel Messi always makes the difference for Barcelona

Barcelona boss Ernesto Valverde joined the queue to praise skipper Lionel Messi following their 5-1 win at home to Real Valladolid.

Messi scored two and set up two, as La Blaugrana returned to the top of the La Liga table, and his manager joined team mates Arturo Vidal and Sergio Busquets to hailing the Argentina international.

“I do not know what I can say about Messi. “We always know that he will be there when we need him. “He always makes the important difference at the right time. “His talent is incomparable to anyone else in football.”

Valverde also confirmed that he is pleased with the progress of Ansu Fati, and he will continue as a first team player this season, with Carles Perez and Carles Alena also staying in the squad.

(Source: Marca)

Defiant governor says Olympic marathon should stay in Tokyo

Tokyo’s governor insisted Wednesday she still wants to see the Olympic marathon held in the capital next year, despite plans to move the event to northern Japan over heat concerns.

The location of the marathon and race-walking events in next year’s 2020 Summer Games has become a major sticking point between Tokyo officials and the International Olympics Committee (IOC).

The body said earlier this month it would propose shifting the events to Sapporo in northern Japan after disastrous scenes at the Doha world championships where dozens of athletes needed medical attention in hot and humid conditions.

Last week, the chair of the IOC’s coordination commission John Coates, made clear the decision to move the events was final, but Tokyo officials have not backed down.

“Let me clearly speak as the leader of the host city and the representative of the people of Tokyo, it is my wish for marathon and race walk to be held in Tokyo,” Governor Yuriko Koike said at the start of a three-day meeting between IOC officials, Tokyo government and 2020 organizers.

Koike noted IOC chief Thomas Bach after an IOC executive meeting on October 3 said he had never seen a host city so well prepared.

The plan to move the events came two weeks later and was a “tremendous shock” to Tokyo, she said.



“This proposal was made with no explanation at all to the Tokyo government or the Tokyo metropolitan assembly until the last moment.” She said angry local residents had called the local government asking about the decision.

Public anger

There have been reports suggesting Tokyo wants to see the events start at 5am, or even

earlier, as a way to keep them in the city.

But Coates again on Wednesday described the move as a done deal.

“This was a decision that was taken quickly. It was a decision that was taken as consequences of what we saw in Doha,” he said.

Coates said he was in Tokyo “to explain to her (Koike) the reasons, the detailed reasons

Ex-Team Sky & British Cycling doctor to admit ‘I told a lot of lies’



Former British Cycling and Team Sky doctor Richard Freeman will admit to a medical tribunal he “told a lot of lies” and that he ordered the banned substance testosterone.

Dr Freeman is charged with ordering testosterone in May 2011 to give to an unnamed rider to boost performance.

He will claim the 30 Testogel sachets were not for an athlete but were ordered on behalf of ex-British Cycling and Team Sky coach Shane Sutton.

Sutton has denied this claim.

Dr Freeman attended the preliminary discussions for the rescheduled tribunal that will start on 5 November in Manchester.

The original tribunal was postponed from February when Dr Freeman did not appear, citing ill health.

Representing Dr Freeman, Mary O’Rourke QC told the hearing her client had previously “told a lot of lies and he couldn’t bring himself to tell the truth, even to his lawyers”.

She said that Dr Freeman only submitted a revised statement as to why he ordered the testosterone last month.

Following a General Medical Council investigation, Freeman was charged with

ordering testosterone to the National Cycling Centre in Manchester in May 2011 from Fit4Sport Limited in order to boost the performance of an athlete.

He is facing 22 allegations in total, including administering testosterone, making false statements and asking the supplier to falsely claim the order had been sent in error.

Only three of the 22 claims are being contested.

Dr Freeman, who resigned from British Cycling in 2017 because of ill health, is expected to admit he made false statements in originally denying he made the order but will maintain the testosterone was for a member of staff who needed it for medical reasons.

The use of testosterone by athletes is banned at all times under World Anti-Doping Agency rules.

