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U.S. targeting Lebanon's economy, development

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Iran, Iraq power grids synchronized

TEHRAN — Power grids of Iran and Iraq were synchronized on Friday, IRNA reported quoting Iranian Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian.

"As of today, the two countries' power networks are operating in coordination with each other," Ardakanian said on the sidelines of the synchronization operation in Tehran.

Underlining the positive steps taken by the two countries for expansion of cooperation in the energy sector, the official mentioned his negotiations with his Iraqi counterpart last year, saying "we decided to take serious steps in a three-year period."

"Synchronizing the two countries electricity networks, reducing losses in Iraq's electricity grid." **→5**

Iran underscores support for Afghan-Afghan peace talks

TEHRAN — Iranian First Vice President Es'haq Jahangiri said on Friday that people in Afghanistan should decide their own fate, reaffirming Tehran's support for Afghan-Afghan peace talks.

In a meeting with Afghanistan's Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) meeting in Uzbekistan, Jahangiri said that his country will

back peace talks under leadership and ownership of Afghanistan.

He further said, "Iran-Afghanistan's collective cooperation document has been finalized and we hope to be inked soon."

Jahangiri also congratulated successful implementation of Afghanistan's presidential election to Abdullah, adding, "Iran will continue promotion of cooperation with the newly-elected government in Kabul." **→2**

Iraq's top Shia cleric urges end of bloodshed, warns of civil war

PRESS TV — Iraq's top Shia cleric Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani has urged the end of bloodshed in the Arab country, warning of a civil war and chaos after dozens of deaths during the recent wave of protest rallies across Iraq.

In a statement on Friday, Ayatollah Sistani expressed regret over the continued clashes between demonstrators and security forces, which have resulted in the deaths and injuries

of many innocent people from both sides and damages to public and private properties.

"The innocent blood shed during the past few weeks is very valuable to us, and measures must be taken to prevent further bloodshed," the top cleric said.

"The country must be kept from slipping toward the edge of the precipice of a civil war, chaos, and destruction," Ayatollah Sistani urged. **→13**

ARTICLE
Ramin Hossein Abadian
Mehr News Agency
journalist

Intensifying pressure on Abdul Mahdi to resign

Domestic and foreign pressure for ousting Iraqi Prime Minister Adil Abdul Mahdi appear to have increased more than ever.

Iraq's President Barham Salih has also recently made a statement in this regard, saying, "The prime minister had previously agreed to submit his resignation, if the blocs agree on an acceptable replacement in order to adhere to constitutional and legal frameworks".

Condemning the violence against the protesters, Salih claimed that he will stand beside the Iraqi people.

The prime minister added that he is against quelling the protesters. Addressing the protesters, he said the Iraqi people and security forces are on the same side. Noting that forcible action is not the way to deal with the protesters, Salih said that reforms is the only solution.

There are two point regarding the remarks by the Iraqi president. The first point is that Abdul Mahdi has only announced his consent for resignation, and considered its dependent on the agreement of political parties about a replacement. Therefore, as some foreign media have suggested, a resignation of Abdul Mahdi cannot be considered inevitable.

The second point in Salih's remarks is that Adul Mahdi is well aware of Iraq's political situation. He knows that even if he resigns, political parties will not come to an agreement about a replacement, at least in the short run, and this matter will emerge as a serious problem. The prime minister has agreed to "conditional resignation" to prevent Iraq from facing a "power vacuum".

Currently, it is obvious that domestic and foreign pressure has increased on the Iraqi government to make Abdul Mahdi step down. Domestic pressure mainly comes from a particular political current that has repeatedly asked for the resignation of the prime minister and hold an early election. In such a situation, Iraqi Shi'ite leader Muqtada al-Sadr had earlier announced if Abdul Mahdi did not step down, Iraq would become like Yemen and Syria. **→3**

Assad: Liberating northern Syria from Kurds 'ultimate goal'

PRESS TV — Syrian President Bashar al-Assad says his country's ultimate goal is to restore state authority over Kurdish-controlled northeastern regions in the wake of an abrupt US troop withdrawal and a Turkish offensive against the Kurds there.

In an interview with state TV on Thursday, the Syrian president also said an agreement last week between Turkey and Russia to drive out Kurdish-led People's Protection Units (YPG) militants from a 30-kilometer "safe zone" along the border was a step that would help Damascus in regaining control, though gradually, over the northeastern areas.

The Turkey-Russia deal, which would halt the weeks-long Turkish invasion, calls for the withdrawal of Syrian Kurdish militants from areas along the Turkish border with

the aim of establishing a "safe zone" that Ankara claims will be used to repatriate some of the three-million-plus Syrian refugees it currently hosts.

Assad said during the interview that agreement is "temporary."

"We have to distinguish between ultimate or strategic goals... and tactical approaches," he said, stressing that his forces will eventually reclaim territory taken by Ankara's latest offensive.

The Kurdish YPG militia had reached a deal with Damascus to take up positions near the border after US President Donald Trump's announcement of pullout of US troops in northeastern Syria left them feeling abandoned.

Assad, however, added that Damascus will not demand that armed groups there hand over weapons immediately when the army enters those

areas in a final deal with the Kurds that restores state control.

"Erdogan Syria's enemy" The Syrian head of state said he did not intend to call Turkey an "enemy"? but Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and many Turkish political elite were enemies of Syria because of their hostility towards the Arab neighbor.

"We must ensure that we don't turn Turkey into an enemy and here comes the role of friends" such as Russia and Iran, he said.

"Erdogan and his group are enemies, because he leads these policies, but until now most of the political forces in Turkey are against Erdogan's policies," he argued.

Assad noted that Iran and Russia, as state-guarantors of Syrian peace efforts, have been negotiating with Turkey over the past year. **→13**

Yemeni forces shoot down U.S.-made ScanEagle spy drone

PRESS TV — Yemeni armed forces have shot down a US-made spy drone while on a mission over the battle front near the southwestern Saudi province of Asir.

The spokesman for the Yemeni Armed Forces Brigadier General Yahya Saree said on Friday that the aircraft was a ScanEagle type.

Yemeni forces have managed to down numerous US-made drones in recent years, notably destroying a US-operated advanced MQ-9 Reaper attack drone most recently in August.

The US has been a major backer of Saudi Arabia ever since it formed a so-called military coalition campaign against Yemen in March 2015 in a bid to bring the government of former President Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi back to power.

Resistance by Yemeni forces, led by the Houthis Ansarullah movement, has, however, pushed the Saudi war to a stalemate, largely stalling Riyadh's ambitions in the country.

The war has, nonetheless, taken a heavy toll on the country's population and infrastructure. On Thursday, the US-based Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) published a report saying that 100,000 people have been killed since the onset of the conflict.

The report said 20,000 people had been killed only this year, making the second deadliest year of the war after 2018.

Addressing the report, Oxfam Country Director in Yemen Muhsin Siddiquey said that it served as "further proof of the mindless destruction and injustice of the

war in Yemen. The true death toll is much higher when fatalities related to the lack of medicine, food and clean water are taken into account."

"This should act as a wake-up call to all sides to agree a nationwide ceasefire and to return to the negotiating table in order to reach a lasting peace. Arms exporting countries should stop fueling the fighting by sending weapons to the warring parties," he added.

The newly published death-toll comes as the US is by far Saudi Arabia's largest arms supplier, with Riyadh spending about 70 percent of its arms imports on US-made weapons.

According to numerous reports, the supplied weaponry has been a lead factor in mass civilian deaths in the country. **→13**

PERSPECTIVE
Masoud Hossein
Head of the Sport Desk of the TehranTimes

Iran volleyball's future remains unclear

With about three months until the AVC Continental Olympic Qualification Tournament, Iran volleyball's status is still unknown and is managing by an interim president.

Iran are favorites to book a place at the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games, but the uncertain situation keeps Team Melli in suspense.

The top eight teams will participate at AVC Continental Olympic Qualification Tournament in Jiangmen, China from January 7 to 12, 2020 and the winners will qualify for the Games.

Iran volleyball has no president for months and the six candidates have been confirmed but it's still not exactly clear when the elections will be held.

Other Asian teams, namely China, Australia and South Korea are armed to the teeth for the event and are preparing for the important competition while the Iranian volleyball doesn't know what will happen.

"We need long-term plan for our volleyball but I don't understand why Iran's Ministry of Sports and Youths spends time doing nothing. There is no reason in delaying it," Iran volleyball expert Jahangir Seyeddabbasi said.

"In my opinion, Iran deserve to qualify for the Olympics because we are the best Asian team at the moment but to compete at the highest level you need a long-term plan and stability. I fear of missing the chance because we are wasting the time," he added.

Iran debuted in 2016 Olympic Games and finished in fifth place behind Brazil, Italy, the U.S. and Russia.

Team Melli have recently won the 2019 Asian Men's Volleyball Championship, however they showed a poor performance at the 2019 FIVB World Cup held in Japan in October.

After the competition, Iran coach Igor Kolakovic said that his players were exhausted and some of them suffering from the injury.

"Playing 11 matches in 15 days was very difficult for them, as well as time difference between Iran and Japan. But we will be well-equipped for the Olympics qualification and are motivated for booking a place in the Games," he said.



Persian poet Mazaher Mosaffa dies at 87

TEHRAN — Persian poet Mazaher Mosaffa, mostly famous for his odes, died of natural causes at his home in Tehran on Thursday. He was 87.

He was buried in his hometown of Tafresh on Friday, his daughter Golzar told the Persian service of ISNA.

He received his primary school education at the Hakim Nezami School in Qom. He then obtained a Ph.D. in Persian literature at the University of Tehran. He wrote his doctoral thesis on the evolution of Persian odes. **→16**

Iran says ready to expand co-op with IAEA based on mutual trust

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said on Thursday that Iran is ready to expand cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency based on “mutual trust” and adoption of a professional approach by the UN nuclear body.



“The Islamic Republic of Iran is ready to maintain and expand constructive interaction and cooperation with the agency based on mutual respect and professional precision and neutrality of this institution,” he said in a message, congratulating appointment of Rafael Grossi as the director general of the IAEA.

Mousavi expressed hope that Grossi would fulfil his international duties professionally and with adopting an independent position.

The UN nuclear watchdog’s board on Tuesday picked Argentina’s Grossi to become the agency’s next chief, and he immediately pledged to act independently and neutrally on issues including Iran, Reuters reported.

“I will do my job and I think my job is to implement the mandate in a manner which is independent, which is fair, which is neutral,” Grossi told reporters after the vote when asked about Iran, declining to go into specifics.

“What I think is important is that I give my member states and the international community the guarantee that I am absolutely independent and impermeable to pressure,” he said.

Funeral held for Azam Taleghani

POLITICAL TEHRAN — A funeral ceremony was held on Friday morning in Tehran for Azam al-Sadat Taleghani.

Azam Taleghani, admitted to a hospital in Tehran due to a brain problem, died at 76 on Wednesday evening.



She was a prominent revolutionary figure and daughter of Seyed Mahmoud Taleghani, the first Friday prayers leader of Tehran.

She was buried adjacent to the grave of her father in the Behesht Zahra cemetery, south of Tehran.

A crowd of political, cultural, and media activists and certain officials attended the ceremony.

Among the officials participating in the ceremony were Ali Rabiei, the government spokesman, Abbas Ali Amiri, the vice president for parliamentary affairs, legislators Mostafa Kavakebian and Parvaneh Salahshouri.

Mrs. Taleghani was a political prisoner before the victory of the Islamic Revolution in 1979. She also served as a lawmaker in the first parliament after the revolution.

She was recognized as cultural, media and political figure. President Hassan Rouhani sent a message of condolences over demise of Azam Taleghani as a women’s rights activist.

Also, Seyed Hassan Khomeini, the grandson of Imam Khomeini, in a message expressed his condolences over her death.

Iran underscores support for Afghan-Afghan peace talks

➔ The vice president, during the meeting, termed presidential election a giant step towards institutionalization of democracy and stability in Afghanistan.



Abdullah, for his part, said, “Outcome of the country’s presidential election will be announced in a couple of days.”

The chief executive said Afghanistan’s new government will “continue fulfilling its obligations to Iran and will expand close relations with Tehran.”

Jahangiri visited Tashkent on Friday to attend a meeting of the member states of the SCO.

Jahangiri arrived at Islam Karimov international airport where he was welcomed by Uzbek Deputy Prime Minister Aziz Abdolhakov, the Iranian ambassador to Uzbekistan and some senior officials of the host country.

‘Japan seeks to remove obstacles to ties with Iran’

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Japan’s Ambassador to Tehran, Mitsugu Saito, has said that Japan seeks to remove obstacles to ties with Iran, expressing optimism over relations.

“There are obstacles to expansion of relations. These obstacles are complicated, however, they can be removed through vigilance. I am sure that the Iranian and Japanese people can solve problems by vigilance. So, I am optimistic about the future of relations,” he told IRNA in an interview published by Friday.

He said that the Japanese corporations are interested in doing business with Iran. “In his visit to Iran in June, Mr. Shinzo Abe [the Japanese prime minister] showed his determination to solve problems which are obstacle to expansion of relations,” he said.

Elsewhere, he expressed concerns over tension in the Persian Gulf region.

“Japan decided not to join the United States’ coalition, however, it will continue its initiative to ease tension. In line with this, we will consult and exchange views with regional players, especially Iran, and also the United States and Europe,” Ambassador



Saito stated. Abe visited Tehran on June 12 for a two-day visit.

President Hassan Rouhani met with Abe in New York in late September on the sidelines

of the UN General Assembly. On August 30, Abe said that he plans to do everything he can to ease tension in the Middle East region. “Peace and stability in the Middle East

directly links to Japan’s national interest,” Reuters quoted Abe as saying in a news conference at the end of a three-day international conference on African development.

“I would like to work tenaciously, and play the best possible role to ease tensions in the Middle East,” he said.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif also met with Abe in Yokohama, near Tokyo, on August 28.

According to Reuters, Zarif said that Iran is not seeking to increase tension but every country should be able to enjoy its rights under international law.

“As our president has said, we are not at all seeking heightened tensions,” Zarif said, speaking through a translator.

He said, “We believe every country should be able to enjoy its rights under international law.”

According to The Mainichi, Zarif said, “Iran welcomes the Japanese government’s role (in trying) to ease tensions in the Middle East.”

Abe said, “Japan will persistently continue our diplomatic efforts to deal with rising tensions in the Middle East and stabilize the current situation.”

Putin highlights Iran-Russia-Turkey role in settling Syrian crisis

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Wednesday that Iran, Russia and Turkey play a constructive role in settling crisis in Syria.

The Syrian constitutional committee that was formed upon efforts by Russia, Iran and Turkey will help resolve the Syria crisis, ISNA quoted Putin as saying in a joint press conference with Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban in Budapest.

United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres announced the formation of the constitutional committee on September 23.

The Syrian constitutional committee met on Wednesday for the first time under UN auspices to chart a political settlement to end the eight-and-a-half-year civil war.

The meeting in Geneva is being overseen by the UN special envoy for Syria Geir Pedersen.

The first meeting of the 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.

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



and supporting the work of the constitutional committee.

The statement was issued after a trilateral meeting with Pedersen in Geneva.

“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,” the statement said.

The sides also “reaffirmed their determination to support the work of the Constitutional Committee through continuous interaction with the Syrian parties and the UN Secretary-General’s Special Envoy for Syria in order to ensure its sustainable and effective work.”

In a joint press conference with Lavrov and Cavusoglu, Zarif said foreigners must not interfere in the work of the constitutional committee.

President Hassan Rouhani, the Russian president and Tayyip Erdogan, the Turkish president, met in September to discuss the Syrian conflict.

Talking before the meeting of the three presidents, Rouhani said cooperation among Iran, Russia, and Turkey, as the three guarantor states of the ceasefire regime in Syria, has promoted security in the war-ravaged country.

Putin said in August that Iran-Turkey-Russia talks have been “most effective” in tackling crisis in Syria.

According to Sputnik, in a meeting with Erdogan at Russia’s MAKS-2019 air show, Putin praised the results, achieved by the Astana format, which includes Russia, Turkey and Iran, calling it the “most effective mechanism” in resolving the Syrian crisis.

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

Iranian vice president attends SCO meeting in Uzbekistan

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Iranian First Vice President Es’haq Jahangiri visited Tashkent on Friday to attend a meeting of the member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

Jahangiri arrived at Islam Karimov international airport where he was welcomed by Uzbek Deputy Prime Minister Aziz Abdolhakov, the Iranian ambassador to Uzbekistan and some senior officials of the host country.

In addition to participation in the 18th meet-

ing of prime ministers of SCO states, Jahangiri is slated to hold meeting with the Uzbek prime minister and some foreign officials attending the meeting.

Upon arrival, the vice president said, “The Shanghai Cooperation Organization is one of the most important organizations which has thus far been formed in Asia. Some important countries including Russia and China are the organization. And, India and Pakistan have also recently been accepted as permanent

members of the organization.”

Highlighting his county’s intention to be a permanent member of the SCO, Jahangiri said, “The Shanghai Cooperation organization enjoys large capacities for economic, diplomatic and security cooperation based on which the members states can promote their cooperation.”

Transport and Urban Development Minister Mohammad Eslami and Trade and Industry Minister Reza Rahmani are accompanying Jahangiri in the two-day-long trip.

The SCO, or Shanghai Pact, is a Eurasian political, economic, and security alliance, the creation of which was announced on June 15, 2001 in Shanghai by the leaders of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.

The SCO charter, formally establishing the organization, was signed in June 2002 and entered into force on September 19, 2003.

Iran, Afghanistan, Mongolia, and Belarus are observer states of the organization.

Zarif: Subjecting construction workers to economic terrorism only manifests maximum failure of “maximum pressure”

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Following U.S. sanctions on Iran’s construction sector, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif wrote on his Twitter account on Friday that such moves show the “maximum failure of maximum pressure.”

The U.S. State Department issued a fact sheet Thursday singling out the sale of software used for industrial purposes, raw and semi-finished metals, graphite and coal used in Iran’s construction sector as targets for the new sanctions.

“Subjecting construction workers to economic terrorism only manifests maximum failure of “maximum pressure,” Zarif wrote.

Zarif added, “The U.S. can sanction every man, woman and child but Iranians will never submit to bullying.”

The Iranian chief diplomat called on the Trump administration that instead of digging itself “deeper” in such efforts, revise its “failed policies” and rejoin the 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

“Rather than dig itself deeper, US should abandon failed policies and return to JCPOA,” Zarif suggested.

In its fact sheet the State Department said Secretary of State Mike Pompeo had determined Iran’s construction sector was controlled directly or indirectly by Iran’s Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC).

The U.S. has previously imposed sanctions on a number of Iranian business companies and networks on the pretext of being tied to the IRGC after blacklisting it as a “terrorist” organization earlier this year. The IRGC is an official branch of the Iranian armed forces.

Also on Thursday, the State Department announced a separate batch of sanctions against what it described as the sale of “strategic material” being used “in connection with Iran’s nuclear, military, or ballistic missile programs.”

The State Department listed the sanctioned material as “stainless steel 304L tubes, MN40 manganese brazing foil, MN70 manganese brazing foil, and stainless steel CrNi60WTi ESR + VAR.”

The embargoes mark the latest round of Washington’s sweeping sanctions against Iran after the U.S. government unilaterally pulled out of the 2015 nuclear deal and reimposed sanctions lifted under the agreement last year.

The U.S. has imposed a number of additional embargoes since.

Earlier this week, a Riyadh-based group composed of the U.S. and its Arab allies introduced sanctions against 25 economic entities on the pretext of allegedly supporting the IRGC and Lebanon’s Hezbollah.

Humanitarian implications

Washington’s sanctions against Iran have had widespread negative effects on the lives of ordinary Iranians, pushing up commodity prices and denying Iranians essential imported goods such as certain medical drugs.

The new sanctions announced Thursday are set to make it further difficult for average Iranian households to attain affordable

housing after Washington’s coercive measures destabilized Iran’s real estate market last year.