In witness statements, Australian Sutton denied the testosterone was for him and denied knowledge of the delivery.

Miss O’Rourke said the only GMC witness she needs to cross-examine is former British Cycling technical director Sutton.

(Source: BBC)

Footballers’ ‘wives’: the interpreters who are a lifeline in China

Rafa Benitez says his Chinese-language interpreter is always by his side and former Barcelona defender Sergi Barjuan joked that his translator was like his wife, because they were together so much.

At training, matches and press conferences in China, the interpreters are always close by -- but they get scant attention and are paid far less than the coaches or players they help.

But Benitez and other foreigners in Chinese football would not be able to do their jobs without their interpreters, who also play a crucial role in everyday life.

Benitez, a Champions League winner as Liverpool manager, said soon after arriving at Dalian Yifang in July that communication was his biggest challenge.

“You always have an interpreter at your side shadowing you,” the 59-year-old Spaniard, who speaks good English, wrote on his blog.

“Mine, Justin, is copying my gestures at training and at the matches and each day we are more in sync,” he added, highlighting just how critical the dynamic is.

Filtering out ‘sharp words’

Interpreters are not unique to China: former Chelsea, Real Madrid and Inter Milan coach Jose Mourinho famously started out as a translator, and worked for England’s Bobby Robson when he managed Barcelona.

But the difficulty many people have learning Chinese and the lack of English in the country as a whole has spawned an industry of football interpreters, almost always young and male.

One of them is Hong Wenjie, right-hand man to coach Dragan Stojkovic at Guangzhou R&F, who like Benitez’s Dalian are in the top-tier Chinese Super League.

The 29-year-old Chinese, who can speak English and Spanish, describes his job as “a bridge”.



He has been Stojkovic’s interpreter since the Serbian, who speaks English, French and Italian, arrived at the club in August 2015.

“The challenges were more at the beginning. I needed to know about the coach’s personality, habits and his football philosophy,” said Hong, who once did a stint as a tour guide.

Language skill is one thing, Hong said, but you also need to know football jargon and have an intricate understanding of the game.

Being a “bridge” is not always a comfortable place to be, especially when feelings are running high in the changing room at half-time or after a defeat.

Hong said he sometimes uses his own discretion to water down some of Stojkovic’s more scathing remarks.

“Everyone understands that only when you really love the team, you will have such a strong emotion,” he said.

Cameroon footballing legend Eto’o rules out career in politics



Samuel Eto’o is up there with George Weah as an African great on the football field, but he says he has no plans to follow the Liberian into politics “for the moment”.

“Everyone wants me to go into politics, but there won’t be 10 million Weahs,” Eto’o said in an exclusive interview with AFP.

Weah, the only African player to win the Ballon d’Or, became president of Liberia in January 2018.

“Everyone is born with their own star. Everyone at some point gets involved in politics at their own level, but, for the moment, it doesn’t interest me.”

The 38-year-old Cameroon legend recently brought the curtain down on a glittering playing career during which he won the UEFA Champions League twice with Barcelona and once more with Inter Milan.

An idol in his homeland, Eto’o gave his backing to Paul Biya -- who has ruled the country for 37 years -- before his re-election in 2018.

Biya is 86 and is dealing with a major

for those changes.”

“We absolutely recognize and we are so very thankful to the people of Tokyo,” he added.

Speaking to reporters afterwards Koike said “mutual trust” was indispensable for a successful Games, and said there were “no plans to spend Tokyo taxpayer money for another venue”.

Part of the anger over the decision appears to stem from the IOC’s abrupt announcement, which came without prior consultation with either Tokyo or Sapporo officials.

The marathon is generally considered one of the key events of the Olympics, with its route carefully designed to show off landmarks in the host city.

It is also one of the few opportunities for ordinary citizens to see an Olympic event for free, and is seen as an important way to drive engagement with the Games.

The proposed move has thrown up various questions, including who will bear the additional costs of the decision.

Koike’s party Tomin First, the biggest force in the Tokyo Assembly, estimates the venue move will cost an extra 34 billion yen (\$315 million), including expenses to build temporary facilities and lay mass-media transmission lines.