They come a week after the U.S. Treasury announced “a new humanitarian mechanism” to allow “permissible trade” to support the Iranian people while maintaining its “maximum pressure” policy against the Iranian government.

The announcement was received with much skepticism in Iran which dismissed the purported humanitarian channel as “a farce” and a trap to target more Iranian companies and entities.

The new method, disguised as the humanitarian channel, asks foreign governments and banks to report on a monthly basis to Washington any link they have with Iranian financial institutions.

Many experts have said that the regulations will only enable the U.S. to pursue sanctions against the country with more efficiency, further imperiling “permissible trade” with the country.

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin was the first U.S. official to ride roughshod on the purported humanitarian channel on Monday when he pledged to increase sanctions on Iran after meeting Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Jerusalem al-Quds.

Netanyahu called on Washington to impose additional sanctions on Iranians, instead of facilitating humanitarian trade,



in order to “make the availability of cash more difficult for them.”

At a joint news conference, Mnuchin said then the US administration “will continue to ramp up more, more, more,” adding, “We are not doing this to hurt the people of Iran.”

Last November, however, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said it was in Iran’s best interests to toe the line and listen to Washington or else its people would pay the price.

Pompeo told BBC Persian that Iranian officials had to “make a decision that they want their people to eat.”

The Treasury said on Wednesday the U.S. and six Persian Gulf countries - Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE - had agreed to jointly impose sanctions on 25 corporations, banks and individuals allegedly linked to Iran’s IRGC and Lebanon’s Hezbollah.

“The U.S. can sanction every man, woman and child but Iranians will never submit to bullying,” Zarif says.

Cleric warns Iraqi, Lebanese nations of enemy's plots

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Tehran desk Friday prayer leader Ayatollah Mohammad-Ali Movahedi Kermani has warned the Iraqi and Lebanese nations of the enemy's conspiracies against their countries.

"The people of Iraq and Lebanon should not take the security of their country for granted and they should be vigilant in the face of the enemy's conspiracy to create sedition and rift among different ethnicities and groups in these two countries," Movahedi Kermani said on Friday, addressing worshippers.

He said the enemy is always waiting for the right time to foment unrest in the region.

He also said the main problems of the Iraqi and Lebanese people are economic issues and mismanagement.

Iraq and Lebanon have been the scene of protests recently.

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 October 25 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.

Iraqi President Barham Salih said on Thursday the country's embattled Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi is ready to step down if a replacement is found, emphasizing that a snap parliamentary election will be held once a new electoral law is passed.

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.

U.S. maximum pressure against Iran is wrong: Turkey

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said on Thursday that the United States' policy of maximum pressure against Iran is "wrong".

"We have said that the United States' policies on Palestine and Quds and various other issues are wrong. We also consider Washington's sanctions against Iran wrong," ISNA quoted him as saying in an interview with Arabic Al Jazeera.

He noted, "We say no to the United States' wrong policies." Turkish Ambassador to Tehran Derya Ors said on October 7 that his country is looking for ways to improve its trade ties with Iran despite the U.S. sanctions.

The U.S. State Department issued a fact sheet on Thursday announcing imposition of sanctions on sale of software used for industrial purposes, raw and semi-finished metals, graphite and coal used in Iran's construction sector.

The State Department said Secretary of State Mike Pompeo had determined Iran's construction sector was controlled directly or indirectly by Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), Press TV reported.

The State Department also announced a separate batch of sanctions against what it described as the sale of "strategic material" being used "in connection with Iran's nuclear, military, or ballistic missile programs."



The State Department listed the sanctioned material as "stainless steel 304L tubes, MN40 manganese brazing foil, MN70 manganese brazing foil, and stainless steel CrNi-60WTi ESR + VAR."

Iran's central bank governor, Abdolnaser Hemmati, called the sanctions repetitive.

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

Former U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry has called policy of "maximum pressure" on Tehran bankrupt.

"We have been pressuring them. Maximum pressure..."

we're seeing the unfolding of really a bankruptcy of approach," he told CBS News.

First Vice President Es'haq Jahangiri said on October 7 that pressure and sanction against Iran have failed.

He added, "Despite the United States' economic war against our country, the country is moving fast on the path of development."

Jahangiri said on October 1 that Iran has succeeded to defeat the United States' policy of "maximum pressure".

"We have defeated the United States' policy of maximum pressure and they are aware that this plan does not work against Iran," he said at the time.

In an interview with NPR published on September 22, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said that Iran will not succumb to economic pressure by Washington.

"Abandon the illusion that Iran can be defeated by pressure," he said.

"We are resisting an unprovoked aggression by the United States. I can assure you that the United States will not be able to bring us to our knees through pressure," he noted.

Zarif also told CGTN in an interview aired on September 22 that Washington's policy of sanction and pressure against Iran has not worked.

"The United States is running out of options. It is desperate. The policy of maximum pressure has not worked," he said.

MP: Iran to keep reducing JCPOA commitments if its interests not protected



POLITICAL TEHRAN — The Islamic Republic will continue to reduce its commitments under the 2015 nuclear agreement, also known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, if the other parties to the deal do not respect their obligations, says an MP.

"If the other parties to the deal do not respect their obligations, we will definitely take further steps to reduce our commitments under the deal," Deputy Chairman of the Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee Kamal Dehghani Firouzabadi said, Mehr reported on Friday.

The lawmaker also called on the remaining parties to the deal to stand up to Washington's unilateral pressure on Iran.

Iran and the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council — the United States, France, Britain, Russia and China — plus Germany signed the JCPOA

on July 14, 2015 and started implementing it on January 16, 2016.

Under the deal, Iran undertook to put limits on its nuclear program in exchange for the removal of economic and financial sanctions.

However, U.S. President Donald Trump pulled his country out of the international nuclear deal in May last year. He re-imposed the sanctions that were lifted under the deal and added new ones.

Since May 8, exactly a year after the U.S. withdrawal, Iran has rowed back on its nuclear commitments three times in compliance with paragraphs 26 and 36 of the JCPOA.

Iran says its reciprocal measures will be reversible as soon as Europe finds practical ways to shield the Iranian economy from unilateral U.S. sanctions, which were imposed last year when Washington withdrew from the nuclear deal.

diplomats and staff, hostage. They were held hostage for 444 days. The embassy in Tehran is now an Islamic cultural center and a museum. It stands as a symbol of the Iranian revolution, and is known in Iran as the "den of spies."

Marandi said Washington's interference in Iran's affairs led to a decisive response by the Iranian people, which eventually harmed the United States and destroyed its grandeur in the world.

Each year on November 4, Iranians take to the streets across the country to commemorate the anniversary of the U.S. embassy seizure.

Former MP: Reformist women to strongly contest upcoming parliamentary elections



POLITICAL TEHRAN — Fateme Rake'ei, a former parliamentarian, has said reformists, particularly females, are resolved to seriously contest the February parliamentary elections.

Rake'ei, who serves as the head of media working group of reformists' supreme front, said, "The 11th Majlis elections is a good chance for reformists to revive their social wealth."

"Women's 30 percent share in candidatureship list (of the reformists) should not be ignored. Women must participate in the upcoming elections remarkably."

She further quoted former president Mohammad Khatami asking, "Why 30 percent? The entire female experts should compete in the election because Majlis needs them."

Rake'ei was a member of the 6th Majlis (2000-2004) from Tehran.

In relevant remarks in mid-September, MP Mostafa Kavakebian said reformists would not boycott the upcoming parliamentary elections even if they see that their chances of victory is low.

"If for any reason we felt that we cannot have a serious competition and introduce candidates for all the seats, we will not boycott the elections and will announce to the people that they should participate and vote for any of the existing candidates they wish," Kavakebian said.

He also ruled out the possibility of forming a coalition between reformists and other factions for the elections, saying, "Our experience says that it is useless. In the elections of 1394 (2016) we put some people in our list but later regretted."

Parliamentary elections will be held on Feb. 21, 2020.

U.S. embassy takeover saved the Islamic Revolution: Prof. Marandi

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Mohammad Marandi, a professor at the University of Tehran, has said the takeover of the U.S. embassy in Tehran was a "legitimate" action that protected the Islamic Revolution and the country's territorial integrity.

In an interview with Mehr news agency published on Thursday, Marandi said the U.S. embassy had turned into a place to overthrow the new establishment and it would have become a big threat if it was not taken over.

On November 4, 1979, a group of Iranian students stormed the U.S. embassy in Tehran and took 52 Americans, including

diplomats and staff, hostage. They were held hostage for 444 days.

The embassy in Tehran is now an Islamic cultural center and a museum. It stands as a symbol of the Iranian revolution, and is known in Iran as the "den of spies."

Marandi said Washington's interference in Iran's affairs led to a decisive response by the Iranian people, which eventually harmed the United States and destroyed its grandeur in the world.

Each year on November 4, Iranians take to the streets across the country to commemorate the anniversary of the U.S. embassy seizure.

Pakistani minister stresses cooperation with Iran for regional peace

TEHRAN (FNA) — Pakistani Minister of State for States and Frontier Regions Shehryar Khan Afridi has underscored the need for Tehran and Islamabad to increase cooperation to establish peace and help the development of the regional states.

Afridi made the remarks in a meeting with Iranian Ambassador to Pakistan Mehdi Honardoost in Islamabad on Thursday.

He also said that Pakistan and Iran will collectively fight the menace of drugs. Honardoost, for his part, said that Iran will always stand shoulder to shoulder with Pakistan, adding that Iran values Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan's

efforts for regional peace and unity among the Islamic states.

He said both countries will also cooperate for regional peace and development.

In relevant remarks in April, Imran Khan in a meeting with Honardoost said that Islamabad was enthusiastic about having closer relations with Tehran.

Imran Khan said that his country attaches great importance to its ties with Iran.

"Pakistan attaches great significance to its neighbors, especially the Islamic Republic of Iran, which shares many interests and commonalities with Pakistan," the prime minister said.

Tehran calls on 'friendly' Malaysia to resolve banking restrictions on Iranians

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi has deplored banking restrictions on Iranians residing in Malaysia under the U.S. sanctions, which Iran refers to as "economic terrorism", calling on the "friendly state of Malaysia" to resolve the issue.

"Sadly, a number of Malaysian banks have placed a series of restrictions on opening accounts and offering banking services for Iranians, under the influence of the United States' economic terrorism," Mousavi told reporters on Thursday, the Foreign Ministry website reported.

"In this regard, our country's embassy in Malaysia has put the issue on the agenda in constant and intensive arrangements with Malaysia's government bodies and banking officials, and multiple negotiations have been held with the relevant authorities, and figuring out a solution and resolving the problem is still on the agenda," the spokesman added.

Citing a number of affected individuals, Reuters reported on Wednesday that Banks in Malaysia were closing the accounts of Iranian individuals and companies because of U.S. sanctions.

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.

Mousavi also said the banking restrictions have created problems for the presence and activities of Iranians in Malaysia, particularly the participation of Iranian elites and university students in Malaysia's scientific and academic sphere as well as those involved in the trade and business sector.

"We hope that the friendly state of Malaysia would work out solutions to settle the problem, considering the Malaysian government's good will and clear and recognized stances on the unilateral (U.S.) sanctions, and that the problems that have arisen in Iranians' bank accesses would be resolved with consultation and on the basis of the legal frameworks available for the issue," he added.

Malaysia's prime minister told reporters on Wednesday his nation was being forced to "make it difficult" for Iranians to live normal lives in the country.

"Our ties are very good with Tehran, but we face some very strong pressures from certain quarters, which you may guess," Mahathir Mohamad said, without naming where the pressure was coming from.

"We are forced to do this because if we don't, they will close our banks abroad. It's a kind of bullying by very powerful people."

Iran is in post-victory situation, Civil Defense Organization chief says

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Civil Defense Organization chief Gholam Reza Jalali says Iran has defeated the enemy in different fronts and is in a post-victory situation.

"Since last year, we have been witnessing a new type of threat, which is a combination of all the tools that the Americans have at their disposal," Jalali said prior to Friday Prayer sermons at Tehran University, Mehr reported.

He said Iran has reached a significant balance in foiling such challenges, and the Islamic Republic is currently passing through a phase of success against the enemies.

The general also said U.S. President Donald Trump's unilateral withdrawal from the 2015 nuclear deal was the U.S.'s first step in increasing the political pressure on Iran.

He further said that the defeated plot was followed by their military option which was also repelled by Iran's strong military might and firm response to their hawkishness.

On May 8, 2018, Trump announced that he would abandon the nuclear deal, reached between Iran and six world powers — the U.S., the UK, France, Russia, China and Germany, on July 14, 2015.

Under the deal, also known as the JCPOA, Iran had agreed to limit parts of its peaceful nuclear program in exchange for the removal of all nuclear-related sanctions.

Washington's new decision to restrict Iran's enriched uranium exports came after the Trump administration said in a statement on April 22 that, in a bid to reduce Iran's oil exports to zero, buyers of Iranian oil must stop purchases by May 1 or face sanctions.

Tehran has denounced the sanctions as an act of "economic terrorism" and "economic war" with the aim of starving the Iranian nation.

Intensifying pressure on Abdul Mahdi to resign

The pressure by political parties and figures such as Muqtada al-Sadr on the prime minister is taking place while the government has taken great steps to carry out reforms, and has also established good cooperation with the parliament. To this end, one of the latest government's reform plans includes training job seekers, reducing retirement age, cutting taxes for small businesses and industries and removing their income tax.

According to a recent statement issued by the government, it is stated in the new reform package that the Ministry of Energy should train job seekers and provide them with financial aid so that they can get a job in government organizations, or help them to launch small businesses. The government put Civil Servants Pension Organization in charge of developing a plan to reduce retirement age in government jobs and to provide more employment opportunities for the youth.

Last week, Abdul Mahdi released an important message about reforms, stating that the government had emphasized the importance of creating a special anti-corruption court to prosecute the corrupt.

In addition to domestic pressure, the U.S. applied its pressure since the very first days of the protests to force Iraq's prime minister to resign. Americans have played an important role in Iraq's uprising through their embassy in Baghdad.

The U.S. ambassador to Iraq, Matthew Tueller, is also involved in foreign pressure on the prime minister. This matter can be easily understood in the remarks of the ambassador about the recent unrest. For example, Tueller recently said that it "appears inevitable" that Abdul Mahdi would resign.

In addition, about three weeks ago the American newspaper Task and Purpose revealed Tueller's correspondence with Washington officials about Abdul Mahdi's resignation.

In view of all these things, it is clear that domestic and foreign pressure is intensifying on the government.

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	309660.8
IFX	3927.58

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	46,904 rials
GBP	54,303 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$59.78/b
WTI	\$54.45/b
OPEC Basket	\$61.24/b
Gold	\$1,511.35/oz
Silver	\$818.33/oz
Platinum	\$935.25/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

Kish Island hosting intl. building industry exhibition

ECONOMY TEHRAN - The 15th International Civil and Building Industry Exhibition (Kish Buidek 2019) kicked off on Wednesday in Kish Island in southern Iran, IRNA reported.



Some 105 Iranian companies as well as 15 foreign exhibitions from five different countries are displaying their latest achievements and services in the fields of construction technologies, equipment and building materials.

Contributing to construction industry and tourism's progress in Kish free trade zone and promoting special status of the zone in exporting goods and services and developing civil infrastructures are among the objectives of the four-day exhibition.

Russia's growth driven by agriculture and wholesale trade in 3Q19

By Ben Aris

Russia's growth was driven by growth in agriculture and rising wholesale trade in the third quarter of this year, reported Rosstat in a data release looking at the basic sectors of the economy on October 30.

The basic sectors output rose by 2.9% y/y in September, compared with 2.4% a month ago, Rosstat reported. As a result, output was up 2.6% y/y in 3Q19, accelerating from 1.7% y/y growth in 2Q19.

The "improvement in September was mostly the result of better growth in agriculture, wholesale and construction. The only sector that showed weaker dynamics was retail, where sales growth decelerated despite a pickup in real disposable income," Anton Stroutchenovski, Rodion Lomivorotov and Artem Vinogradov of Sberbank CIB said in a note.

The "stronger basic sectors output in 3Q19 means an acceleration in GDP growth from 0.9% y/y in 2Q19 close to 2% in 3Q19, which is in line with our forecast of 1.3% growth for this year."

Accelerating growth is welcome after the International Monetary Fund (IMF) recently downgraded Russia's growth outlook for the whole year for the fourth time this year to 1.1% from the previous 1.6%.

The pickup comes after a poor August where basic sector output rose by 2.4% y/y, decelerating from 2.5% in July. The slower growth in August was mostly attributable to the agriculture and wholesale trade sectors, which recovered some of their zing in September.

The basic sectors output was up 2.9% y/y in September and 2.6% y/y in 3Q19. Support came from stronger dynamics in agriculture (up 5.6% y/y in September, versus 3.4% growth in August), construction activity (0.8% y/y growth in September, up from 0.3% y/y growth in August) and wholesale trade (which rose by 4.6% y/y, up from 2.9% growth).

A slight deceleration

The only sector that showed a slight deceleration in September was retail trade, which added 0.7% y/y, versus 0.8% y/y growth in August (up 0.8% y/y in 3Q19 versus 1.6% y/y in 2Q19).

The slowing of retail is bad news as consumption is one of the three big economic drivers in Russia, but another of these, construction, has been improving in the last quarter.

Construction is gradually picking up as the government started to spend more on the so-called national projects in 3Q19: total expenditures were up 16% year-on-year. This provided some support to construction activity during the quarter, according to Sberbank.

"Since budget spending on national projects will likely remain high in 4Q19 and 2020, the positive trend in construction should continue. Year-over-year growth should further accelerate next year due to the low base of the beginning of 2019. Moreover, it is quite possible that the State Statistics Service will revise upward its construction activity data for 2019 next year, as some companies report statistics on construction at the end of the year, meaning that the monthly statistics could underestimate the actual pace of expansion," Sberbank said in a note.

Retail sales growth remains weak despite the pickup in real disposable income. Retail was the only sector that showed weaker growth in September than August, with sales up 0.7% y/y versus 0.8%. Both food and non-food sales slowed. Food sales rose 0.7% y/y in 3Q19, down from 1.6% y/y in 1H19, while 3Q non-food sales were up 1.0% y/y, versus 1.9% in 1H.

"One possible reason is the decelerating expansion in consumer loans (excluding mortgages), the growth of, which slowed to 22.9% y/y in August from 23.8% in June," Sberbank added.

(Source: intellinews.com)

Steel products output to reach 28m tons by March 2020

ECONOMY TEHRAN - Iran's steel products output is going to reach 28 million tons by the end of the current Iranian calendar year, IRNA reported, quoting deputy industry, mining and trade minister as saying on Thursday.

Speaking on the sidelines of the 15th International Exhibition for Mines, Construction Machinery and Related Industry and Equipment (Iran ConMin 2019), Javad Sarqini put the country's steel products output in the first half of the current calendar year (March, 21-September 22) at 13.2 million tons.

According to the official, in the mentioned time span, over six million tons of such products were exported to foreign destinations.

"Industry ministry is planning to increase the exports of steel products to 12 million tons by the end of the year [calendar year which ends on March 19, 2020]," Sarqini said.

The value of the exports of such commodities is expected to reach \$9 billion by yearend, the official added.



Back in August, the industry ministry released the data for steel production in the first four months of the current Iranian

calendar year (March 21-July 22), which indicated that the production of such commodities increased by 11.6 percent

from that of the same period of time in the past year.

According to the data, 7.204 million tons of such products were produced in the four-month period, rising from 6.453 million tons in the same time span of the previous year.

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

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

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

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

Tehran hosting 2 intl. exhibitions

ECONOMY TEHRAN - The 15th International Exhibition for Mines, Construction Machinery and Related Industry and Equipment (Iran ConMin 2019) and the 19th Iran International Electricity Exhibition (IEE 2019) kicked off on Thursday at Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds, IRNA reported.