Local media has said Tokyo organizers plan to demand the IOC shoulder those extra expenses.

(Source: Eurosport)

“In that case, I won’t translate the sharp words otherwise it will fuel the fire.

“However, I will convey the coach’s attitude to the team in another way.”

It can also mean saving coaches from themselves, especially in China, where football authorities hand out harsh punishments for criticism of referees.

Interpreters sometimes purposely omit comments by coaches in press conferences to head off trouble with the Chinese Football Association.

Memories of tragic Tiote

Sergi Barjuan’s family remained in Spain while he coached Zhejiang Greentown -- one reason why he called his interpreter his “wife”. He left the post in July after 20 months.

Interpreters also play an important part in the daily lives of foreign players and coaches, for whom China can be a culture shock.

They help new arrivals find a place to live, open bank accounts and help set up mobile payment systems on their smart phones.

Even after they get settled into life in China, foreign coaches or players lean heavily on interpreters, even taking them supermarket shopping.

They can become close friends and confidants.

That was the case for Zhao Chen, who worked at Beijing Enterprises FC and helped Cheick Tiote, the midfielder who died in 2017 after collapsing in training with the club.

The Ivory Coast international’s death aged 30 shocked the football world.

The 28-year-old Zhao, now an interpreter at Shijiazhuang Ever Bright in China’s second tier, has fond memories of getting Tiote settled in, including finding him a place to worship.

(Source: AFP)

Iran announce squad for Intercontinental Beach Soccer Cup

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iran coach d e s k Abbas Hashempour has invited 12 players to the team for the Intercontinental Beach Soccer Cup.

Team Melli have been drawn in a tough group at the 9th edition of the competition.

The prestigious competition will be held at the Kite Beach in Dubai, the UAE from Nov. 5 to 9.

Defending champions are pitted against three-time winners Russia, Mexico and Egypt for the two semi-final spots from Group B.

Hosts the UAE will meet European powerhouses Italy and Spain and Asian champions Japan in Group A.

The Intercontinental Cup is second only to the FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup as the largest and most prestigious event on the international beach soccer circuit, featuring an exclusive assembly of the world's very best national teams from each continent.

Since the World Cup is a biannual competition, this event is now the most important annual international beach soccer tournament.

The 2019 tournament will not see any debutants hit the sand in the United Arab Emirates, but it will only be a second appearance for Italy and Spain, while Russia maintain their record of being the only side, other than their Emirati hosts, to take part in every single edition.

Russia share the record for the most Intercontinental Cups won with Brazil (3), and the 2019 edition could be the perfect opportunity for Mikhail Likhachev's men



to lift trophy number four.

However, defending champions Iran will also be keen to make the most of the absence of Gilberto's Brazilians, as they could draw level with Brazil and Russia

should they retain the Intercontinental Cup and clinch a third title this year.

Iran squad:
Peyman Hosseini, Hamid Behzadpour, Mohammad Ahmadzadeh, Amirhossein

Akbari, Saeid Piramoon, Mohammadali Mokhtari, Mehdi Shirmohammadi, Moslem Mesigari, Mostafa Kiani, Mohammad Masoumizadeh, Ali Mirshekari, Hassan Abdollahi

Persepolis forward Abdi sidelined for three weeks



S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Persepolis striker Mehdi Abdi will miss at least three weeks of the Iran professional League season.

He suffered a knee injury on Tuesday in the team's training.

Abdi, 21, scored the only goal of Tehran derby against Esteghlal in late

September.

He became popular in Persepolis after scoring against the team's arch-rivals.

Persepolis doctor Alireza Haghighat said that Abdi needs three weeks to recover.

Persepolis sit fourth in the table, three points behind IPL leaders Sepahan.

Qeshm to host 2019-2020 FIVB Beach Volleyball World Tour



S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — The 2020 portion of the 2019-2020 FIVB Beach Volleyball World Tour calendar begins during the first full week of January when the Iranian island Qeshm hosts an inaugural event.

The second of three Iranian events on the 2019-2020 FIVB World Tour schedule,

Qeshm is an island in the Strait of Hormuz.

The 2019 portion of the 2019-2020 World Tour schedule also began in Iran when Bandar Torkaman hosted an event at the start of October.

The third Iranian event is also an inaugural men's only tournament and will be held from February 5 to 7 in Bandar Abbas.

AFC Dream Asia Awards 2019 winners announced

The Japan Inclusive Football Federation (NGO), Shell Qatar's Koora Time Programme (Corporate) and Nepali journalist and filmmaker, Bhojraj Bhat (Individual) won the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) Dream Asia Awards 2019 held in conjunction with Wednesday's AFC Social Responsibility Conference in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

The three worthy winners, who were chosen from a record 27 strong applicants this year, will receive USD\$10,000, enabling them to bolster their social responsibility programmes alongside the AFC.

Chairman of the AFC Social Responsibility Committee, Mr Zaw Zaw said: "Social Responsibility is a key focus area for the AFC and already, through the AFC Dream Asia Foundation and these awards, we have witnessed the incredible strides and growth of our efforts as one united Asian footballing family, to use football as a powerful tool for social development."

"The record 27 applicants received this year reinforces that our spirit of partnership is stronger than ever, and we are in the best possible position to fulfil our purpose to empower communities and inspire hope through football."

■ Japan Inclusive Football Federation – NGO

JIFF was established in April 2016 as an affiliate member of the Japan Football Association, with the aim to create an inclusive community through football, one which champions equal and active participation for all, regardless of ability.

Taking a partnership approach, the JIFF works hand-in-hand with seven affiliate members to engage various



disability groups in Japan, further underlining the importance of inclusiveness and diversity.

And to foster a greater sense of community, the JIFF has staged various engaging programmes including the JIFF Inclusive Football Festa, FutbolNet Methodology training for instructors, numerous coach education courses in partnership with the Barça Foundation and the Financial Assistance Programme for the Hearing Impaired.

Shelter Ashraya Nepal (Silver)
Shanghai Love and Grace Sports Club (Bronze)
Childreach Nepal (Bronze)

■ Shell Qatar Koora Time Programme (QAT) – Corporate

Koora Time Programme is a youth football initiative created by the Qatar Football Association and Shell Qatar, designed to improve the health and wellbeing of Qatar's youth through football. It serves to break the barriers of physical activity and

expand the opportunities and spaces to spread the love of the game in a fun and non-competitive environment.

As the country's only football and education initiative, the Koora Time Programme continues to deliver the highest levels of engagement, benefitting more than 100,000 children across Qatar since its launch in 2012.

A major contributor to the larger national health and fitness agenda, the success of the programme is evident as participants saw lower levels of BMI and Fat Mass while their knowledge of healthy living significantly increased.

Volkswagen Group China (Silver)
Sun Ai Carpet (Bronze)

■ Bhojraj Bhat (NEP) – Individual

Filmmaker Bhojraj Bhat made international headlines with his moving 2015 documentary Sunakali, which cast the spotlight on a group of aspiring teenage female footballers from the remote and mountainous district of Mugu in Nepal.

The documentary was shown in more than 130 film festivals across Europe, and also won more than 20 awards. Bhat's authentic portrayal of the challenges faced by the footballers not only garnered international recognition but paved the way for the girls' participation in the Donosti Cup in Spain.

In highlighting their compelling story, Bhat continues to advocate social change and best encapsulates the power of the beautiful game as a tool to inspire hope and to thrive against-all-odds.

Alireza Beiranvand (Silver)

(Source: the-afc)

Iraq v Iran likely to be held in Erbil

PLDC — The match between Iraq and Iran will likely be held in Erbil, the capital of the Kurdistan Region, Al Jazeera TV reported.

The 2022 World Cup qualifier has been scheduled for November 14 at the Basra Stadium in Basra but the venue will likely be changed.