As reported, some 464 domestic exhibitors along with 36 foreign companies from 13 countries including Italy, France, Germany, Russia, Japan, the United Kingdom, China and Turkey are attending IEE 2018 to showcase their latest achievements and products in the electricity industry.

According to the organizers, the number of knowledge-based companies attending the exhibition has doubled

this year compared to the previous event. In this edition of the exhibition, over 40 knowledge-based companies are presenting their achievements in the electricity industry.

As the region's leading trade fair for the construction machinery, mining equipment, building and natural stone sectors, Iran ConMin 2019, on the other hand, is hosting dozens of domestic and foreign exhibitors from various countries; most of which are small and medium enterprises.

The exhibition is set up in three main sectors: exploration, extraction and processing, each of which involves a variety of industries, mining equipment and machinery, various investor companies, financial and credit institutions, and consulting engineers.

Both of the events will be wrapped up on Sunday.



Iron ore concentrate output exceeds 17m tons in H1

ECONOMY TEHRAN - Production of iron ore concentrate in Iran during the first six months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21 - September 22) reached 17.408 million tons, IRNA reported on Thursday.

As reported, the data regarding the out-

put of major mineral production companies released in the first half of the current year indicated that in the same period, 30.405 million tons of iron ore was produced.

Production of iron ore concentrate during the first four months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21 - July 21) reached

15.903 million tons, registering a three percent rise compared to the same period last year.

As reported, the data regarding the output of major mineral production companies released in the first four months of the current year indicated that 15,903,165 tons of iron ore concentrate was produced.

Iran's export of iron ore concentrate rose 96.6 percent during the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20), compared to the preceding year.

The country exported 5.552 million tons of the product worth \$398 million during the mentioned period.

Should Germany spend more to revive its economy?

By Andrew Walker

The eurozone has a problem. Its biggest economy, Germany, is in or close to recession.

That has further stimulated a debate about whether Berlin should open the financial taps and spend more.

Should Germany launch a program of spending on, for example, its infrastructure?

Should the government ditch the policy of balancing the budget, known as the "black zero" and the related legal restriction on borrowing called the "debt brake"?

We had some clues about the impact of Germany's downturn with eurozone economic growth figures that showed growth of 0.2% in the third quarter of the year. That is sluggish though slightly better than many economists were expecting. We will have to wait two weeks for a read-out on Germany's own performance in the same period.

The eurozone as a whole might not be in recession, but inevitably the downturn in Germany affects the country's neighbors.

The question is what should policymakers - especially the German government and the European Central Bank (ECB) - do about the situation.

The ECB has already taken steps. It has cut its interest rates to ultra-low levels (to below zero for one of its key rates) and it is about to re-start the policy known as quantitative easing, buying financial assets with newly-created money.

But there are real doubts about how effective these measures will be. Many economists believe that monetary policy - what central banks do - has done about as much as it can in the eurozone.

Many argue that governments should do more. The current president of the ECB Mario Draghi and his successor Christine Lagarde, who takes over this week, have both taken that view.

In September, Ms Lagarde told the European Parliament: "Some countries in the euro area can use some of their fiscal space (government spending and taxation) in order to improve broadband infrastructure and set in place the public spending that will help fight the recession."

The most obvious example

She didn't name the countries that could afford to take



such action, but she did say it was now true of a majority of them. The most obvious example is Germany which has had a surplus in its public finances - with tax revenue higher than spending - since 2012.

The IMF's chief economist, Gita Gopinath, was explicit on this point in the foreword to the IMF's recent World Economic Outlook.

"A country like Germany should take advantage of negative borrowing rates to invest in social and infrastructure capital," she wrote.

Her reference to negative borrowing rates refers to the fact that Germany, and a number of other countries, can borrow at an interest rate of less than zero. In effect, the financial markets pay them to borrow.

Professor Peter Bofinger of Würzburg University, and a former member of Germany's economics experts council, agrees with Ms Gopinath that the country should take advantage of these below-zero borrowing costs to invest in infrastructure and social housing.

Currently he says net infrastructure investment - that is, after the wear and tear on existing infrastructure is factored in - is below zero.

The idea that Germany has a problem in this area might come as a bit of a surprise. But Prof Bofinger says he often sees the evidence himself. He describes travelling by train in the country as "a real adventure - whether the train will arrive, how many minutes and hours they are delayed, whether you get something to eat on the train".

"Transportation is in extremely bad shape and it is a

consequence of insufficient investment for many years."

He says it is a "tremendous mistake" not to use the opportunity presented by those favorable borrowing costs to address some of these problems.

He believes the debt brake and black zero policies don't make sense. If every major government followed the black zero policy, the "world economy would end up in a black hole," he says.

The G20 group

Currently among the G20 group of leading economies only two others - Russia and South Korea - have government budgets with a surplus.

But Professor Bofinger does not favor using the infrastructure program in the short term as a stimulus for a flagging economy. The construction industry is already working at full capacity.

What he favors is more generous tax treatment to encourage business investment, which he says is currently where German economic performance is weak.

But there are many defenders of Germany's cautious approach to managing its government finances.

Prof Clemens Fuest is the director of one of the country's leading economic research agencies, the IFO institute in Munich. He argues that Germany is not facing a serious downturn - though there might be a technical recession in the sense of two consecutive quarters of declining economic activity.

Germany has full employment and does not currently need further stimulus, he argues. There would, however, be a case for allowing the government to increase its borrowing if there were a sharper decline in economic activity.

He agrees that the country could benefit from infrastructure improvements but it is nonetheless in better shape than in many other European countries. The problem is not so much lack of money for projects, he says, but delays in implementing them often due to the objections raised by German residents.

He argues the debt brake was an appropriate response in 2009, around the time of the global financial crisis, when the government's debt was higher in relation to GDP and it remains a useful restraint.

(Source: bbc.com)

China's economy struggles as consumers cut back on spending

With home sales crashing, real estate agent Zhang Yonggang is tightening his belt, part of a plunge in Chinese consumer demand that is a bigger threat to economic growth than Beijing's tariff war with Washington.

As per marketwatch.com, Zhang, who works in the central city of Taiyuan, said his office sold no apartments last month after

Beijing tightened lending controls in July to rein in housing costs and debt. Zhang, 42 and married with a teenage son, said his income has fallen by half from a year ago.

Communist leaders are counting on consumers to power China's economy, replacing trade and investment. But shoppers, spooked by the tariff war and possible job losses, are

cutting spending on cars, real estate and other big-ticket purchases.

Economic growth sank to a three-decade low of 6% over a year earlier in the quarter ending in September. That is stronger than most major countries but a strain for Chinese companies that need to repay debt.

Factory activity shrank more than expect-

ed in October, according to an official trade group, the China Federation of Logistics & Purchasing. Analysts said that suggested an uptick a month earlier didn't mark the start of a recovery.

Communist leaders express confidence China can survive President Donald Trump's tariff hikes on its exports.

Syria calls for Iran's contribution to its electricity projects

E N E R G Y TEHRAN — Syrian Minister of Electricity, Mohammad Zuheir Kharboutli called for participation of Iranian companies in his country's major electricity projects, IRIB reported.

In a meeting with his Iranian counterpart Reza Ardakanian on the sidelines of Iran's International Electricity Exhibition (IEE 2019) on Wednesday, Kharboutli stressed the importance of Aleppo thermal power plant project and called for Iranian private sector's contribution to maintenance and rehabilitation of the power station.

The official also called for knowledge transfer and exchange of experiences with Syria for the production of electricity industry's required equipment.

Kharboutli also mentioned the establishment of a trilateral electricity network among Iran, Syria and Iraq, as well as construction of renewable power plants in his country, among other issues discussed at the meeting.

The Syrian minister also underlined the formation of a joint committee between the deputies of the two countries'



Iranian Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian (R) met with Syrian Minister of Electricity, Mohammad Zuheir Kharboutli (middle) in Tehran on Wednesday.

energy ministries in order to follow up on the implementation of a two-year plan to supply the whole Syria with electricity.

Iran, Syria to set up joint electricity task force
On the sideline of the meeting, Ardakanian

also announced that within the next two days, a joint task force between Iran and Syria will be formed to pursue joint projects in the electricity industry, IRNA reported.

"Setting up this working group will help to follow up on the two sides' joint projects more seriously and also to find solutions for any rising problems in the future co-operation," Ardakanian said.

Currently, Iranian companies are participating in several major projects in Syria's electricity industry among which construction of a major power plant in Latakia could be mentioned.

The project is being carried out by Iran's Mapna Group.

The deal for construction of Latakia power plant was finalized in October 2018 when the Mapna group, the largest energy construction company in Iran, signed an agreement with Syrian authorities to build the power plant and the gas pipeline that feeds it.

Zuheir Kharboutli traveled to Tehran on top of a delegation to visit the country's international electricity exhibition and to pursue previous discussions made with Iranian officials on cooperation in Syria's electricity sector.

Iran, Iraq power grids synchronized

I → maintaining and repairing the Iraqi network's equipment and training the Iraqi staff were among the measures which were decided to be implemented over the mentioned period," he added.
Back in October, Deputy Head of Iran Electricity Industry Syndicate said that power grids of Iran and Iraq were going to be interconnected by the end of 2019.

Payam Baqeri had also mentioned Iranian energy ministry's plans for reducing the Iraqi power grid losses, saying "Based on a deal between Iran and Iraq, Iraq's electricity grid losses, which is currently over 50 percent, will be reduced to 30 percent by the end of 2020."



Iraq is a strategic market for all Iranian industries including the energy sector and according to agreements reached between the two countries energy ministries, the two sides are going to execute joint projects in the electricity sector over three years (or three stages) of 2019, 2020 and 2021.

Since the Arab country has serious plans to modernize its electricity industry, Iran could be the best option to work in this area and to collaborate for increasing the efficiency of Iraqi power plants.

OPEC looking for another member

It's that time of the year again, the final OPEC+ meeting of 2019 has been scheduled and is ready to take place in December. Geopolitical tensions in the Middle East are running high and so are worries about the balance between supply and demand. The top concern, however, is whether the production cuts agreed last December will be extended or deepened once again.

As per baystreet.com, Russia is, of course, in the spotlight. The world's second-largest oil producer has made it a habit of demonstrating reluctance about any final commitment until the last moment when it agrees to cut. This time is no exception.

Russia's Deputy Energy Minister Pavel Sorokin this week told TASS in an interview it was too early to discuss deeper cuts.

The news immediately ignited the not-too-dormant worry of traders that Russia could play OPEC and leave the cuts altogether—a not too far-fetched scenario given Russian oil companies' general negative attitude towards the cuts. If the OPEC+ events from the last three years are any indication, Russia will not leave the cuts but may well use the meeting to politically maneuver.

But it's not just Russia. Nigeria earlier this month struck a deal with OPEC that will allow it to produce more oil even under a production cut regime. Reuters reported the news citing unnamed OPEC officials and noting that the decision was not made public. This development raises one important question: how long before other OPEC members ask for similar special treatment?

Besides Nigeria, there are at least two OPEC members that want to boost their oil production: Iraq and Libya. Libya has been exempted from all production cut agreements so far and, as its National Oil Corporation chairman Mustafa Sanalla said in July, it must remain exempt from any future cuts as well. Libya plans to increase its oil output to 1.6 million bpd from the current 1.3 million bpd.

■ OPEC's number-two exporter
Iraq is taking part in the cuts, but grudgingly, and it shows: OPEC's number-two exporter has consistently failed to stay within its production quota. Yet overall compliance continues to excel because of the forced production declines in sanction-stricken Venezuela and Iran. So, the obvious question is how long and how much OPEC+ will decide to cut. But there's a less obvious one that was put forward by Bloomberg's Julian Lee: why cut at all instead of turning the taps all the way back to maximum production?

Lee argued in a recent commentary that Saudi Arabia, for one, would benefit a lot more from a maximum-production approach than an extension of the cuts. U.S. shale oil growth is already slowing down because of international prices. If Saudi Arabia and its allies decide to reverse their price control approach, it will crash and burn. Of course, as prices crash so will the Saudi dream of a \$2-trillion valuation for Aramco, whose IPO is reportedly scheduled for a couple of days after the OPEC+ meeting. This means the otherwise perfectly reasonable scenario put forth by Lee and others is unlikely to play out. What is most likely to happen is either a preservation of the status quo or an agreement to extend the current cuts further into 2020.

Exxon Mobil profit halves on weak oil prices, chemicals margins

Exxon Mobil Corp's third-quarter profit nearly halved, hit by lower oil prices and weaker margins in refining and chemicals, with its three major business reporting lower year-over-year profit.

Earnings fell to \$3.17 billion, or 75 cents per share, in the quarter, from \$6.24 billion, or \$1.46 per share, a year earlier, Reuters reported on Friday citing the company.

It beat analysts' recently reduced expectations for earnings of 67 cents per share. The company last month warned results would be hurt by weaker chemicals and lower oil prices, prompting analysts to reduce estimates from 86 cents per share.

Exxon shares rose less than 1% in premarket trading on Friday. Exxon's results mirrored weaker results at rivals BP Plc (BP.L) and Royal Dutch Shell, which earlier this week indicated they might delay dividend increases or a buyback program because of low prices. Prices have fallen for oil and gas as U.S. shale producers keep pumping more oil amid slowing global consumption growth. The company's cash flow, a closely watched metric by investors, fell 24% from a year ago. Investors have been looking for the company to improve cash flow to cover its dividends and capital expenses.

Despite rising output from U.S. shale, profits in Exxon's oil and gas production unit were down 49% to \$2.17 billion on weaker prices, its lowest earnings in two years.

Its refining business earned \$1.23 billion, down 25% from last year, on lower margins for its gasoline and diesel.

Its chemicals business was down 66% year-over-year. Results have been weaker because of global overcapacity in plastics and higher project expenses.

Exports of oil products to Iraq continues despite unrests: OPEX

E N E R G Y TEHRAN — Spokesman of Iranian Oil, Gas and Petrochemical Products Exporters' Union (OPEX) said the country continues exporting oil products to Iraq despite the unrests in the Arab country, IRNA reported.

According to Hamid Hosseini, Iraqi Kurdistan Region is the main destination for most of Iran's oil products exports like gasoline and gas oil.

"Currently, we are only exporting the cargoes which were purchased in the previous offerings of such products at Iran Energy Exchange (IRENEX)," the official said.

National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) sold 450,000 tons of oil products worth \$160.656 million at the international ring of Iran Energy Exchange (IRENEX) during the week ended on September 20.

In the mentioned week, 168,000 tons of gasoline worth \$64.297 million as well as 162,500 tons of gasoil worth



\$73.964 million along with 20,000 tons of kerosene and 50,000 tons of liquefied petroleum gas were sold to foreign

buyers mostly from Iraq and Afghanistan.

Since the U.S.'s withdrawal from Iran's nuclear pact in May 2018, vowing to drive Iran's oil exports down to zero, the Islamic Republic has been taking various measures to counter U.S. actions and to lessen its economy's reliance on oil.

In the past few years, Iranian think-tanks and energy experts have been repeatedly stating that the country should increase its refining capacity in order to make up for the reduces in the crude oil sales by exporting oil products.

Since the first offering of oil products at IRENEX, foreign buyers, mainly from neighboring countries, expressed willingness for purchasing the products offered at this exchange market.

In this regard some foreign companies and businessmen from Iraq have been assigned the Iranian Commercial Code and, some have also referred to the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) for participation in these transactions.

Oil prices little changed but set for big weekly loss

Oil prices were little changed on Friday but set for a slide of about 4% on the week hurt by rising global supply and concerns about future demand.

As stated by reuters.com, Brent crude was down 12 cents, or 0.2%, at \$59.50 a barrel, on track for a drop of about 4% for the week.

WTI crude had edged up 3 cents to \$54.22 a barrel by 0742 GMT with the U.S. contract was set for a weekly loss of more than 4%.

Worries over global economic growth, along with oil demand, continue to haunt the market as the United States and China struggle to end

a 16-month dispute that has hit trade between the world's top two economies.

"There's renewed doubts about a U.S.-China trade deal... and at the same time we've had inventory lifts quite a lot more than expected at the crude level out of the U.S. this week," said Lachlan Shaw, head of commodity research at National Australia Bank.

The market received some respite from a run of poor economic data after an unexpected bounce in a private sector survey of Chinese manufacturing activity on Friday, which contrasted with dour results in an official survey Thursday.

Japanese factory activity, however, sank to more than a three-year low in October, data showed on Friday, in a fresh warning sign for the world's third-largest economy.

U.S. crude inventories rose by 5.7 million barrels in the week to Oct. 25, dwarfing analyst expectations for an increase of just 494,000 barrels.

A Reuters survey showed that oil prices are likely to remain under pressure this year and next. The poll of 51 economists and analysts forecast Brent crude would average \$64.16 a barrel in 2019 and \$62.38 next year.

A Reuters survey found output from Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) recovered in October from an eight-year low, with a rapid recovery in Saudi Arabian production from September attacks on its oil infrastructure offsetting losses in Ecuador and voluntary curbs under an international supply pact.

Meanwhile, U.S. crude production soared nearly 600,000 barrels per day in August to a record of 12.4 million, buoyed by a 30% increase in Gulf of Mexico output, government data released on Thursday showed.

Solar projects show rapid growth in Middle East

By Darrell Proctor

Solar power continues to make inroads in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), and other parts of the Persian Gulf region. The Middle East Solar Industry Association (MESIA) in late September said it expects at least \$15 billion of solar power projects will enter operation in the region in the next five years.

MESIA has estimated the region's solar power market is worth more than \$20 billion. Solar photovoltaic (PV) technology is now the "most competitive form of power generation" in the Persian Gulf region, according to a report released earlier this year from the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA).

The IRENA report said Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (PGCC) countries, which include the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia, plan to install a total of almost 7 GW of new power generation capacity from renewable sources by the early 2020s.

Saudi Arabia earlier this year advanced to a second phase of its solar procurement plan, opening bidding for seven projects totaling more than 1.5 GW of capacity. Oman has begun the procurement process for the rollout of at least 1 GW of residential solar generation. Reports earlier this year said Algeria had announced tenders for 2 GW of solar generation.

Mina Mesbahi, a research analyst at Solarplaza International B.V., a Rotterdam, Netherlands-based group that organizes solar PV events worldwide, told the Saudi Gazette English-language newspaper that the UAE is the leading market with solar projects either operating or in development.

■ The top five markets

The "top five markets in the MENA region with the largest operational and in-the-pipeline solar projects include the UAE (58%), Egypt (23%), Jordan (10%), and Morocco (6%)," along with Iran (3%). "Almost all the countries in this region experience an all year-round sunshine, providing breeding grounds for solar development. Accounting for almost 3 GW of operational capacity, solar seems to only loom large for MENA," Mesbahi said.

The 1.177-MW Noor Abu Dhabi solar project in the United Arab Emirates, which began commercial operation in late June, is among the world's largest solar power developments.

MESIA has said that the MENA region is expected to need



at least 267 GW of additional power generation capacity by 2030, an increase of 66% from today's generation capacity level.

A Solarplaza International research team recently compiled a list of the region's largest solar power projects, led by the 1,177-MW Noor Abu Dhabi (Figure 1) project in the UAE, which came online in late June. Second on the list is the 200-MW second phase of the Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Solar Park in the UAE (Editor's note: The third phase of this project, an 800-MW installation, is scheduled to come online in 2020. The fourth phase of the project has a generation capacity of 700 MW, and is scheduled to be commissioned in phases beginning next year).

Other large projects include the 186-MW Benban Solar Complex, and the 166.5-MW Benban Solar Park in Aswan, both in Egypt. Mesbahi's group in a recent white paper noted the challenges with operating solar facilities in the region.

The "dusty desert conditions make for challenging and risky operations," the report says, noting that solar farms in much of the region are vulnerable to sandstorms that can scour or obscure solar panels, leaving them in need of cleaning.