The anti-government demonstrations in Iraq have gripped the capital, Baghdad, and swept through several other cities in the country's south.

Head of the Iraqi Football Federation, Abdul-Khaliq Masoud, has already said that they have no problem to host the match, but the Qatari channel has reported that Iran and Bahrain football federations have requested to change the venue for security reasons.

According to Al Jazeera TV Channel, the match between Iraq and Iran will likely be held at the Franso Hariri Stadium in Erbil.

Iran sit third in Group C with six points. Iraq lead the table with seven points and Bahrain are second on goal difference.

Persepolis remain best Iranian team in Club World Ranking

TASNIM — Persepolis football team of Iran moved six places up in the latest Club World Ranking.

Persepolis have moved up to 241st in the ranking, followed by Zob Ahan, who moved six places down to 262nd.

Third-placed Esteghlal climbed 41 places to 267th and Sepahan sits fourth (390).

Barcelona stay first, followed by Liverpool, Manchester City and River Plate.

Club World Ranking is a ranking system of the best soccer teams, top scorers and coaches in the world, based on match results over the past 52 weeks.

Iranian football delegation departs for Iraq to review conditions

MNA — A delegation from Iranian football federation has departed for Iraq to review the conditions of Iraq for hosting the upcoming match with Iran.

National football teams of Iran and Iraq are slated to lock horns on November 14 at Basra International Stadium in 2022 World Cup and 2023 Asian AFC Cup qualifications.

Public protests in Iraq have cast the shadow of doubt on holding the match in the country. Earlier, the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) announced that matches of Group A of U19 Championship qualification from Nov. 2 to 10, which was slated to be held in Iraq, has been postponed until further notice.

To further review the conditions, an Iranian delegation led by Mohammad Reza Saket, Secretary-General of the Islamic Republic of Iran's Football Federation, left Tehran for Iraq on Wednesday morning. The federation will mull over requesting for postponing or holding the game in another venue after the visit.

Also, the Iranian federation announced that the head of the Iraqi Football Federation, Abdul-Khaliq Masoud, will visit Tehran on Saturday to hold talks with his Iranian counterpart, Mehdi Taj.

Iranian wrestlers win gold and bronze in U23 World C'ships

MNA — Iran's freestyle team gained one gold and one bronze medal on Tuesday night in 2019 edition of the U23 World Wrestling Championships in Hungary.

Mojtaba Goleij gained a commanding 8-2 victory over 2017 Junior World champion Shamil Musaev of Russia in the final of 97kg category to collect his second world title.

Also, Alireza Sarlak defeated Mongolia's Zhanabazar Zandabud in the bronze contest of 57kg. Cuba's Reineri Andreu Ortega overpowered Adlan Askarov of Kazakhstan to win the gold medal of this category.

The competitions are being held in Budapest, Hungary from October 28 to November 3.

Kaveh Rezaei strikes goal for his Belgian club Charleroi against Oostende

IRNA — Iranian football player Kaveh Rezaei scored a goal for his Belgian club Charleroi on Tuesday to win the match against Oostende.

Rezaei scored the match's only goal at minute 82 to allow Charleroi to go past Oostende in the Belgian First Division A.

He was later substituted by Senegalese midfielder Mamadou Fall at minute 85.

Last week as well, Iranian player Ali Gholizadeh scored the only goal for the Belgian football club to cruise past Royal Excel Mouscron.

Charleroi stand fifth in Belgian First Division A with 21 points.

Minimalist Tajikistan reap maximum rewards

12 years ago, Tajikistan took part in their first, and up until this year, only FIFA U-17 World Cup. In 2007 in Korea Republic, they secured a 4-3 win over USA in their opening match, and despite two 1-0 defeats after that by Belgium and Tunisia, they still managed to create history by making it into the Round of 16 as one of the best third-placed teams.

History may be in line to repeat itself here in Brazil, with the Asian team opening their Group E campaign with a shock 1-0 win over African champions Cameroon on Monday.

"A surprise? Not in the slightest," head coach Zainidin Rahimov told FIFA.com. "We

already showed what we were capable of against the big teams in the Qualifiers, so we knew that we stood a chance here."

Indeed, Tajikistan saw off first DPR Korea DPR then Korea Republic in the quarter-finals and semi-finals of the AFC U-16 Championship Malaysia 2018 respectively, both times on penalties. By the end of the tournament, they had scored six goals in as many matches and finished second only to Japan.

This minimalist trend seems set to continue, with a single goal from the penalty spot enough to see off their African opponents.

"I'm very proud of my goal," said Sharifbek

Rahmatov who converted the spot-kick. "Of course I was a bit nervous before taking it, but I focused on the ball and then just hit it. It went in, and the celebrations started."

The goal was set up by a long clearance from goalkeeper Shohruxh Qirghizboev, who somewhat surprisingly replaced the shoot-out hero from the AFC U-16 Championship Malaysia 2018 Mukhriddin Khasanov in goal.

Amadoni Kamolov and Rustam Soirov, both of whom had been brought on as substitutes, played a one-two and the only way the Cameroon keeper Manfred Ekoi could stop them was illegally.

"Kamolov and Rustam are important players for us who could easily be part of the starting line-up," the coach explained, "but it's obviously great that we can have players like that on the bench who can come on during the match."

Tajikistan thought they had scored a second goal that was typical of their counter-attacking style, with a long ball sent up front, a sprint, a dribble and a shot that found the back of the net. Unfortunately for them, it was ruled out by the video assistant referee for a foul.

(Source: FIFA.com)

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GUIDE TO
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Chastity is the adornment of indigence and
gratitude is the ornament of wealthiness.

Imam Ali (AS)

Artists from 10 countries to take part in Tehran Intl. Sculpture Symposium

A R T **TEHRAN** — Sculptors from 10 countries will join Iranian artists at the 9th Tehran International Sculpture Symposium, which will open on Saturday.



A poster for the 9th Tehran International Sculpture Symposium.

The sculptors are coming from France, Slovenia, Taiwan, Bulgaria, China, Argentina, Belorussia, India, Bolivia and Peru, the Beautification Organization of the Tehran Municipality announced on Wednesday.

“Five sculptors from Iran will also take part in the symposium, which will take place in the Abbasabad district,” said the deputy director of the organization, Mojtaba Musavi. “No specific topic has been selected for this year’s symposium, and we are expecting a wide range of artworks to be created with travertine,” he added.

He said that a number of students will also be creating their works beside the participating sculptors on the sidelines of the event.

Winners will be announced during a special ceremony on November 26, just one after the end of the symposium.

Organized annually by the Beautification Organization, the symposium seeks to help beautify the urban environment of the city and familiarize the citizens with the process of making new designs.



Varzesh channel manager Ehsan Shie (L) receives the World Best TV Sport Channel Award from FICTS President Franco Ascani during the 37th Milano International FICTS Fest in Milan, Italy on October 29, 2019.

Italy’s RAISPORT, Germany’s ARD, Spain’s CCMA - Televisió de Catalunya, Switzerland’s RSI - Radiotelevisione Svizzera Italiana and Uganda’s UBC - Uganda Broadcasting Corporation were other winners of the award.

The Federation Internationale Cinema Television Sportifs (FICTS) is the organizer of the festival, which is the final phase of the World FICTS Challenge that runs in 16 countries including Iran.

ZINEBI film festival picks Iranian shorts

A R T **TEHRAN** — Iranian shorts “Violet” and “Exam” will be screened at the 61st ZINEBI International Festival of Documentary and Short Film of Bilbao in Spain.

Directed by Ghasideh Golmakani, “Violet” is about Azi, a young girl who feels lonely despite having a big family. On the day of her sister’s wedding, Azi notices that the wedding rings are lost and she tries to find them before the ceremony.

“Exam” by Sonia Haddad is about a teenage girl who agrees to deliver a pack of cocaine on the day of an important exam at school. The ZINEBI film festival will be held from November 8 to 15.