"Good news is that these risks and challenges can be overcome given the advancements in solar technology. After all, if the panels are covered with dust and sand, they aren't receiving as many rays of sunlight.

Additionally, sand and the UV (ultraviolet) light have an adverse effect on the performance of the panels and cause backsheet degradation."

Saudi Arabia, meanwhile, on Sept. 29 announced it has opened applications for loans from a 105 billion riyal (\$28

billion) Saudi Industrial Development Fund, known as Mutjadedda. The program will provide loans of as much as 1.2 billion riyals (\$320 million) to companies involved in development of renewable energy projects, as the country tries to diversify its energy industry away from a reliance on crude oil.

■ Financing of projects

The fund also is available for financing of projects for renewable energy from other industrial sectors. "Whether you're in manufacturing, agriculture or retail, if you want to deploy renewable energy, we will finance it," Ibrahim Almojel, the fund's director general, said in a statement. "For renewables to be adopted in the kingdom, we need to support it."

The fund was first created more than 40 years ago, but it is being revamped as part of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's plan for life after oil in Saudi Arabia, a program called Vision 2030. The Saudi government in January raised the fund's capital resources by about 60%.

The World Bank earlier this year said, "Primary energy demand in the (Middle East) region is expected to continue to rise at an annual rate of 1.9 percent through 2035," and several countries have begun embracing solar and wind as a way to diversify their power generation mixes, which are heavily dependent on natural gas and oil.

Saudi Arabia also is exporting its solar PV technology; Saudi-based ACWA Power in September was awarded a contract to develop two projects, with total generation capacity of 250 MW, in Ethiopia.

Uppendra Tripathy, head of the Delhi, India-based International Solar Alliance (ISA), a group of 122 "sun-rich" countries, welcomed Saudi Arabia as a member earlier this year, telling Arab News, the "decades of experience in energy policy, infrastructure, investment and financing that Saudi Arabia will bring on board will be incredibly valuable for ISA members. This will help member countries to promote solar-energy deployment and implement the Paris (climate) accord."

As a prominent member of OPEC (Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries), Saudi Arabia has always played a major role in global energy markets. The Saudi government is now sending a clear message to the global community that it can play a prominent role in the future of solar energy."

(Source: powermag.com)

By Adam Dentor

ILFAROSULMONDO — During the 2016 presidential election and Facebook's activities in this period, many things happened that raised the sensitivity of public opinion.

In 2017, a review was carried out in the commercial documents of 19 countries with easy taxation and ownership laws, such as Malta, Virgin Island, and Isle of Man. It revealed that some of these 13.4 million documents are related to commercial-financial activities of Moscow companies involved in the U.S. election. The documents are related to Russian agencies' investments and known as "Paradise Papers". The documents exposed unusual activities of companies in technology and IT fields, and Facebook has been the focus of attention as a global media from the beginning.

A review related to main sources of investment in Facebook and Twitter revealed that Yuri Milner's financial resources and investments in Facebook were supported by Russian public and semi-public companies.

Some companies were involved in what Facebook and Twitter been through, such as Gazprom investment holding, VTB Capital, VTB Bank, Kanton Services, as well as Digital Sky Technologies (DST) and DTS Global, now belong to Yuri Milner.

Gazprom, one of main powers in kremlin, has invested about \$920 million in Facebook.

VTB Capital, a foreign investment element of VTB Bank of Russia, has invested \$ 191 million in Twitter.

Gazprom and VTB Bank are run by Putin, and also are under the sanction of the U.S. Department of Treasury. These companies intended to more affect public opinion on Facebook and Twitter rather than economic interests during the 2016 election.

Mail.ru and Digital Sky Technologies, which have been operating as Mail.ru group since 2011,

Facebook and privacy are the victims of the 2016 election



have been other Milner's investment resources in the Facebook project.

Mail.ru is the largest social-communication company in Russia founded by Milner, and benefits from extensive relations with Kremlin and Russian security agencies by Alisher Usmanov. It could get to the U.S. technology and public opinion by Silicon Valley's tech investor Milner.

Kanton Services, which was registered in Virgin Island, has been noted by Russian oligarch and one of senior managing director of Gazprom Alisher Usmanov since 2005. It finally were owned by him in 2009 with \$ 920 million investment.

Yuri Milner could buy several billion dollars of Facebook stock by his companies, including DTS Investment 3 and DSTUSA2, and through the gained resources from four Russian companies in 2011 to 2012.

Kanton Services, with a majority stock in DT-SUSA2, eventually took over management and control of Facebook shares trading. It also played an important role in purchasing Twitter shares.

As the Ukrainian conflict began in November 2013, Milner and Usmanov withdrew their shares of \$1.7 billion from Facebook. They did so because a part of their investments in Facebook was provided by Russian public companies Gazprom and VTB Bank, and they were fearful of possible future sanctions by the U.S. six months later, on March 6, 2013, Obama imposed his sanctions against

Russia due to the occupation of Crimea.

Milner withdrew more than \$ 5 billion of his shares by timely selling 9% of stock.

In 2011, Milner invested \$ 380 million in twitter through his company DTSUSA3, and achieved 5% of twitter's total stock. At least half of this huge sum was financed through Russia's second-largest public bank VTB.

On May 7, 2014, six month after Twitter's initial public offering, VT Bank transferred its majority stock to Kanton Services. Then Kanton Services, which is a Russian Intermediate company, and DTS sold their shares on Twitter at the same time.

Behind Milner's investment maze on Facebook and Twitter, there are details that reveal kremlin's hidden strategic goals using Gazprom and VT Bank.

On the other hand, the controversial advocator of Trump Peter Thiel is related to Facebook's privacy scandal and the U.S. National Security Agency (NSA).

Peter Thiel was one of the first foreign investors in Facebook, who involved in the Facebook project since 2004, and then was elected as a member of board of directors. He invested more in Facebook after entering it.

Thiel also has a friendly relationship with Facebook CEO Zuckerberg. After the Cambridge Analytica and Facebook scandal that led to Zuckerberg's questioning by the Senate, a strange and strong relationship between Cambridge Analytica and Palantir was revealed. Then it was founded out that these companies collaborating with each other. In this collaboration, Cambridge Analytica could access to the information of more than 87 million users. This work was carried out with the help of Palantir in receiving the data from Facebook and analyzing American audience during the 2016 election in favor of Trump. Cambridge Analytica was shut down after the revelation of this scandal.

By William J. Astore and Tom Engelhardt

ANTIWAR — We're in an age in which the president who miraculously "captured" ISIS in "a month," or so he recently claimed, and has tweeted his fervent desire to end America's "endless wars" and "bring the troops home" can only imagine increasing an already astronomical military budget. (Since May, by the way, at least 14,000 more American troops have actually been deployed to the Middle East.) And oh yes, he's hot to create a whole new service to add to the Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, and Coast Guard, a Space Force guaranteed to ensure yet more conflicts in new places in the decades to come. Meanwhile, using his "great and unmatched wisdom," he's dealt with the almost 18-year-old Afghan War by cancelling peace talks with the Taliban at the last moment, even as he's praised the U.S. military for its increasing destructiveness in that country. (The Taliban, he swore, had "never been hit harder.") He's also ratcheted up the possibility of war with Iran, while drone strikes across the Middle East have soared far above the Obama-era level. Of course, he did end the U.S. role in Syria in a fount of bloodshed and horror by withdrawing all 1,000 U.S. Special Operations forces from that country and bringing them home. (Oh wait, perhaps 150 of them are actually going to stay at Al-Tanf, a base in southern Syria, and most of the rest will evidently just be moved to Iraq.) Meanwhile, in a thoroughly peaceable manner, he's ordered almost 3,000 more American troops, two squadrons of jet fighters, and two Patriot missile batteries to Saudi Arabia, another obvious move to end this country's wars. (And what's more, the Saudis will pay!)

That's the antiwar president of the United States. Now, add in the rest of the official Washington crew, all belonging to "the indispensable nation," and whatever you do, don't forget various increasingly assertive retired generals and admirals. For instance, consider the general Donald Trump once loved to death for his moniker "Mad Dog," former Secretary of Defense James Mattis. The president recently called him "the world's most overrated general." Mattis responded, "I earned my spurs on the battlefield... Donald Trump earned his spurs in a letter from a doctor this way: bone spurs."

By the way, in the midst of such chaos, you can check out Democratic presidential debates (or Republican commentaries) until hell freezes over and, as innocents continue to die from Syria to Afghanistan and beyond, here's a topic you won't find discussed anywhere: a growing American militarism at home in this era of never-ending wars and soaring national security state budgets. That's why we're lucky to have historian and retired Air Force Lieutenant Colonel William Astore, a TomDispatch regular, offer a rare assessment of the damage our wars are doing not in distant parts of the Earth, but right here in this country, however unnoticed. ~

When Americans think of militarism, they may imagine jackbooted soldiers goose-stepping through the streets as flag-waving crowds exult; or, like our president, they may think of enormous parades featuring troops and missiles and tanks, with warplanes soaring overhead. Or nationalist dictators wearing military uniforms encrusted with medals, ribbons, and badges like so many barnacles on a sinking ship of state. (Was Donald Trump only joking recently when he said he'd like to award himself a Medal of Honor?) And

what they may also think is: that's not us. That's not America. After all, Lady Liberty used to welcome newcomers with a torch, not an AR-15. We don't wall ourselves in while bombing others in distant parts of the world, right?

But militarism is more than thuggish dictators, predatory weaponry, and steely-eyed troops. There are softer forms of it that are no less significant than the "hard" ones. In fact, in a self-avowed democracy like the United States, such softer forms are often more effective because they seem so much less insidious, so much less dangerous. Even in the heartland of Trump's famed base, most Americans continue to reject nakedly bellicose displays like phalanxes of tanks rolling down Pennsylvania Avenue. But who can object to celebrating "hometown heroes" in uniform, as happens regularly at sports events of every sort in twenty-first-century America? Or polite and smiling military recruiters in schools? Or gung-ho war movies like the latest version of *Midway*, timed for Veterans Day weekend 2019 and marking America's 1942 naval victory over Japan, when we were not only the good guys but the underdogs?

What do I mean by softer forms of militarism? I'm a football fan, so one recent Sunday afternoon found me watching an NFL game on CBS. People deplore violence in such games, and rightly so, given the number of injuries among the players, notably concussions that debilitate lives. But what about violent commercials during the game? In that one afternoon, I noted repetitive commercials for SEAL Team, SWAT, and FBI, all CBS shows from this quietly militarized American moment of ours. In other words, I was exposed to lots of guns, explosions, fistcuffs, and the like, but more than anything I was given glimpses of hard men (and a woman or two) in uniform who have the very answers we need and, like the Pentagon-supplied police in Ferguson, Missouri, in 2014, are armed to the teeth. ("Models with guns," my wife calls them.)

Got a situation in Nowhere-land? Send in the Navy SEALs. Got a murderer on the loose? Send in the SWAT team. With their superior weaponry and can-do spirit, Special Forces of every sort are sure to win the day (except, of course, when they don't, as in America's current series of never-ending wars in distant lands).

And it hardly ends with those three shows. Consider, for example, this century's update of *Magnum P.I.*, a CBS show featuring a kickass private investigator. In the original *Magnum P.I.* that I watched as a teenager, Tom Selleck played the character with an easy charm. *Magnum's* military background in Vietnam was acknowledged but not hyped. Unsurprisingly, today's *Magnum* is proudly billed as an ex-Navy SEAL.

Cop and military shows are nothing new on American TV, but never have I seen so many of them, new and old, and so well-armed. On CBS alone you can add to the mix *Hawaii Five-O* (yet more models with guns updated and up-armed from my youthful years), the three NCIS (Naval Criminal Investigative Service) shows, and *Blue Bloods* (ironically starring a more grizzled and less charming Tom Selleck) — and who knows what I haven't noticed? While today's cop/military shows feature far more diversity with respect to gender,

ethnicity, and race compared to hoary classics like *Dragnet*, they also feature far more gunplay and other forms of bloody violence.

Look, as a veteran, I have nothing against realistic shows on the military. Coming from a family of first responders — I count four firefighters and two police officers in my immediate family — I loved shows like *Adam-12* and *Emergency!* in my youth. What I'm against is the strange militarization of everything, including, for instance, the idea, distinctly of our moment, that first responders need their very own version of the American flag to mark their service. Perhaps you've seen those thin blue line flags, sometimes augmented with a red line for firefighters. As a military veteran, my gut tells me that there should only be one American flag and it should be good enough for all Americans. Think of the proliferation of flags as another soft type of up-arming (this time of patriotism).

Speaking of which, whatever happened to *Dragnet's* Sergeant Joe Friday, on the beat, serving his fellow citizens, and pursuing law enforcement as a calling? He didn't need a thin blue line battle flag. And



in the rare times when he wielded a gun, it was .38 Special. Today's version of Joe looks a lot more like G.I. Joe, decked out in body armor and carrying an assault rifle as he exits a tank-like vehicle, maybe even a surplus MRAP from America's failed imperial wars.

Besides TV shows, movies, and commercials, there are many signs of the increasing embrace of militarized values and attitudes in this country. The result: the acceptance of a military in places where it shouldn't be, one that's over-celebrated, over-hyped, and given far too much money and cultural authority, while becoming virtually immune to serious criticism.

Let me offer just nine signs of this that would have been so much less conceivable when I was a young boy watching reruns of *Dragnet*:

1. Roughly two-thirds of the federal government's discretionary budget for 2020 will, unbelievably enough, be devoted to the Pentagon and related military functions, with each year's "defense" budget coming ever closer to a trillion dollars. Such colossal sums are rarely debated in Congress; indeed, they enjoy wide bipartisan support.

2. The U.S. military remains the most trusted institution in our society, so say 74% of Americans surveyed in a Gallup poll. No other institution even comes close, certainly not the presidency (37%) or Congress (which recently rose to a monumental 25% on an impeachment high). Yet that same military has produced disasters or quagmires in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria, Somalia, and elsewhere. Various "surges" have repeatedly failed. The Pentagon itself can't even pass an audit. Why so much trust?

3. A state of permanent war is considered America's new normal. Wars are now automatically treated as multi-generational with little concern for how permawar might degrade our democracy. Antiwar protesters are rare enough to be lone voices crying in the wilderness.

4. America's generals continue to be treated, without the slightest irony, as "the adults in the room." Sagas like former Secretary of Defense James Mattis (cited glowingly in the recent debate among 12 Democratic presidential hopefuls) will save America from unskilled and tempestuous politicians like one Donald J. Trump. In the 2016 presidential race, it

not bliss. By tacitly giving the military a blank check, issued in the name of securing the homeland, Americans embrace that military, however loosely, and its misuse of violence across significant parts of the planet. Should it be any surprise that a country that kills so wantonly overseas over such a prolonged period would also experience mass shootings and other forms of violence at home?

7. In that context, consider the militarization of the weaponry in those very hands, from .50 caliber sniper rifles to various military-style assault rifles. Roughly 15 million AR-15s are currently owned by ordinary Americans. We're talking about a gun designed for battlefield-style rapid shooting and maximum damage against humans. In the 1970s, when I was a teenager, the hunters in my family had bolt-action rifles for deer hunting, shotguns for birds, and pistols for home defense and plinking. No one had a military-style assault rifle because no one needed one or even wanted one. Now, worried suburbanites buy them, thinking they're getting their "man card" back by toting such a weapon of mass destruction.

8. Paradoxically, even as Americans slaughter each other and themselves in large numbers via mass shootings and suicides (nearly 40,000 gun deaths in 2017 alone), they largely ignore Washington's overseas wars and the continued bombing of numerous countries. But ignorance is

seemed that neither candidate could run without being endorsed by a screaming general (Michael Flynn for Trump; John Allen for Clinton).

5. The media routinely embraces retired U.S. military officers and uses them as talking heads to explain and promote military action to the American people. Simultaneously, when the military goes to war, civilian journalists are "embedded" within those forces and so are dependent on them in every way. The result tends to be a cheerleading media that supports the military in the name of patriotism — as well as higher ratings and corporate profits.

6. America's foreign aid is increasingly military aid. Consider, for instance, the current controversy over the aid to Ukraine that President Trump blocked before his infamous phone call, which was, of course, partially about weaponry. This should serve to remind us that the United States has become the world's foremost merchant of death, selling far more weapons globally than any other country. Again, there is no real debate here about the morality of profiting from such massive sales, whether abroad (\$55.4 billion in arms sales for this fiscal year alone, says the Defense Secu-

ity Cooperation Agency) or at home (a staggering 150 million new guns produced in the USA since 1986, the vast majority remaining in American hands).

9. Even as Americans "support our troops" and celebrate them as "heroes," the military itself has taken on a new "warrior ethos" that would once — in the age of a draft army — have been contrary to this country's citizen-soldier tradition, especially as articulated and exhibited by the "greatest generation" during World War II.

What these nine items add up to is a paradigm shift as well as a change in the zeitgeist. The U.S. military is no longer a tool that a democracy funds and uses reluctantly. It's become an alleged force for good, a virtuous entity, a band of brothers (and sisters). America's foremost missionaries overseas and most lovable and admired heroes at home. This embrace of the military is precisely what I would

call soft militarism. Jackbooted troops may not be marching in our streets, but they increasingly seem to be marching unopposed through — and occupying — our minds.

■ The Decay of Democracy

As Americans embrace the military, less violent policy options are downplayed or disregarded. Consider the State Department, America's diplomatic corps, now a tiny, increasingly defunded branch of the Pentagon led by Mike Pompeo (celebrated by Donald Trump as a tremendous leader because he did well at West Point). Consider President Trump as well, who's been labeled an isolationist, and his stunning inability to truly withdraw troops or end wars. In Syria, U.S. troops were recently redeployed, not withdrawn, not from the region anyway, even as more troops are being sent to Saudi Arabia. In Afghanistan, Trump sent a few thousand more troops in 2017, his own modest version of a mini-surge and they're still there, even as peace negotiations with the Taliban have been abandoned. That decision, in turn, led to a new surge (a "near record high") in U.S. bombing in that country in September, naturally in the name of advancing peace. The result: yet higher levels of civilian deaths.

How did the U.S. increasingly come to reject diplomacy and democracy for militarism and proto-autocracy? Partly, I think, because of the absence of a military draft. Precisely because military service is voluntary, it can be valorized. It can be elevated as a calling that's uniquely heroic and sacrificial. Even though most troops are drawn from the working class and volunteer for diverse reasons, their motivations and their imperfections can be ignored as politicians praise them to the rooftops. Related to this is the Rambo-like cult of the warrior and warrior ethos, now celebrated as something desirable in America. Such an ethos fits seamlessly with America's generational wars. Unlike conflicted draftees, warriors exist solely to wage war. They are less likely to have the questioning attitude of the citizen-soldier.

Don't get me wrong: reviving the draft isn't the solution; reviving democracy is. We need the active involvement of informed citizens, especially resistance to endless wars and budget-busting spending on American weapons of mass destruction. The true cost of our previously soft (now possibly hardening) militarism isn't seen only in this country's quickening march toward a militarized authoritarianism. It can also be measured in the dead and wounded from our wars, including the dead, wounded, and displaced in distant lands. It can be seen as well in the rise of increasingly well-armed, self-avowed nationalists domestically who promise solutions via walls and weapons and "good guys" with guns. ("Shoot them in the legs," Trump is alleged to have said about immigrants crossing America's southern border illegally.)

Democracy shouldn't be about celebrating overlords in uniform. A now-widely accepted belief is that America is more divided, more partisan than ever, approaching perhaps a new civil war, as echoed in the rhetoric of our current president. Small wonder that inflammatory rhetoric is thriving and the list of this country's enemies lengthening when Americans themselves have so softly yet fervently embraced militarism. With apologies to the great Roberta Flack, America is killing itself softly with war songs.

Former U.S. National Security Advisor Trouble for the White House

Does Bolton shoot at Trump?

By Saeed Sobhani



TEHRAN—Donald Trump is concerned about the testimony of former US National Security Adviser John Bolton against himself in the Ukraine Gate case. The US President knows well that Bolton is ready to take such action against the White House! However, Donald Trump is aware of John Bolton's sentiments and sensitivities. A former US national security adviser is seeking revenge on Trump. Here's a review of the latest analyses of the Trump-Bolton relationship:

Waiting for Bolton: A Capital Speculates on What He Will Say

New York Times reported that As the House impeachment inquiry enters its second month, there may be no witness investigators want to question more than John R. Bolton, the president's former national security adviser.

The message that John R. Bolton, President Trump's former national security adviser, sent supporters of his newly reopened political action committee last week raised as many questions as it answered in a capital consumed by impeachment. Mr. Bolton implicitly criticized Mr. Trump's foreign policy, declaring that "despite all the friendly notes and photo ops, North Korea isn't our friend and never will be." But he also wrote that the nation's security "is under attack from within," citing "radicalized Democrats."

The conflicting signals were maddening. After either resigning or being fired last month depending on whose version is to be believed, is Mr. Bolton so estranged from Mr. Trump that he might provide damaging testimony to House investigators? Or does he share the president's view of out-of-control Democrats pursuing an illegitimate impeachment out of partisan excess? The question is more than academic. As the House inquiry enters its second month, there may be no one in Washington that investigators want to question more than Mr. Bolton. His name has come up repeatedly in testimony that has depicted him resisting Mr. Trump's Ukraine pressure campaign and warning that Rudolph W. Giuliani, the president's personal lawyer, was a "hand grenade who's going to blow everybody up."

But even as he has been at the center of the discussion during the impeachment inquiry, the outspoken former Fox News commentator has remained uncharacteristically silent. To Democrats who vilified him for years as an ultraconservative warmonger, suddenly Mr. Bolton has emerged as a much-sought witness who in the narrative they are assembling may have made a principled stand against Mr. Trump's abuse of power to advance domestic political goals.

"What it says is this is not about competing Republican versus Democratic visions of American foreign policy," said Representative Tom Malinowski, Democrat of New Jersey. "This is about whether our foreign policy should be made in the national interest or in the personal political interests of the president."

It may take longer for investigators to find out. Mr. Bolton shares a lawyer with his former deputy and longtime ally, Charles H. Kupperman, who went to court on Friday to ask a judge to decide whether he should obey a House subpoena or a White House order to not testify. Mr. Bolton presumably might follow the same course.

If and when he does testify, Mr. Bolton appears positioned to answer fundamental questions surrounding the events that have led the president to the edge of impeachment. As the national security adviser, Mr. Bolton was charged with managing the government's foreign policy apparatus. Yet Mr. Trump and Mr. Giuliani worked around Mr. Bolton to try to pressure Ukraine to investigate Democrats. At the same time, the president froze \$391 million in American assistance to the former Soviet republic.

"According to the testimony given to Congress so far, Bolton was a central figure in trying to prevent any delay in releasing foreign aid to Ukraine," said John Yoo, a University of Berkeley law school professor and senior Justice Department official under President George W. Bush. "I cannot see how any responsible investigation would not seek Bolton's appearance."

But he added that the White House would presumably "go to the mat" to fight any effort to interview Mr. Bolton. "If the White House were to fight the House impeachment on executive privilege grounds, Bolton would be the hill on which to die," Mr. Yoo said. "The Trump White House could claim not just that the impeachment investigation is illegitimate, which is its current line of defense, but that it is defending the right of future presidents to have an effective White House and to conduct a successful foreign policy."

A Yale-trained lawyer, Mr. Bolton brought years of experience when Mr. Trump made him his third national security adviser in March 2018. Mr. Bolton served in both the Justice Department, where he headed the civil division under President Ronald Reagan, and the State Department, where he was an assistant secretary of state under the first President George Bush and an under secretary of state and ambassador to the United Nations under the second Mr. Bush.

While Mr. Trump appreciated his firebrand style of politics on Fox News, Mr. Bolton saw his job as keeping Mr. Trump from making unwise deals with outlier states like North Korea or Iran, leading to friction. Mr. Bolton struggled with Secretary of State Mike Pompeo for control of foreign policy and left just a day before Mr. Trump agreed to restore the frozen aid to Ukraine under pressure from Congress.

With his trademark bushy mustache and unapologetic conservative views, Mr. Bolton, 70, has built a following on the right, even flirting in the past with running for president himself. His polit-

ical action committee has donated more than \$1.5 million to candidates since 2014 and spent another \$6 million to promote his policy views related to national security. Since leaving Mr. Trump's team last month, Mr. Bolton has already identified five Republican senators and congressmen for whom he plans to raise \$50,000 each and, as reported by Bloomberg, sent out the solicitation email on Thursday that seemed to provide conflicting clues. He has also rejoined the Rhone Group, a private equity firm where he worked before the White House, and was spotted in South Korea in recent days talking with investors. And he is reportedly thinking about writing a book.

The combination of his pedigree and the possibility that he really does have incriminating information about Mr. Trump makes him a particularly appealing witness to Democrats. The prospect of one of the nation's most visible foreign policy conservatives testifying against his former boss would, in their view, underscore the significance of Mr. Trump's transgressions. But some Democrats warn that they cannot be sure what he will say once he sits for an interview. "You just can't work from assumptions," said Representative Mike Quigley, Democrat of Illinois and a member of the House Intelligence Committee. "I don't know what he had. I don't know if he has value. I don't know if he is willing to talk about it."

The president's defenders dismiss the idea that Mr. Bolton could hurt Mr. Trump. "I don't care what Bolton says," Senator Lindsey Graham, Republican of South Carolina and a close ally of the president's, said on Fox News on Thursday. If the Ukrainians did not know the president had held up their aid when he was pressing them to investigate Democrats, Mr. Graham said, there is no impeachable offense. "You can't have a crime unless you have a victim. There is no victim here."

Democrats disagree with that logic, saying it can still be an impeachable offense to pressure a foreign power to provide dirt on a political opponent regardless of when the Ukrainians knew about the suspension of the assistance. Moreover, The New York Times, citing interviews and documents, reported that in fact word of the aid freeze had gotten to high-level Ukrainian officials by the first week in August, earlier than previously known.

Mr. Bolton has hired Charles J. Cooper, one of Washington's best-known lawyers and a colleague and friend since the Reagan administration, when Mr. Cooper was an assistant attorney general. Mr. Cooper, whose firm's motto is "victory or death," also represented former Attorney General Jeff Sessions, another Trump adviser who fell out with the president.

According to testimony presented so far, Mr. Bolton bristled at efforts by Mr. Giuliani to bypass the national security process as he pressured Ukraine to investigate former Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr. and a conspiracy theory that Ukrainians, not Russians, intervened in the 2016 election, and did so to boost Democrats, not Republicans. Mr. Trump's former homeland security adviser repeatedly told the president that the theory had been "completely debunked."

Mr. Bolton met on July 10 with Ukrainian officials and Gordon D. Sondland, a political appointee serving as ambassador to the European Union, who was working with Mr. Giuliani and Mick Mulvaney, the acting White House chief of staff, on the issue. When the investigations came up, Mr. Bolton grew so irritated that he abruptly ended the meeting, according to Fiona Hill, his former top Europe and Russia adviser.

Ms. Hill testified that Mr. Bolton told her to report what was going on to a White House lawyer. "I am not part of whatever drug deal Sondland and Mulvaney are cooking up," he told her to tell the lawyer. She also testified that, on an earlier occasion, Mr. Bolton said, "Giuliani's a hand grenade who's going to blow everybody up."

Mr. Bolton unsuccessfully sought to block Mr. Mulvaney's effort to arrange an Oval Office visit in May by Prime Minister Viktor Orban of Hungary, an authoritarian leader whose criticism of Ukraine reinforced Mr. Trump's already hostile views toward the country. Mr. Bolton likewise opposed the July 25 telephone call in which Mr. Trump pressed President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine to "do us a favor" by investigating the 2016 conspiracy theory and Mr. Biden.

Mr. Bolton went to Ukraine on Aug. 27 to try to prepare for a meeting between the president and Mr. Zelensky that ultimately did not happen. While there, William B. Taylor Jr., the acting ambassador to Ukraine, said he raised his concerns about the

frozen aid and Mr. Bolton recommended he send a cable to Mr. Pompeo.

But Mr. Mulvaney and Mr. Sondland have said that Mr. Bolton never brought any concerns about the Ukraine pressure campaign to them.

"I read that and I was surprised, because John Bolton never complained to me about it," Mr. Mulvaney said on "Fox News Sunday" last weekend. "No one at N.S.C. ever complained to me about anything that was going on."

Mr. Sondland testified that Mr. Bolton embraced their efforts during a conference call in June. "We went over the entire Ukraine strategy with Ambassador Bolton, who agreed with the strategy and signed off on it," Mr. Sondland said. "Indeed, over the spring and summer of 2019, I received nothing but cordial responses from Ambassador Bolton and Dr. Hill." So now Mr. Bolton has been left in the middle, a key witness in the unfolding impeachment drama. His friend, Thomas M. Boyd, an assistant attorney general in the Reagan and Bush administrations, said Mr. Bolton understands his obligations to guard the confidentiality of communications with the president but will also be prepared to give his unvarnished views if it comes to it. "I just don't think that he's in an awkward position at all," said Mr. Boyd. "He's very comfortable in his own skin and whatever decisions he's made or plans to make, I'm sure he's comfortable with them as well."

■ John Bolton, welcome to the Resistance?

Politica reported that testimony in the impeachment inquiry has indicated Bolton was alarmed by shifts in Trump's foreign policy. But will he turn on the president? Washington has grown accustomed to the unexpected, the unusual and even the bizarre during the presidency of Donald Trump. But is it ready for John Bolton, hero of the "Resistance"?

It's a question increasingly on the minds of lawmakers, U.S. diplomats and possibly Trump himself as the House Democrats' impeachment inquiry forges ahead. A key revelation so far: Bolton, while serving as Trump's national security adviser, raised alarms about the politically questionable role informal actors were playing in shaping U.S. foreign policy toward Ukraine.

"Am I going to have to like Bolton now?" Bradley Moss, a national security lawyer frequently critic of the Trump administration, tweeted earlier this month. "This plot twist, where John Bolton turns out to be good, really strains the credibility of this entire season," joked Vox.com writer Ian Millhiser. In remarks he's made since leaving the administration in September, Bolton has blasted Trump's outreach to North Korea as "doomed to failure" and ripped his negotiations with the Taliban as "disrespectful" to the families of 9/11 victims.

He hasn't publicly described what others have depicted as a fierce internal battle among aides and associates of Trump over the thrust of U.S. policy toward Ukraine, however. Privately, some observers suspect whatever Bolton ultimately says could damage the president.

On Tuesday, William Taylor, the top U.S. diplomat in Ukraine, offered the most detailed account yet portraying Bolton—a famously hawkish conservative known for his bureaucratic knife-fighting skills and loathing of liberals—as growing irate at the possibility that Ukraine policy was being warped by Trump's political ambitions.

In testimony before House lawmakers, Taylor said he was told by Fiona Hill and Alex Vindman, both National Security Council officials at the time, that Bolton "abruptly ended" a July 10 meeting with Ukrainian officials. He did so after Gordon Sondland, the U.S. ambassador to the European Union, "connected" a potential Trump meeting with Ukraine's new president, Volodymyr Zelensky, with "investigations."

As he ended the meeting, according to Taylor, Bolton told Hill and Vindman that "they should have nothing to do with domestic politics." Bolton told Hill, who has also since left the NSC, that she should "brief the lawyers." Bolton also opposed setting up a call between Zelensky and Trump "out of concern that it 'would be a disaster,'" Taylor testified.

Taylor's statements aligned what Hill told lawmakers earlier. He confirmed a particularly colorful line from Hill: that "Bolton referred to this as a 'drug deal' after the July 10 meeting."

Hill also told lawmakers that Bolton described Rudy Giuliani, Trump's personal attorney, who also was helping shape Ukraine policy, as "a hand grenade who's going to blow everybody up."

Bolton was not on the July 25 phone call between Trump and Zelensky that is at the core of

the impeachment probe. According to a detailed readout of that call, which Trump has defended as "perfect," Trump repeatedly pressured the new Ukrainian leader to investigate Joe Biden. Trump pushed Bolton out of the national security adviser role in September, after months of rising tensions between the two, describing him as "tough" but "not smart." He also complained, "John wasn't in line with what we were doing"—remarks that at the time were interpreted to refer to Bolton's widely reported disagreements with the president over Afghanistan, Iran and North Korea. Bolton's firing came at almost exactly the same time that the Trump administration agreed to unfreeze some \$400 million in military aid to Ukraine—money that Taylor came to believe was being held up to pressure Kiev into pursuing Trump's desired investigations.

There remain many unanswered questions about Bolton's role in the Ukraine drama, including whether he ever addressed his concerns directly with Trump or took other steps to derail actions he thought inappropriate. Bolton, via a spokeswoman, declined to comment for this story. There is widespread anticipation, however, that lawmakers will demand his testimony.

The White House has refused to cooperate with the impeachment inquiry led by Hill Democrats, and has even sought to bar former officials like Bolton from testifying. If he does end up providing his version of events, what he says could affect not only the inquiry but also history's view of him. Until now, Bolton's professional legacy has been shaped heavily by a few things: his time spent as George W. Bush's ambassador to the United Nations; his vehement disdain for multilateralism; his pugnacious support for the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq; and his time at Trump's side, during which he angled for military strikes on Iran.

But Bolton is working on a hotly anticipated book in which he's expected to provide a first-hand account of his tumultuous 17-month tenure working for Trump. His agents on the project, Javelin's Matt Latimer and Keith Urbahn, secured major advances for previous tell-alls by former FBI director James Comey and ex-White House aide Cliff Sims. Bolton's allies caution Trump's liberal detractors not to get their hopes up that Bolton has changed at his core. Plus, they warn, what's been leaked out of the closed-door impeachment hearings so far isn't the full picture.

"This idea of John Bolton being a hero on the left is such nonsense," said Fred Fleitz, a longtime associate who briefly worked as Bolton's chief of staff at the NSC. "John Bolton is a Reagan conservative, and he's going to remain so after this process."

For now, plenty of Democrats who love the idea of aides turning on Trump are unwilling to rope Bolton into the so-called Resistance. It is possible, they argue, to be a purveyor of terrible policy ideas while at the same time balking at illegal, or at least impeachable, acts.

And the longer Bolton takes to speak out, some add, the more the skepticism of his motives will rise.

"There is an early mover advantage for witnesses to come forward on presidential misconduct, not to mention a constitutional duty to do so," said Jeffrey Prescott, a former senior official in the Obama administration. "Soon, the question for those around Trump, including those who have left the administration, is 'If you saw something, why didn't you say something?'"

John Gans, author of "White House Warriors," a book about the NSC, noted that Bolton, a Yale-trained lawyer, has long held a view that the president has expansive power on foreign policy. Republicans seeking to shut down the inquiry will be relying in part on arguments he and others have made, Gans said.

"The question for all those who see Bolton as the key to bringing Trump down is whether he will abdicate or put aside his long-held views on the presidency," Gans said. Taylor's testimony Tuesday also raised questions about the actions of two other Trump aides: Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Tim Morrison, a top NSC official.

According to Taylor, he spoke privately in late August with Bolton about his concern that Trump was withholding U.S. military assistance to Ukraine, though this was before he realized the aid freeze may have been to pressure Zelensky into pursuing the investigations.

By signing up you agree to receive email newsletters or alerts from POLITICO. You can unsubscribe at any time. This site is protected by reCAPTCHA and the Google Privacy Policy and Terms of Service apply. On Bolton's advice, Taylor sent a first-person cable to Pompeo, sharing his worries that withholding the aid would hurt Ukraine's ability to defend itself against Russia. "I told the secretary that I could not and would not defend such a policy," Taylor said. "Although I received no specific response, I heard that soon thereafter, the secretary carried the cable with him to a meeting at the White House focused on security assistance for Ukraine."

The testimony deepens the mystery surrounding Pompeo's actions throughout the affair. He has acknowledged being on the July 25 call, but he's been silent on what he knew, when he knew it and how he could have permitted Giuliani and others to play such a major role in Ukraine policy. The State Department did not reply to a request for comment.

■ Trump Suspects a Spiteful John Bolton Is Behind Some of the Ukraine Leaks

The Dailybeast reported that Trump fears the leaks are now coming from the people he chose to serve him—and that only increases the paranoia currently infecting the West Wing. At a critical juncture in his presidency, facing a rapidly unfolding impeachment inquiry by House Democrats, Donald Trump is feeling besieged by snitches.

In recent weeks, numerous leaks have appeared in the pages of The Washington Post, The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, and other major papers and news outlets detailing the president's attempts to enlist foreign leaders to help dig up dirt on former Vice President Joe Biden and also aid Trump's quest to discredit Special Counsel Robert Mueller's concluded investigation. And as is his MO, the media-obsessed president has been fixated on not just the identity of the whistleblower behind the internal complaint that brought this scandal to the fore, but also on who, exactly, has been namelessly feeding intel to the press.

In the course of casual conversations with advisers and friends, President Trump has privately raised suspicions that a spiteful John Bolton, his notoriously hawkish former national security adviser, could be one of the sources behind the flood of leaks against him, three people familiar with the comments said. At one point, one of those sources recalled, Trump guessed that Bolton was behind one of the anonymous accounts that listed the former national security adviser as one of the top officials most disturbed by the Ukraine-related efforts of Trump and Rudy Giuliani, the president's personal attorney who remains at the center of activities that spurred the impeachment inquiry.

"[Trump] was clearly implying [it, saying] something to the effect of, 'Oh, gee, I wonder who the source on that could be,'" this source said, referring to the president's speculation. Bolton, for his part, told The Daily Beast last month that allegations that he was a leaker in Trump's midst are "flatly incorrect."

The former national security adviser—who departed the administration last month on awful, mutually bitter terms—is working on a book about his time serving Trump, and has "a lot to dish," one knowledgeable source noted.

Neither Bolton nor White House spokespeople provided comment for this story. Matt Schlapp, an influential conservative activist with close ties to the White House, said his assumption was that the leaks were coming from "career folks inside who hate Trump" and that the president and his campaign had "14 months of this" to come. As for Bolton, Schlapp said, "He's smarter than that, although he does aggressively defend himself."

Indeed, Bolton's name surfaced Monday before House impeachment inquiry committees, when Hill reportedly testified that he told her to alert the chief lawyer for the National Security Council that Giuliani was working with Mick Mulvaney, the acting White House chief of staff, on an operation with legal implications, the Times reported late Monday. "I am not part of whatever drug deal Rudy and Mulvaney are cooking up," Bolton told Hill to tell White House lawyers, according to sources familiar with the testimony.

"I have not spoken to John about [his comments, as conveyed by Hill]," Giuliani told The Daily Beast on Tuesday morning. "John is a longtime friend. I have no idea why John is doing this. My best guess is that he's confused and bought into a false media narrative without bothering to call me about it."

Regarding Bolton's reported comment about Mulvaney being involved in this figurative Ukraine "drug deal," the former New York City mayor insisted that "Mick wasn't involved in this. I don't recall having any lengthy conversation with him about this subject... I don't recall ever having a lengthy conversation [about Ukraine] with John, either."

Trump has felt under siege from within before, including at various flashpoints of his presidency. For instance, near the end of the Mueller probe, the president became so distrustful and resentful toward Don McGahn, his own White House counsel at the time, he started asking those close to him, "Is [Don] wearing a wire?"