Germany to celebrate 200th anniversary of Goethe’s “West-East Divan” in Shiraz

A R T **TEHRAN** — Germany will celebrate the 200th anniversary of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s “West-East Divan” during a festival in the southern Iranian city of Shiraz, home to the mausoleum of Persian poet Hafez who influenced Goethe’s collection.

A number of German scholars have been invited to attend the five-day festival, which will open today, the Embassy of Germany in Tehran has announced.

German filmmaker Florian Graf Henckel von Donnersmarck, best known for writing and directing the 2006 Oscar-winning dramatic thriller “The Lives of Others”, and director and author Doris Dörrie are among the participating guests.

Professor Anke Bosse, an expert on “West-East Divan”, and writer and Islamologist Stefan Weidner will also attend the event.

Goethe wrote “West-East Divan”, which contains his poems, notes and essays written under the influence of Hafez’s poetry.

He was familiar with Hafez and his works through his friendship with Austrian Orientalist Joseph Freiherr von Hammer-Purgstall (1774-1856) who provided the first-ever complete translation of the Divan of Hafez into a Western language.

A variety of programs on cinema, arts, theater and literature will be arranged during the festival, which will be organized in collaboration with the Municipality of Shiraz.



A poster for Germany’s festival that will mark the 200 anniversary of Goethe’s “West-East Divan” in Shiraz.

“Lotus” named best doc at ForadCamp exhibition



A scene from Iranian filmmaker Mohammadreza Vatan-doost’s documentary “Lotus”.

A R T **TEHRAN** — Iranian filmmaker Mohammadreza Vatan-doost’s acclaimed film “Lotus” has been selected as best documentary at the 8th Nature and Cinema Exhibition – ForadCamp 2019 in Spain.

The film is about an old woman who is waiting for a permit to enter an island after 12 years to visit her son’s grave.

The jury has valued the short film “for making a portrait of a person and a landscape, for the human and political dimensions of history, and for its great cinematic quality,” the organizers have announced.

“Lotus” also received the Granollers Cultural Association Mention at the event, which took place in the New Casino Figaró, on October 19 and 20.

The film was screened at numerous international events and has won several honors, including the mini-doc artistic vision award at the 16th Big Sky Documentary Film Festival in the U.S. city of Missoula, Montana.

ForadCamp also honored several other films. “All Inclusive” by Corina Schwingruber Illic from Switzerland won the Audience Award, while “Los rugidos que alejan la tormenta” by Santiago Reale from Argentina received the Distribution Prize.

ForadCamp is a film exhibition organized by the Figaró-Montmany village and coordinated by the Association of Independent Documentary Filmmakers – INDOC.

The exhibition seeks to link the natural environment with independent personal cinema made with an innovative spirit.

WFP to organize exhibition of paintings by refugee children in Iran

A R T **TEHRAN** — The United Nations World Food Program (WFP) in Tehran plans to celebrate 32 years of its presence in Iran by organizing an exhibition of paintings by refugee children living in the country.

“The exhibit will open in the Faculty of Physical Education and Sport Sciences of the University of Tehran on November 8 to raise funds for the refugee children,” the WFP spokesman in Iran, Dara Darbandi, said in a press conference held at the UNICEF Conference Hall in Tehran on Wednesday.

Darbandi added that a collection of 32 paintings out of 6,000 submissions have been selected by Iranian actors Hamid Jebeli, Majid Mozaffari, Pantea Bahram and Forugh Qojabeghi for the exhibit.



Afghan refugee children in Iran in an undated photo.

“This year’s motto is ‘Stop the Waste’ and children were asked to do their paintings on the main topic of food, especially breakfast and brunch, at schools,” said the WFP representative in Iran, Negar Gerami.

Jebeli and Mozaffari, also present at the conference, expressed their hopes that no children in Iran and the world would remain hungry.

According to a report published by the WFP, “Iran has been generously hosting one million refugees, the fourth largest refugee population in the world, for over 30 years.”