But the current sense that he has been undermined by people whom he brought into his orbit has come at a critical juncture and colored some of the decisions he has made since the whistleblower complaint became public. The president has openly declared that the whistleblower committed an act of treason. He has attempted to stop prominent advisers—including Ambassador to the European Union Gordon Sondland, a man who donated \$1 million to the Trump inauguration—from testifying to Congress, only to apparently fail. On Monday, Fiona Hill, Trump's former top adviser on Russia and Europe, was on Capitol Hill, where she reportedly told lawmakers that Sondland and Giuliani circumvented the standard national-security process on high-profile Ukraine matters. The president has struggled to add to his current legal team, and appeared to begin putting some distance between himself and Giuliani last week.

And when outside allies began to talk about constructing a war room to help with impeachment, Trump shot down the concept, in part out of a sense that he couldn't rely on them to get the message out right. One top White House aide subsequently labeled the idea an exercise by "outside peeps trying to self-aggrandize."

The impression left on Republicans is one of a president increasingly driven by paranoia and a desire for insularity—and not, necessarily, to his own benefit.

"There is a certain level of frustration that all the sudden the president says something, then Rudy does, and it is not always consistent. There is a frustration that not everybody knows what they should be doing. It is not that they can't defend the president it is a frustration that they don't know exactly how they are supposed to defend the president," said John Brabender, a longtime GOP consultant. "From the president's perspective, this whole thing is a witch hunt and is outrageous and, therefore, it shouldn't even need explanation... But with that said, you can't just be angry. You need a unified communications team."

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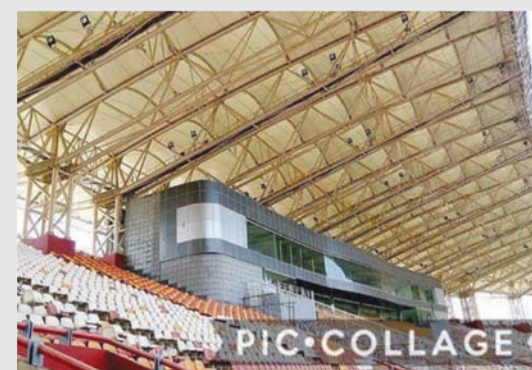
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New class of black holes smaller than thought possible discovered by scientists

Scientists have discovered a new class of black holes that are smaller than thought possible.

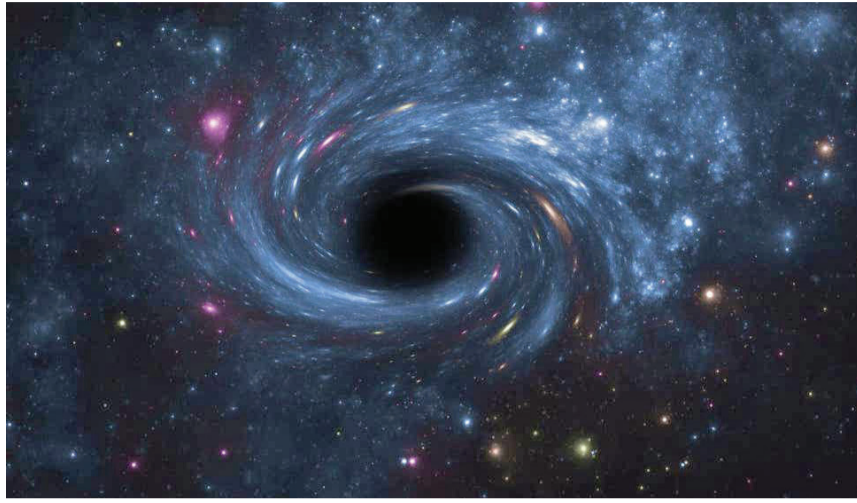
For years, astronomers believed black holes had to be at least five times the mass of the sun. However, they have discovered a black hole that is 3.3 times the mass of the sun — making it by far the smallest known one in the Milky Way.

“We’re showing this hint that there is another population out there that we have yet to really probe in the search for black holes,” said lead author Todd Thompson, a professor of astronomy at Ohio State University.

“People are trying to understand supernova explosions, how supermassive black stars explode, how the elements were formed in supermassive stars.

“So if we could reveal a new population of black holes, it would tell us more about which stars explode, which don’t, which form black holes, which form neutron stars. It opens up a new area of study,” he said.

Black holes have such powerful gravitational pulls nothing — including light — can escape. They form when stars die, shrink and then explode. Neutron stars



are small dense stars that form when stars die and collapse.

For years astronomers only knew about black holes that were between five and 15 times the mass of the sun. If neutron stars were above 2.5 times the mass of the sun,

scientists believe they would collapse into a black hole.

In 2017 scientists used Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory to spot two black holes merging together in a galaxy 1.8 billion light years away. One black hole was

31 times the mass of the sun and the other was 25 times its mass.

This showed that black holes could have larger masses than ever recorded before.

Researchers suspected this meant black holes could also be discovered that were somewhere between the size of the biggest neutron star and smallest black hole.

Astronomers looked through data collected from the Apache Point Observatory Galactic Evolution Experiment, which collected light spectra from around 100,000 stars in the Milky Way and discovered a low-mass black hole that was 3.3 times the mass of the sun, according to the paper published in Science.

Professor Thompson said: “What we’ve done here is come up with a new way to search for black holes, but we’ve also potentially identified one of the first of a new class of low-mass black holes that astronomers hadn’t previously known about.

“The masses of things tell us about their formation and evolution, and they tell us about their nature.”

(Source: The Independent)

This fluffy ball contains the story of the universe

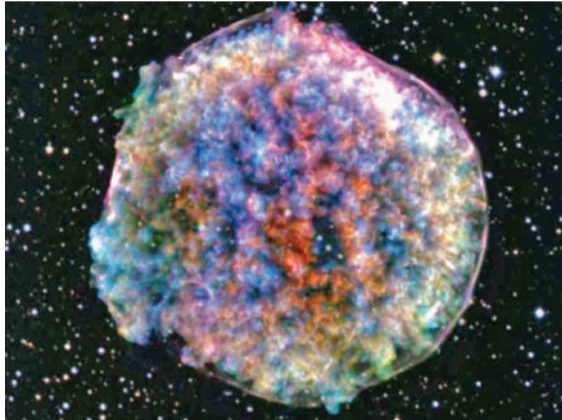
By Jess Romeo

More than 10 thousand years ago, a star in our galaxy exploded. The light from this explosion didn’t reach Earth until 1572, when the astronomer Tycho Brahe saw a burst of brightness in the night sky and mistook it for a new star being born. We now know that this flare was actually a white dwarf star going supernova—a violently explosive wave of energy and matter that a star emits as it dies. Nearly 500 years later, the imprint of that explosive burst is still visible—and it’s very fluffy.

Last week, NASA released the latest image of Tycho’s supernova remnant (also called “Tycho”). The photo, taken by the Chandra X-Ray Observatory, looks a bit like an opalescent dandelion.

“You look at this image, and it sort of looks like it’s cotton candy,” says Brian Williams, a NASA astronomer who helped take the latest photograph of the supernova remnant. Scientists use these cosmic fireworks to understand and test theories of supernovae. Currently, astronomers don’t know all that much about how supernovae form, Williams adds, or how the explosion progresses. Further, understanding the mechanism that creates the outburst’s distinctive shape—described as “fluffy” and “clumpy”—has been particularly baffling.

Tycho is classified as a Type Ia supernova—it underwent a massive thermonuclear explosion, letting off a shockwave that moved at almost 3,100 miles per second. The wave hit nearby gas and dust, heating the air and particles by millions of degrees. The human eye can’t pick up on any of this action, but the activity shines bright in X-ray photographs (X-rays have higher energy than visible light, and tend to come from



extremely hot objects, like black holes, galaxy clusters, and supernovae).

This image of Tycho “is visually striking, and also scientifically meaningful,” says Gilles Ferrand, a physicist who uses data to build 3D visualizations of supernovae. “It’s not the first time we got an image from Tycho. But there’s something new in this image that’s interesting.”

That “new” thing is the blue and red in the center of the photo. Most of the colors in the shot—red, yellow, cyan, navy blue, purple, and orange—represent different energy levels as viewed through the x-ray telescope (red and yellow being the lowest, orange and purple being the highest). In this new photo of Tycho, scientists were also able to isolate and visualize a specific element: silicon—the clumps of blue

in the center represent the silicon moving toward us, and the red is the silicon moving away.

Scientists have two potential explanations for how the Tycho remnant formed these fluffy balls. The first posits that the explosion was originally round and smooth, and as it expanded, fluid instability (between the particles in space and the matter from the explosion) caused those misshapen lumpy bits. The second possibility is that it was clumpy from the get-go. In that scenario, the dying star didn’t just undergo one single major explosion, but many. In the first model, the white dwarf is like a nuclear bomb; in the second, it’s like millions of sticks of dynamite.

Using what Williams called a “complicated image analysis technique,” scientists examined the number of chunks and holes in the image (looking at where they appear, where they don’t, and how big they are). From all of this data, they were able to build a mathematical map of these clumps. When astronomers compared that map to a simulation of a supernova, they discovered that the second option—the millions of sticks of dynamite exploding at once—was more likely.

These clumps are rich in heavy elements like iron and silicon. This makes sense based on what scientists know about how the universe was formed. Initially the expanse was made up only of simple light elements, like hydrogen and helium. Most heavy elements formed inside the stars, synthesized during these supernova explosions. The bursts also sent them flying throughout the galaxy. When the next generations of stars form, they form out of this matter.

“You’ve heard the famous saying ‘We’re all made of stardust?’” says Williams. “That’s literally what you’re seeing right here.”

Spooky Halloween asteroid flyby one of the closest near misses ever seen



A near-Earth asteroid currently identified as CopPEV1 was spotted in the early morning hours Thursday by the Catalina Sky Survey, based in Arizona, and shortly thereafter by New Mexico’s Magdalena Ridge Observatory and Arizona’s Mt. Lemmon Steward Observatory. According to data from these early observations, the asteroid came closer to the surface of our planet (without actually colliding with our atmosphere) than any other close approach in NASA’s database of known near-Earth objects.

Simulations show the asteroid passing above southern Africa within 3,852 miles (6,200 km) at the moment of closest approach, around 7:45 a.m. PT. To get an idea of how close this is, consider that many telecommunications satellites orbit at an altitude of 22,236 miles (35,786 km).

Of course, some asteroids come closer and actually impact our planet, like the

previously unseen bolide that exploded as it smacked into the atmosphere over Russia in 2013. A much smaller asteroid also collided with the atmosphere last year and burned up, leaving little bits of meteorites that re thought to have fallen over Africa.

Just like a Hollywood jump scare though, this late October asteroid poses no actual threat. It has already passed by us at a speed of nearly 27,000 miles per hour (43,452 kph) and is likely only between 2 and 7 meters in diameter, which is too small to do major damage even if it had impacted.

What’s really remarkable about this spooky space rock sighting is that it speaks to how astronomers are getting better at spotting incoming asteroids. It’s very possible that we’re getting buzzed by cosmic boulders on the reg, and always have been, but we’re just now getting a sense of how much traffic is really up there. (Source: msn)

Footprints suggest Alaskan beaches once home to dinosaurs



Dozens of dinosaur tracks discovered in Alaska have revealed that the duck-billed hadrosaurs preferred to frolic on the beach and were once as ‘commonplace as cows’, claims a new study.

Seventy-five trackways were found in coastal sediment deposits in the remote Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve in south-west Alaska over the last 20 years.

A study - published in the PLOS ONE journal on Wednesday - has now revealed that 93 per cent of those tracks belonged to hadrosaurs - a highly successful plant-eating dinosaur.

Two other footprints belonged to armored dinosaurs, while one was from a predatory tyrannosaur measuring around six to seven meters long, the study said.

Previous research on dinosaur remains in northern Alaska found that hadrosaurs were most abundant in coastal habitats. (Source: msn)

But the latest study by Anthony Fiorillo from the Perot Museum of Nature and Science in Texas, has revealed the same trend was true for southern Alaska.

Mr. Fiorillo said: ‘Our study shows us something about habitat preferences for some dinosaurs and also that duck-billed dinosaurs were incredibly abundant.

‘Duck-billed dinosaurs were as commonplace as cows, though given we are working in Alaska, perhaps it is better to consider them the caribou of the Cretaceous.’

The trackways were preserved in the Chignik Formation, a series of coastal sediment deposits dating back to the late Cretaceous period around 66 million years ago, the study said.

This suggests the Hadrosaurs were abundant in coastal areas which may have been their preferred habitat. (Source: msn)

Czech lab grows mustard plants for Mars

Czech scientists have opened a lab to experiment growing food for environments with extreme conditions and lack of water, such as Mars.

The “Marsonaut” experiment by scientist Jan Lukacevic, 29, and his team at the Prague University of Life Sciences is based on aeroponics - growing plants in the air, without soil, and limiting water use to a minimum.

The plants grow horizontally from a vertical unit and are stacked one above the other to minimize space. Researchers experiment with light and temperature changes, Lukacevic said.

The team has already succeeded in growing mustard

plants, salad leaves, radishes and herbs like basil and mint. Scientists ate their first harvest last week.

“They taste wonderful, because they grow in a controlled environment and we supply them with bespoke nutrients,” said Lukacevic.

Strawberries are the next crop planned.

The main benefit of the growing method is that it uses 95 percent less water than normal plant cultivation and also saves space, which could boost agricultural yields in areas hit by urbanization and climate change. (Source: Reuters)



Study underscores changes in brain structure, function in long-duration space missions

A new study demonstrates for the first time that changes in cognitive performance correlate with changes in brain structure in NASA astronauts following spaceflight. How the human brain adapts in space or in a microgravity environment is the subject of continuing research by neurologist Donna R. Roberts, M.D., Department of Radiology and Radiological Science at the Medical University of South Carolina. The American Journal of Neuroradiology published Roberts’ paper, “Prolonged Microgravity Affects Human Brain Structure and Function,” online in October.

Previously, Roberts’ research reported an upward shift of the brain, crowding of tissue at the top of the brain and enlargement of the ventricular system in astronauts following long-duration missions in space aboard the International Space Station (ISS).

In this study, Roberts and her colleagues reviewed brain magnetic resonance (MR) imaging scans of NASA astronauts and saw widespread structural changes in the brain, especially after extended spaceflight missions. They found that those structural changes correlated with changes in the astronauts’ motor skills and cognitive performance in postflight testing.

“This study looks at cognitive changes in the brains of astronauts,” said Roberts. “Not a lot is known about cognitive impairment in humans during spaceflight. Although this study evaluates a small subset of astronauts, it’s significantly larger than any previously published study of its kind involving astronauts or Russian cosmonauts.”

Roberts obtained data from the NASA Lifetime Surveillance of Astronaut Health (LSAH) program and compared the pre- and post-spaceflight brain MR imaging of 19 NASA astronauts -- seven astronauts who completed short-duration flights aboard the Space Shuttle and 12 astronauts who underwent long duration missions aboard the ISS.

Then, she and her team evaluated the pre- and post-spaceflight cognitive tests results of the 12 long-duration astronauts and correlated that data with the brain structure imaging findings. The Spaceflight Cognitive Assessment Tool for Windows (WinSCAT) battery test is a screening tool developed by NASA to monitor astronauts and their neuro-cognitive status while in space and alert NASA flight surgeons to any accuracy or reaction time changes in an astronaut’s performance. WinSCAT tests working memory, computational skills, attention, visual tracking and spatial processing.

In addition, eight of the astronauts participated in a functional task test, a NASA-sponsored study to assess an astronaut’s performance of mission-critical tasks during spaceflight required after landing on a planetary surface like Mars. This physical coordination and strength assessment evaluates mission activities such as an astronaut opening a hatch, climbing a ladder, exiting a vehicle or walking a distance on a planetary surface.

The study team used several analytic methods to assess brain MR imaging change data and cognitive and motor function scores to determine any correlations. They compared brain structure changes with the astronaut’s age at the time of launch and flight duration.

Roberts and other human research scientists remain concerned about the lack of data about how the human brain adapts to microgravity. She continues to advocate for more research in these areas, noting in the paper that her study results could have major health significance that should be considered in spaceflight policy and planning.

According to Roberts, basic MR imaging scans are part of the medical operations protocol for NASA astronauts but no long-term imaging follow-up is part of that protocol. Roberts is among a research cadre who would prefer NASA use advanced neuroimaging techniques that can provide sharper, enhanced views of the brain to understand these changes and their effects on long-duration missions planned for the moon, Mars and beyond.

“The long-term effects of these brain changes are unknown at this time because of the need for more detailed brain imaging of our astronauts. With that data we can begin to answer some important questions -- Does the brain return to its pre-flight baseline? Are there any long-term consequences of the brain’s structural and performance changes in microgravity?” Roberts said. (Source: Science Daily)

New material expands by a factor of 100 when electrocuted

Scientists have discovered a new material that dramatically expands or contracts when exposed to a weak electrical signal.

Many materials expand and contract in response to changes in temperature and pH levels. Materials in greenhouse windows, for example, automatically open and close to help regulate the temperature. Similar materials, both solids and gels, are used in robots and biomedicine applications.

Until now, however, scientists had failed to find a material that can dramatically alter its volume -- ideally, triggering a phase change -- in response to electricity.

While making and testing experimental materials in the lab, researchers in Sweden and Britain synthesized a polymer that can both expand and contract in response to a weak electrical signal.

Scientists described the novel material this week in the journal Advanced Science.

When placed in an electrolyte solution, the material expands by a factor of 100 in response to a weak positive electrical pulse. A negatively charged pulse causes the material to return to its original volume.

In follow up experiments, scientists insulated a wire with the new material. When electricity was run through the wire, the thin film of polymer absorbed water and converted to a rapidly expanding gel. When scientists repeated stronger electrical pulses, the gel expanded to a volume 300 percent larger than the film’s original size.

If integrated into a sponge or filter, scientists suggest the new material can manipulate via electricity to control the passage of different sized particles.

“We can control the pore size of a filter electronically, and potentially actively control the size of particles that pass through,” Magnus Berggren, professor in organic electronics and director of the Laboratory of Organic Electronics at Linköping University, said in a news release.

“This means that the properties of this smart filter can be dynamically changed to allow different types or different sizes of particle to pass through. This function can be used for sieving, filtration, purification, and in process chemistry. It may also have applications in medicine and biochemistry,” Berggren said. (Source: UPI)

Trump administration considers adding more countries to travel ban list

Trump administration officials are discussing adding more countries to the travel ban list, two sources tell CNN, potentially expanding the controversial ban that has been criticized as discriminating against Muslims.

An inter-agency discussion about imposing travel restrictions on countries that are not compliant with electronic documents and information sharing -- a key focus of the administration -- is underway, according to a senior administration official. Fewer than five countries are under consideration, the official said.



The goal, the official said, is to "bring governments into compliance by using the power of access to the United States." The travel restrictions would be tailored to the countries, if they're added, and not impose a ban on them altogether, the official noted.

The administration has argued that the travel ban is vital to national security and ensures countries are in compliance with security measures. But critics say the restrictions imposed by President Donald Trump's executive order are an attempt to ban Muslims from entering the United States. It's unclear which countries are currently under consideration and if they are majority Muslim.

In 2018, the Supreme Court upheld the third version of the travel ban after previous bans ricocheted through the courts. The ban restricts entry from seven countries to varying degrees: Iran, Libya, Somalia, Syria and Yemen, along with Venezuela and North Korea. Chad was removed from the list last April, after the White House said the country improved security measures.

The third iteration of the travel ban directs the Department of Homeland Security, in consultation with other federal agencies, to assess the list of countries on an ongoing basis and provide a report to the President.

CNN has reached out to the Department of Homeland Security for comment.

As of mid-September, more than 31,000 people have been denied entry to the United States due to Trump's travel ban, a State Department official testified.

The State Department has also issued more than 7,600 waivers, said Edward Ramotowski, deputy assistant secretary for visa services in the Bureau of Consular Affairs.

Democratic lawmakers have continued to denounce the ban and pushed back against the administration's argument that the ban was for national security purposes.

"The Muslim ban has not made us safer," Rep. Jerry Nadler, a New York Democrat, said a House hearing on the ban in September. "It has weakened our standing in the world and runs contrary to our country's moral and philosophical foundation. The United States has always been, and must continue to be, a place that welcomes and embraces people of all religions and nationalities."

On April 10, Democrats introduced a bill known as the "No Ban Act" in the House and Senate to overturn the ban, but the measure is not expected to pass the GOP-controlled Senate.

(Source: CNN)



ROUND THE GLOBE

Archaeological Heritage of the Lengong Valley

A World Heritage, Archaeological Heritage of the Lengong Valley on the Malay Peninsula contains evidence in open-air and cave sites along the Perak River spanning all the periods of hominid history outside Africa from 1.83 million to 1,700 years ago.

Undisturbed in situ Palaeolithic stone tool workshops are located on the shores of a paleolake and ancient river gravel beds and dated in a long chronological sequence.



A meteorite strike 1.83 million b.p. blocked and diverted the river preserving Palaeolithic tools at Bukit Bunuh, where hand axes are among the oldest so far discovered outside Africa. Analysis suggests these were made by hominids which thus provide an extremely early date for hominid presence in South-East Asia.

A catastrophic Toba volcanic eruption 70,000 b.p. caused abandonment of a workshop site containing multiple tool types at Kota Tampan. Other workshop sites date from 200,000-100,000 BP at Bukit Jawa, 40,000 BP at Bukit Bunuh and 1000 BP at Gua Harimau.

The relative abundance of these sites hints at a relatively large or semi-sedentary population.

Perak Man was discovered within Gua Gunung Runtuh cave. Perak Man is South-East Asia's oldest most complete human skeleton. It is radiocarbon dated to 10,120 BP and identified as Australomelanesoid, a hominid type occupying the western part of the Indonesia archipelago and continental South-East Asia at the end of the Pleistocene and early Holocene.

(Source: UNESCO)

Bandar Abbas, Sanandaj join UNESCO Creative Cities Network

HERITAGE TEHRAN — The Iranian cities of Bandar Abbas and Sanandaj have recently been designated as UNESCO Creative Cities by the UN cultural body.

To mark World Cities Day, which is celebrated on October 31, UNESCO has admitted a total of 66 new members to its Creative Cities Network for demonstrating a rich heritage in gastronomy, music, literature, cinema, folk art and design. The newest entries bring the network to a total of 246 Creative Cities.

UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay on Wednesday announced that 66 cities (including Bandar Abbas and Sanandaj) have been designated as UNESCO Creative Cities, the UNESCO website reported.

The southern port city of Bandar Abbas, capital of Hormozgan province, was selected as a city of "Crafts and Folk Art" while Sanandaj, the capital of western Kordestan province, was chosen as a city of "Music".

Previously, two other Iranian cities namely Isfahan and Rasht had been added to the prestigious list, respectively for "Crafts and Arts" and "Gastronomy".

"All over the world, these cities, each in its way, make culture the pillar, not an accessory, of their strategy," Azoulay said in a statement.

"This favors political and social innovation and is particularly important for the young generations."

The UNESCO-designated World Cities Day aims to showcase exceptional cities that are examples of "innovation and collective intelligence" for the future.



A depiction of local costumes in the Kingdom of Ormus in 1670. Situated near the modern city of Bandar Abbas, the kingdom existed from the 10th to 17th century.

In the category of gastronomy, new members this year include Arequipa, Peru; Belo Horizonte, Brazil; Bergamo, Italy; Hyderabad, India; and Yangzhou, China.

Angouleme, France; Beirut, Lebanon; Nanjing, China; and Wonju, South Korea gained membership for their rich literary heritage.

Havana, Cuba; Metz, France; and Port of Spain in Trinidad and Tobago were admitted in the category of music. And Mumbai gained membership via the film category.

UNESCO says that the member cities that form part of the Network come from all continents and regions with different income

levels and populations. They work together towards a common mission: placing creativity and the creative economy at the core of their urban development plans to make cities safe, resilient, inclusive and sustainable, in line with the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Tehran, Muscat in talks to waive visas for visitors from Iran

TOURISM TEHRAN — Iran has officially lifted the visa requirement for Omani nationals and now the two countries are in talks to do the same for Iranian travelers.

"Talks with Oman are underway to implement visa-free program for Iranian tourists visiting the country," Mehr quoted Iran's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Minister Ali-Asghar Mounesan as saying on Wednesday.

"Oman is to cooperate with Iran in this regard and if a no-visa policy is not possible, visa-receiving fees was asked to be reduced," he told reporters on the sidelines of a cabinet meeting.

"In this regard, we have signed an agreement with Oman to boost tourism ties," he added, referring to his visit to the country made upon the invitation of his Omani counterpart, the report said.

The Iranian minister reiterated that his country seeks expansion of tourism ties with regional and neighboring countries.

On September 20, the Iranian cabinet of ministers approved to maintain a visa waiver program for Omani nationals which had been ratified last September for a one-year period.



A view of Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque in Oman

The government took the decision in light of the friendly atmosphere in relations between the two nations and also in line with the reciprocal action of Oman for facilitating the entry of Iranian nationals.

Iran has taken some various steps to increase its revenues from tourism under U.S. sanctions via improving its tourist ties with regional counties.

In mid-June, President Hassan Rouhani issued an order to the interior minister, according to which Iran will not put stamps on the passports of the visiting foreigners.

Government spokesman Ali Rabiei said earlier that "under its economic terrorism plans, the U.S. is trying to frighten and stop foreign tourists from making trips to Iran."

"Unfortunately, the U.S. is following its economic terrorism programs against Iran and seeks to frighten everybody who wishes to travel to Iran from future problems or being sanctioned," he said, adding, "President Rouhani issued an order according to which Iran will not put stamp on the passports of the visiting foreign tourists."

Iran started implementation of no-visa policy for Chinese and Hongkonger tourists and businessmen who make trips to Iran as of July 16, while the Russian government announced on September 16 that Iranians and nationals from 52 other countries can visit St. Petersburg via receiving free electronic visa.

About five million international travelers visited Iran in the first half the current Iranian calendar year (started March 21), showing a 27 percent growth year on year.

Discover incredible rock formations in southern Iranian island



TOURISM TEHRAN — You can find one of the world's most eye-catching nature's creativities at its finest on Qeshm Island, southern Iran, where stunning rock formations are a sign of perpetual thumping of the waves, storms and raging winds.

Called Darreh-ye Tandis-ha ("Valley of Statues"), it is remnant of a high plateau that has been once connected to the "Roof" of Qeshm. The valley is part of those areas which have been once underneath the water, and when pulled up, it has been heavily eroded by sea waves among other factors, qeshmgeopark.ir says.

This type of erosion gets reduced gradually while moving more towards the "Roof" of Qeshm, which has remained intact.

In some areas of the valley numerous fossils may be found including fossils of bivalves, in some areas as colonies. Another interesting geological phenomena in the valley is sedimentation forming muddy mud cracks, which has created beautiful and interesting landscapes.

During and after the rainfall, it is important to pay attention to muddy areas where sometimes the mud is very sticky and dangerous to walk on at this geo-site.

Qeshm Island, in the Persian Gulf, is a heaven for eco-tourists as it embraces wide-ranging attractions such as the Hara marine forests and about 60 villages dotted mostly across its rocky coastlines. Meanwhile, it is home to birds, reptiles, dolphins and turtles to name a few.

The island also features geologically eye-catching canyons, hills, caves and valleys, most of which are protected as part of the UNESCO-tagged Qeshm Island Geopark, itself a heaven for nature-lovers.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization in 2017 registered the island on its Global Geoparks list.

Such scenic landscapes can also be found in other parts of Iran, for instance in Shahdad, which is a major part of the UNESCO-registered Lut desert in southeastern Kerman province. Shahdad is home to massive sand pyramids created by wind and water.



Brick by brick: rethinking masonry construction in Iran

Iran's architecture has long been rooted in Persian culture. From tea houses and pavilions to domestic huts and elaborate mosques, the country's built environment is tied to these influences, as well as the landscape and its broader context. At the heart of Iran's more recent projects is a desire to reinterpret history through new spaces and forms.

Through a complex cultural past, Iran's architecture has achieved its own distinct vernacular. Monumental mosque design reflects the religiously affiliated architecture of the past, but contemporary architects in Iran are concerned with defining their place in non-secular design. Contemporary Persian architecture shows an aesthetic connected with the past while trying to find its place in the future.

While Tehran emerged as an epicenter of design in Iran, the country's innovation has extended to developments throughout other cities and sites. Rethinking the role of art and symbolism in architecture, a wave of new projects have been built that are designed around masonry and its application in commercial and residential projects. Architects are utilizing more readily available building materials like clay from the country's central plateau to rethink historic ideas of scale, geometry and craft.

Most of the buildings seen in larger cities such as Tehran and Isfahan are constructed using similar brick-laying methods. Bricks are chosen because most of the country is covered by earth, sand and rock, which lends itself to brick or adobe construction. In addition, older Iranian architecture often contained a layer of tiles over the brick. Today, brick facades are increasingly made as vertical elements, including for taller residential towers and private developments. With a wide variety of aesthetic, structural and haptic investigations, the following projects use brick to rethink conventional construction methods and techniques across Iran.

The "Woof Shadow" building is a 5-story building with 10 apartments located in a middle class block in Tehran. A third dimension was designed on the facade to create a deep surface in the external figure. In designing the form, the surface had to be one piece with no cuts and using origami, a tri-dimension feature was formed by folding the two-dimension surface. The tri-dimension volume was achieved by creating new texture. The elements created "light and shade" to change the facade into a structure in which overlapped shades from the texture. The team chose bricks as a pixel material that fit the design and could be configured

with the block texture. As CAAT states, there is a constant historical principle in Iranian architecture: the richness in details in coexistence with the representation of simplicity in overall scale which merges with the context and function. In Iranian traditional architecture, users built their houses in a sustainable way. These architectural considerations led to a variety of typologies in different climatic zones of the country. Clay modules were constructed with bricks and were produced in a factory nearby. The brick module design was based on Iranian geometrical patterns; each module was designed in relation with the function of the space behind it.

A key characteristic of Iranian vernacular residential architecture was providing privacy for the residents which in the past was achieved through an introverted architecture often formed around a central private garden with all the openings oriented to that and the windows were rarely exposed on the outer faces. The concept for the facade is inspired from the surrounding neighborhood fabric. The brick texture is a reflection of the context's chaotic skyline and the openings are located considering the surrounding views.

(Source: Arch Daily)

Jeffrey Epstein, U.S. communist First Lady Melania's godfather wiped out

By Adam Dentor

ILFAROSULMONDO — Jeffrey Epstein's record shows him as human trafficker, sex dealer, Wall Street billionaire, fashion brands partner, and close friend to Trump. Bill Clinton, Prince Andrew, the British Queen's son, and Saudi princes have also been his partners in moral scandal cases. Regarding Epstein, whatever was a thing of the past and he is no more existent.

The only thing from Jeffrey Epstein existing in this world is his murder, or suspicious suicide which was carried out under the strictest watch. The forensic announced reason for death as suicide, closing his case in this world forever. But is the black box of politicians' political and sexual crimes going to be buried with him?

The story of Epstein should be traced from his vital information about financial and moral corruption of U.S., European, and Saudi politicians, which is a long story. But the most sensitive part of his life which has been overlooked is his lobbying around the world over political and trade issues which included sex dealership and his introducing Melania to Trump.

Epstein had a team of human traffickers to identify beautiful girls even under-12. Using his ex-partner Ghislaine Maxwell, Epstein would sell to security organs around the world the most talented of girls as prey, choosing their most beautiful ones to U.S., European, Russian, and some Arab politicians to have fun with. He would offer 12-year old girls to top politicians, among which was Bill Clinton too, in his own property on U.S. Virgin Islands, which came to be known as "group sex island".

These beautiful dolls will be strictly controlled in order not to tell secrets if they are not by the side of politicians or billionaires. Of course venturing into the secrets of these voluptuaries would cost one's life. Two British journalists, Jill Dando and Liz MacKean, were killed suspiciously while dealing with such issues.

Epstein's team would carry out their lobbyism by offering young girls to security services to be used for multiple purposes. Some of them would undergo training and enter



security services. Their most beautiful and genius ones would undergo training and then introduced to fashion industry with the aim to bring global fame for trade at the politicians' bordellos. Over various courses, these sex laborers would learn oral sex and golden showers as well as meek, slave-like manners before their masters and their guests. Some of their brightest and most attractive ones would be the share of European presidents. Cecilia Ciganer-Albeniz and Carla Bruni, Sarkozy's wives, as well as Julie Gayet, wife of Francois Hollande, former French presidents, were selected from among these very models.

Ivana Zelnichkova, Trump's first wife, also had some ties in the fashion business. Her father was a member of Czechoslovakia's intelligence service and pushed Ivana into America's fashion market with directions from that service. Ivana met Trump in New York in 1976 and married him a year later. In 1990, after it was found out that Ivana was carrying information about U.S. elections to her father, media pressure forced her into separating from Trump.

Epstein's masterwork during his career was introducing Melania to Trump. Melania's story is a repetition of Trump's first wife. Melania was discovered while under 12 and sold to East Germany's security service Stasi.

The Stasi station in Dresden, former East Germany, which was Stasi's main headquar-

ters, operated with KGB under Putin's direct supervision. This station was commissioned to train Melania and while there she learned Dutch.

After acing in her training, Melania was directed by Stasi in 1986 to change her name from Melanija Knavs to Melania Knauss. The same year, when 16, she started modeling working with a Slovenian photographer named Stane Jerko.

After artificially registering in the University of Ljubljana, she immediately quit and was sent to Italy under her Dutch name, continuing her modeling career in Paris and Milan. In 1988 she signed contract with a fashion magazine in Milan. In 1992, the Jana Magazine published Melania's photos, where she was chosen as one of the year's top 3 models. She however failed at the final stage of the Jana's annual competition and was seized by depression.

During that time, Stephan Roh, the owner of Co-owns Link Campus University in Italy and in close relations with Russian intelligence services, was Melania's covert agent in Italy and Paris. He ended up introducing Melania to Paolo Zampolli, and through him to Epstein. With the help of these people, Melania embarked on route to America.

Zampolli had a fashion company with the name ID Models in New York. He started

fashion business and cooperation with Trump in 2008. He was also working for Trump Organization as international development manager.

Roh was a close friend of Joseph Mifsud, who himself had close ties with Trump, Epstein, and Zampolli. Through Mifsud, Roh introduced Melania to Trump as a project under the name Shining Diamond.

Then, working with Zampolli, Epstein and Mifsud led Melania to New York as part of the 1996 Modelling Community. Later they applied for her Green Card as an elite person.

Before she married Trump, Melania had flown on board his personal jet, appearing in ad photos; and she has many photos with her in the arms of Trump and Epstein.

There are speculations about Melania Trump's relations with the KGB, which are true. Melania was known in Germany's Dresden where Putin was the head of the headquarters.

After she shook hands with Putin in Helsinki during Trump's first meeting with Putin, Melania's fright went viral on media. Melania knows six languages, but she denies she knows Russian. This is while she did the interpreter's job during Trump and Putin's secret meeting where there were no official interpreters.

On the sidelines of the G20 summit in Germany, Melania spent some time talking to Putin. The two of them talked for some considerable length on the sidelines of the summit without any in-between person. Putin knows Dutch as well.

After Epstein's death, Trump made his first threatening reaction to his suicide by citing conspiracy theory over the role of Democrat leaders, including Bill Clinton, in the Epstein scandal, trying to prevent Democrat-minded press as well as pre-election misuse against him over Epstein's suspicious death and his ties with Melania.

Mifsud is now disappeared and Epstein is dead. Now the lives of Melania Trump, Stephan Roh, Zampolli, Maxwell, and George Papadopoulos, as people who were in this issue and have direct ties with Trump, face threats. Are these people going to be the future victims to cover the whole story? The future will give the answer.

Lindsey Graham: 'Steal Syria's oil to pay for U.S. occupation!'

By Daniel McAdams

ANTIWAR — Senator Lindsey Graham (R-SC) has been chewing down his fingernails ever since President Trump's first suggestion that US troops should come home from the Middle East. Last December, when Trump made it clear that he wanted to end the US troop presence in Syria and let the people of the region take care of their own problems, Graham took to an accommodating media (across the supposed ideological spectrum) to slam, damn, and threaten the president for even entertaining such a thought.

"Withdrawal of this small American force in Syria would be a huge Obama-like mistake," Tweeted Graham on December 19, 2018. It was a typical neocon act of duplicity: how could Obama be blamed for "withdrawal" when he's the one who got us into Syria in the first place? Getting out would be the anti-Obama — but Graham never lets facts get in the way of his neocon hysteria. Graham followed up with this threat in his typical theatrical style:

President Trump — I will help you any way I can ... but because you're a Republican, I'm not going to ignore what I believe...I'm going to give you an honest evaluation. I was willing to support a Democrat if he followed sound military advice. I'm willing to fight a Republican if you don't.

Translation: if you even think about keeping your campaign promises to pull back from US troops in the Middle East I will do my best to take you down. Lindsey Graham ran for president on exactly these themes against Trump in 2016: more war, more regime change, more US troops across the globe. He never broke one percent in the polls and by December 2015 he scurried off with his tail between his legs. Americans resoundingly rejected Lindsey Graham's foreign policy of war and conflict and embraced Trump's foreign policy of "bring the troops home" and "get along with Russia."

After the shrill reaction to last year's withdrawal announce-

ment (including a hissy fit by his then-Defense Secretary James Mattis), Trump moved to accommodate Graham and others in the neocon camp, putting his troop withdrawal order on hold while his subordinates "explained" that Trump didn't really mean what he said. Supporters saw yet another "flip-flop" and shook their heads at the weakness at the top. At the beginning of this month, however, as US troops found themselves caught in a crossfire between the military forces of Turkey, Syria, Russia, and the Kurds, Trump sprung into action and ordered the relocation and ultimate removal of US forces from Syria. He likely saved the lives of more than a few US troops.

Once again though, Graham took to attacking Trump, confident that the President doesn't really mean what he says — or that he can be convinced by a few threats to change his mind. Graham inexplicably warned that removing US troops who are illegally occupying Syrian desert territory thousands of miles from home would put the US at risk! He again took to the fawning, pro-war mainstream media to elaborate:

I think he's putting the nation at risk, and I think he's putting his presidency at risk...And I hope he will adjust his policies like he did before. That would be actually be a sign of real leadership.

Shorter Graham: Trump's a wimp. He'll back down as he did before and we'll pat him on the head and assure him that being weak is actually being strong.

Unfortunately Trump seems to have forgotten just how unpopular Lindsey Graham and the other neocons really are among not only his base of support, but across the board among Americans. As Senator Rand Paul (R-KY) puts it, Lindsey Graham has been "wrong on every foreign policy issue this century."

So why listen to Graham?

While literally every single American not inside the Beltway or the MSM propaganda machine views Sen. Lindsey



Graham as a complete idiot on foreign policy, he still seems for some reason to hold sway over President Trump. Not a week after this latest Trump attempt to make it clear that the US was not just moving some troops from Syria to Syria but getting out of Syria, President Trump just yesterday did another flip-flop and decided to actually ADD more military equipment (and likely personnel) to Syria.

"We'll take their oil," was Trump's message. And, sadly, in that he again let Graham take the lead in the neocon's murderous dance macabre. As Lindsey Graham said yesterday, we'll send in more troops and then steal their oil to make them pay for us sending in more troops:

...By increasing the production of the oil fields, we will be helping our Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) allies who fought bravely to destroy ISIS Caliphate. We can use some of the revenues from future Syrian oil sales to pay our military commitment in Syria. That's just what the neocons were arguing in 2002 as they pushed the war on Iraq. And we all know how that worked out. Trump is a chump for listening to Graham.