“The vast majority of these, mainly from Afghanistan and Iraq, live in urban areas, with only three percent living in 20 settlements spread across the country.”

“Yeva” crowned best at DTLA film festival

A R T **TEHRAN** — Iranian-Armenian filmmaker Anahid Abad’s acclaimed drama “Yeva” received the award for best foreign-language feature film at the 11th Downtown Los Angeles - DTLA Film Festival in the U.S. city on Sunday.

Produced by Farabi and the National Cinema Center of Armenia, the film tells the story of Yeva, a young woman who escapes her influential in-laws with her daughter Nareh after her husband’s tragic death, and takes refuge in one of the villages in the Karabakh region. She is a complete stranger in this ballgame and is obliged to

live her daily life in disguise.

“Yeva”, which is currently on screen at theaters in New York and Los Angeles, was Armenia’s submission to the 90th Academy Awards, but it did not make the shortlist.

“American Woman” by Semi Chellas won main awards in four categories, including best film and best director, while “Pushout: The Criminalization of Black Girls in Schools” by Jacoba Atlas received the audience award at the DTLA Film Festival, which was held from October 23 to 27.



A scene from “Yeva” by Iranian-Armenian director Anahid Abad.

New “Star Wars” movie era in disarray after “Game of Thrones” creators exit

NEW YORK (Reuters) — The exit of the “Games of Thrones” creators from the next “Star Wars” film left future stories in the science fiction saga up in the air on Tuesday, although some fans welcomed their departure.

David Benioff and D.B. Weiss had been hired in 2018 to write and produce a trilogy of new movies in the blockbuster Walt Disney Co franchise, with the first scheduled for release in December 2022.

But the creators of HBO’s hit fantasy series said they were stepping away from the project to focus on new work for streaming service Netflix.

“We love Star Wars. When George Lucas built it, he built us too,” Benioff and Weiss said in a statement late on Monday.

“But there are only so many hours in the day, and we felt we could not do justice to both Star Wars and our Netflix projects. So we are regrettably stepping away,” they added.

Disney had said the trilogy from Benioff and Weiss was expected to tell a story separate from the Skywalker series that began with the 1977 film starring Mark Hamill, Carrie Fisher and Harrison Ford, and which is due to conclude with the December movie “Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker.”



David Benioff (L) and Dan Weiss, creators and executive producers, arrive for the sea-son premiere of HBO’s “Game of Thrones” in San Francisco, California March 23, 2015. (Reuters/Robert Galbraith)

Disney and Lucasfilm did not return requests for comment on Tuesday on how their withdrawal would affect the planned 2022 movie, details of which had not been announced.

The “Star Wars” franchise is one of the most valuable in Hollywood. The 2017 film “The Last Jedi” took \$1.3 billion at the global box

office and Disney earlier this year opened “Star Wars” lands at its theme parks in California and Florida.

Fans seemed relieved at the exit of Benioff and Weiss, given widespread disappointment at the conclusion earlier this year of their medieval fantasy TV series “Game of Thrones.” “I am very relieved to read that D.B. Weiss

and David Benioff have stepped away from their Disney/Lucasfilm deal (to create a new trilogy). The last two seasons of #GameOfThrones proved without source material ... they are lost,” wrote Marty Kottick on Twitter.

Others hoped their departure would clear the way for the first woman, or person of color, to direct or write a “Star Wars” movie.

“Consider how many people who aren’t white men LOVE #StarWars, and would be more than happy to be a part of the next phase of the franchise!” tweeted a user, Liz Shannon Miller.

Lucasfilm president Kathleen Kennedy in a statement called Benioff and Weiss “remarkable storytellers.”

“We hope to include them in the journey forward when they are able to step away from their busy schedule to focus on Star Wars,” she added.

Disney also has announced a separate “Star Wars” trilogy in the works by “The Last Jedi” director Rian Johnson. No release date has been unveiled.

Meanwhile, “Star Wars” embarks on another phase on Nov. 12 when spinoff TV series “The Mandalorian” begins streaming on the new Disney+ service.