On Europe's Problem with African Migrants

TEHRAN (FNA) — About 25 African migrants die every week before they ever leave the African continent or take the risks of the dangerous Mediterranean Sea or Gulf-route journeys. That's according to International Organization of Migration, which has published new numbers through its Missing Migrants Project report. Since 2014, more than 7,400 men, women and children have died in transit across Africa, the new records show. These figures fail to capture the true scale of the tragedy, as they represent only fatalities which have been reported.

The data are supported by interviews conducted by the Monitoring Mechanism Initiative in West, North and East Africa between December 2018 and April 2019. Records show that thousands of people lose their lives as they journey through North Africa. However, deaths in this region are not well documented, and the true number of lives lost during migration remains unknown.

Moreover, African migrants who risk perilous sea crossings to Europe are often assumed to be

illiterate, jobless chancers in desperate bids to flee stagnation and rampant corruption in their home countries. But a new survey of irregular African migrants in Europe found them to be more educated than expected, while many of them were leaving behind jobs back home that paid better-than-average wages.

While economic factors do indeed drive many Africans to irregularly migrate across the Mediterranean Sea, a new United Nations report provides some startling data that could change the way migrants are perceived in Europe. The report finds that getting a job was not the only motivation to move and that not all irregular migrants were poor in Africa or had lower education levels.

The report, called Scaling Fences: Voices of Irregular African Migrants to Europe, also found that more than 90 percent of those surveyed were undeterred by risky sea crossings and other dangers and would brave such a journey again. Researchers interviewed 1,970 migrants from 39 African countries who had traveled without official papers and lived in 13 European nations.

They had migrated primarily for job prospects and were not seeking asylum.

They found that the undocumented migrants had often not been struggling by African standards. Some 58 percent either had a job or were in school at the time they decided to take a risky journey north. On average, the respondents had three more years of education under their belts than peers. For those who were leaving jobs in their African homelands, they tended to have commanded better-than-average wages. Still, money was a big motivating factor to leave. About half of the respondents who left jobs said they had not been earning enough. Wages earned in Europe were typically much higher than those paid back home.

At any rate, the report is meant to paint a clearer picture of why irregular migrants move from Africa to Europe. The report calls for more opportunities and choices in Africa while enhancing opportunities to move from un-governed to governed migration. More so, jobs and money are not the only factors. Of those surveyed, 77 percent said they lacked a political

voice back home, and 62 percent said they had been treated unfairly by their governments. Migration is a reverberation of development progress across Africa, albeit progress that is uneven and not fast enough to meet people's aspiration.

The European Union has witnessed mounting migrant flows in recent years, with folks drowning at sea during perilous crossings in rickety boats and often getting stuck in sprawling, unsanitary camps in Greece and elsewhere. This has raised political tensions across the 28-nation bloc, with Italy and others adopting anti-immigrant policies and members struggling to agree on how to process and host new arrivals.

As it stands, the bloc has no system through which member states can share responsibility for hosting migrants in a fair manner. As a consequence, they continue to wrangle with one another over which of them should host the asylum seekers and other migrants who reach Europe's shores. That said, the best way ahead is for the European Union to rethink assumptions about African migrants.

Syed Mohsin Abbas: Sacrifice of Karbala stands out in history like no other

TEHRAN (FNA) — Syed Mohsin Abbas, a journalist and political analyst, says "the principles of the martyrs of Karbala have a unique ability to connect with all human beings of all faiths and none".

In an exclusive interview with FNA, Syed Mohsin Abbas, a researcher, journalist and political analyst discussed why the events of Karbala are still marked by many people from all walks of life around the world.

Below is the full text of the interview:
■ Why do Muslims still mark Ashura after 15 centuries, whilst no comparable event in history from this period is commemorated on this scale by non-Muslims?

A: It is the perfection of humanity which is represented by Ashura and the tragedy of Karbala which echoes into eternity. The sacrifice of Karbala stands out in history like no other, and it has made it possible for all subsequent civilizations to talk about God, justice, freedom, liberty and human rights in light of the lived prophetically inspired moral benchmark.



Just for a moment close your eyes and imagine the 'perfect man' - generous, kind, courageous, compassionate, merciful and loving. A man who personifies all the greatest human virtues. This was the Holy Imam Hussain (as). Imagine the most noble, chaste and innocent of women and children that ever lived, now picture around them the bravest, loyal and chivalrous of friends and companions that humanity has ever witnessed - all preparing to fulfill their covenant with a destiny that demanded one last total self-sacrifice from them in this world.

Now picture them all cut, bleeding exhausted, blistered, thirsty, hungry and out in the middle of a vast burning hot desert - forced to go without water for days. But notice also how serenely composed and defiantly faithful and united they are in their commitment to Allah (swt). See how they stand up for the rights of the poor, the oppressed and downtrodden at the expense of their own lives. In their opposition: note those that are diametrically opposed to them on the dry unforgiving plains of Karbala - the heartless legions of a barbaric unprincipled army who also called themselves Muslims - a cohort of cold blooded inhumane cut throats and killers that have imposed this murderous scenario upon the innocent caravan of Al Hussain Ibn e Ali (AS) with its small band of men, women and children. And for what crime and why were they subjected to the torture? Simply because of their refusal to comply with an act of submission to an immoral tyrant King; one who was hell bent on totally annihilating the Prophetic dream which yearned for a world filled with peace and justice.

The heart-rending events that led to the victory of the principles of these martyrs of Karbala have a unique ability to connect with all human beings of all faiths and none who might come across this tragedy - if, of course, they retain any iota of human empathy that is.

So what of the modern despot oppressors and their deluded sycophants drunk on egomania, hyper-materialist greed, murder of innocents and the other plethora of depravities, these days cunningly clothed in moral relativism or hedonistic individualism. Perhaps there will still be no awakening of the hearts of such people; but regardless of such tyrants the Shuhuda e Karbala's sacrifice for humanity has always, and will always continue to offer hope to the oppressed; with its cacophony of cries for true Divine justice. Karbala in fact defines true liberty, freedom, human rights and optimal human morality for every age.

■ Millions of people from around the world gather in Karbala on Arbaeen. What is it indicative of?

A: There are phenomena in the world that take into account the interdisciplinary facets of our ability to share a powerful commonality. The sacrifice of Imam Hussain (AS) and his fellow martyrs is one such reality which can be a point of unity among religions and their followers.

One of the global phenomena that establishes practical unity among the followers of the major religions is manifested in the Arbaeen Procession - the "world's largest annual human walk". This annual spiritual phenomenon revolves around the personality of Hussain Ibne Ali (AS), the Grandson of the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH), at an event which each year attracts twenty million pilgrims from over seventy countries of the world. They all go to the land of Iraq, arguably one of the earliest human civilizations in the shape of Mesopotamia.

These pilgrims swarm to commemorate one of Islam's greatest heroes and to participate in the longest annual collective walk on this globe.

This unique, extraordinary phenomenon is due to the universal personality of Hussain (AS) who has been talked about in the holy school of Christianity, Judaism and Islam. Other religions including Hindu devotees have been enthusiastic about the Holy Imam Hussain (AS) too and in both the Old and the New Testaments there are prophecies and signs about the spiritual testimony, the stand for justice and the ultimate sacrifice of Hussain (AS) his companions and his family in the land of Karbala on the tenth of Muharram, 61 AH (Oct 9th 680 AD). The phenomenon of Arbaeen around Imam Hussein (AS)'s personality has the potential to be a catalyst for unity among followers of different religious tributaries to this end. Therefore it is necessary to formulate a clearer understanding about this event in order to inspire reflection about this powerful phenomenon and to, God willing, effect unity among the international religious and broader global constituencies.

More than half of people say climate change will influence how they vote in general election

More than half of people say climate change is such an important issue it will influence how they vote in the next general election, new research suggests.

Almost two-thirds (63 per cent) of people believe politicians are not discussing the issue of climate change enough in the run up to the next national vote, the poll for environmental lawyers ClientEarth found.



Against a backdrop of protests by Extinction Rebellion and school strikers calling for urgent efforts to tackle rising temperatures, seven in 10 people think the climate emergency demands swifter action.

Some 58 per cent say the government is not doing enough on the issue, and there is also pressure on investors, with three in five (59 per cent) believing financial institutions and banks should no longer invest in fossil fuels.

The top priorities people had for the government to limit further climate change were planting trees, making homes more energy-efficient and investing more into renewable energy, according to the poll of more than 2,000 people.

People were supportive of bringing forward the 2050 deadline to cut UK greenhouse gases to net zero, and of a "green new deal" or "green industrial revolution" with large-scale, long-term investment in eco-friendly jobs and infrastructure.

Many would like to see their pension funds and financial institutions actively support the transition to a sustainable economy and to consider the climate impacts of the companies they invest in.

And 55 per cent expect their own pension and other investment funds to avoid fossil fuel projects that contribute to global warming.

ClientEarth finance lawyer Joanne Etherton said: "Too many banks, pension funds and insurers are propping up fossil fuel giants. The way the financial world responds to the climate crisis will be make or break for the health of our planet.

"People have clearly shown their appetite for action to tackle climate change and it's now over to financial institutions to respond."

Two-thirds of people thought fossil fuel companies should help pay for the billions of pounds in damages from extreme weather events caused by climate change.

And more than half think the UK is already experiencing the impacts of climate change including more extreme weather, hotter and longer heatwaves, sea level rises and storm surges, increased flooding, air pollution and species extinction.

A majority also think climate change is also causing political instability in the UK.

The government should also do more to drive the use of low-emission vehicles such as electric cars, according to 61 per cent of those quizzed.

ClientEarth lawyer Jonathan Church said: "From the student strikes to Extinction Rebellion, people across the UK are demanding greater action to address the climate crisis.

"Importantly these demands appear strong enough to make a difference at the next election, with more than half of adults saying that climate change will impact how they cast their vote."

(Source: The Independent)

WORDS IN THE NEWS

Afghan defence minister visits Moscow

(February 11, 2002)

The interim Afghan defence minister, General Fahim, is in Moscow for five days of talks. He's due to meet Russian foreign ministry officials and also hold talks with representatives of the Russian arms industry. This report from Kate Clark:

General Fahim's links with Russia are close and **go back a long way**. For many years, it was the main supporter of his armed faction. Now, he's back in Moscow as the interim Afghan defence minister, according to Russian sources, with the aim of signing contracts to buy military hardware and potentially to get help in forming a new national army.

It's not clear why the **cash-strapped** Afghan interim government should be seeking more arms: Afghanistan is already **awash with weapons**. Over the last few months, Russia and America sent in shipments to help in the fight against the Taliban and al-Qaeda. But over the last twenty years of war, Russia, the US, Pakistan, Iran and China have all armed rival factions.

Disarmament is not yet **on the political agenda**. It was **deemed** too sensitive to put into the peace accord signed in Bonn in December. But the creation of a national Afghan army is planned and seen by most people here as essential if there is to be an end to the power of the armed factions.

So far, General Fahim has **appointed** commanders from his own faction to almost all the key defence ministry positions. **Rank and file** soldiers also tend to have factional loyalties to him. Moscow could benefit from its close relationship with General Fahim. But most Afghans are extremely **wary** of any Russian influence, **given** their bloody ten-year occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s.

Words

go back a long way: have existed for a long time

faction: an organized group within a larger group

cash-strapped: in need of money

awash with weapons: has too many weapons

on the political agenda: a matter for discussion between governments

deemed: considered

appointed: given a job

rank and file: ordinary

wary: cautious

given: because of, on account of

(Source: BBC)

Rising sea levels will eradicate more cities by 2050, research shows

Rising seas could affect three times more people by 2050 than previously thought, according to new research, threatening to all but erase some of the world's great coastal cities.

The authors of a paper published on Tuesday have developed a more accurate way of calculating land elevation based on satellite readings, a standard way of estimating the effects of sea level rise over large areas, and found that the previous numbers were far too optimistic.

The new research shows that some 150 million people are now living on land that will be below the high tide line by mid-century.

Southern Vietnam could all but disappear.

More than 20 million people in Vietnam, almost one quarter of the population, live on land that will be inundated.

Much of Ho Chi Minh City, the nation's economic centre, would disappear with it, according to the research, which was produced by Climate Central, a science organisation based in New Jersey, and published in the journal Nature Communications.

The projections do not account for future population growth or land lost to coastal erosion.

Standard elevation measurements using satellites struggle to differentiate the true ground level from the tops of trees or buildings, said Scott A Kulp, a researcher at Climate Central and one of the paper's authors.

Along with Benjamin Strauss, Climate Central's chief executive, he used artificial intelligence to determine the error rate and correct for it.

In Thailand, more than 10 per cent of citizens now live on land that is likely to



be inundated by 2050, compared with just 1 per cent according to the earlier technique.

The political and commercial capital, Bangkok, is particularly imperilled.

Climate change will put pressure on cities in multiple ways, said Loretta Hieber Girardet, a Bangkok resident and United Nations disaster risk reduction official.

Even as global warming floods more places, it will also push poor farmers off the land to seek work in cities.

"It is a dire formula," she said.

In Shanghai, one of Asia's most important economic engines, water threatens to consume the heart of the city and many other cities around it.

The findings do not have to spell the end of those areas. The new data shows that

110 million people already live in places that are below the high tide line, which Mr Strauss attributes to protective measures like sea walls and other barriers.

The Climate Central chief executive said cities must invest vastly greater sums in such defences and they must do it quickly.

But even if that investment happens, defensive measures can go only so far. Mr Strauss offered the example of New Orleans, a city below sea level that was devastated in 2005 when its extensive levees and other protections failed during Hurricane Katrina.

"How deep a bowl do we want to live in?" he asked.

The new projections suggest that much of Mumbai, India's financial capital and one of the largest cities in the world, is at

risk of being wiped out. Built on what was once a series of islands, the city's historic downtown core is particularly vulnerable.

Overall, the research shows that countries should start preparing now for more citizens to relocate internally, according to Dina Ionesco of the International Organisation for Migration, an intergovernmental group that coordinates action on migrants and development.

"We've been trying to ring the alarm bells," Ms Ionesco said. "We know that it's coming."

She said there is little modern precedent for this scale of population movement.

The disappearance of cultural heritage could bring its own kind of devastation. Alexandria, Egypt, founded by Alexander the Great around 330BC could be lost to rising waters.

In other places, the migration caused by rising seas could trigger or exacerbate regional conflicts.

Basra, the second-largest city in Iraq, could be mostly underwater by 2050. If that happens, the effects could be felt well beyond Iraq's borders, according to John Castellaw, a retired Marine Corps lieutenant general who was chief of staff for US Central Command during the Iraq War.

Further loss of land to rising waters there "threatens to drive further social and political instability in the region, which could reignite armed conflict and increase the likelihood of terrorism," said Mr Castellaw, who is now on the advisory board of the Centre for Climate and Security, a research and advocacy group in Washington.

"So this is far more than an environmental problem," he said. "It's a humanitarian, security and possibly military problem too." (Source: The Independent)

Plastic pollution off China's coast soars after drive to stop dumping it in rivers

The amount of plastic polluting China's coastal waters has soared following a government drive to stop rubbish being dumped in the country's rivers.

More than 200 million cubic metres of waste was found floating off Chinese shores last year, up 27 per cent on 2017, according to the environment ministry.

Debris in the country's seas has hit the highest level in a decade, with plastic accounting for the vast majority of the rubbish.

Most of the waste was dumped in the delta regions of the Yangtze and Pearl rivers, both major industrial zones on China's eastern coast, the Ministry of Ecology and Environment said.

"At the moment, there are some clear problems with the work on the marine ecological environment, with some regions not showing a lot of awareness or paying sufficient attention, and lacking strong initiative and dedication," said Huo Chuanlin, deputy director of the ministry's marine environment department.

Environmental groups have previously expressed concern that China, desperate to clean up its own rivers, is dumping increasing amounts of trash in its seas instead.

China found an average of 24kg of floating waste per 1,000 square metres of seawater last year. Some 88.7 per cent of that was plastic, the ministry said. Plastic also dominated the waste found below the surface, including on the seabed.

But Mr Huo insisted overall conditions in the country's coastal waters, including issues like wastewater entering the seas from rivers, were improving.

"China is the biggest producer and exporter of plastic products, accounting for about 30 per cent of the world's total, but



that doesn't mean China is a major marine plastic polluting country," he told a press briefing in Beijing.

However, scientists say China is the world's leading generator of plastic waste.

In a study published in May, researchers at Tianjin University warned China's "massive impact on the plastic levels of the ocean" was "a definite cause of concern" with "multiple economic, environmental and biological complications".

Earlier this year, Beijing published an action plan designed to clean up Bohai Bay, one of the country's busiest and most polluted waterways, in northeast China.

The government has earmarked 7 billion yuan (£770m) for the clean-up this year alone, but Mr Huo said it is still expected to struggle to meet a key target aimed at making at least 73 per cent of Bohai's waters fit for human contact by next year. At present 70 per cent meets that standard.

China is planning to make about 30 per cent of its coastal waters completely off-limits to development as part of a national "ecological red line" scheme.

But it is also trying to protect its rivers and improve the environment of its cities by moving polluting industries like steel and petrochemicals to the coast.

(Source: The Independent)

Climate change could leave southern Britain 'unable' to support crops

Climate change could turn the Garden of England into a "parched grassland" that is unable to support crops, according to a new study.

Currently, cows and sheep are typically grazed in the north and west of Britain but, by 2100, warmer temperatures could force farmers to switch to more profitable arable farming.

Without significant irrigation, large swathes of the south and east of the country could become too dry for crops and, instead, be better suited to low-density livestock farming, according to new research.

If emissions continue at current rates, Britain will be 5C warmer by the end of the century, and would experience up to 140mm less rainfall during the growing season between April and September, according to the paper published in the journal Environmental Research Letters.

Lead researcher Professor Tim Lenton, from the University of Exeter, said this level of climate change would result in a transformation of the country's landscape.

He told The Independent: "We're moving towards a more French or Spanish summer climate."

"The east and southeast will be a parched grassland in the summer and, if there is livestock on it, it will be low stocking level. The lowland grassland plains will be much drier than we're used to and probably won't sustain wheat production because they will just be too dry."

"This is unlike the lush grasslands that can support high stocking densities in the UK at the moment."

Agriculture accounts for 72 per cent of land use in the UK and employs around 1 million people. Arable farming is generally



more profitable than livestock farming, but poor soils and steep slopes in the north mean that it is currently often not a viable option.

Although the overall picture is bad for farming, livestock farmers that are able to switch to arable farming might do better.

Dr Paul Ritchie, from the University of Exeter, said: "Britain is relatively cool and damp, so a warmer and drier growing season is generally expected to increase arable production."

"Crops could still be grown with the aid of irrigation, but this would involve either storing large quantities of winter rainfall or transporting water from wetter parts of the country. The amount of water required would be vast, representing a major challenge for UK agriculture."

Part of the impact of warmer conditions could be offset by higher levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere – meaning plants will be able to use water more efficiently. This is because an enzyme contained in plants is more efficient when there is less oxygen in the atmosphere.

Researchers say this is a crucial uncertainty in projecting the impact of climate change on farming land-use and needs to be researched further.

The paper was supported by the Natural Environment Research Council.

(Source: The Independent)

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION



\$7b to be allocated to retrofit, rebuild flood-devastated houses

A budget of 290 trillion rials (nearly \$7 billion) will be allotted to reconstruct and repair housing units destroyed by flood in 18 provinces across the country, Mehdi Jamalnejad, deputy interior minister for urban and rural development has announced.

Flood has devastated some 169,377 housing units, 68,333 of which are beyond repair and must be reconstructed, he stated.

اختصاص بیش از ۲۹ هزار میلیارد تومان برای بازسازی خانه های سیل زده

معاون عمران و توسعه امور شهری و روستایی وزیر کشور گفت: براساس مصوبه اخیر هیات وزیران مبلغ ۲۹ هزار و ۱۳۰ میلیارد ریال برای بازسازی و جبران خسارات ناشی از سیل در بخشهای مختلف ۱۸ استان پرداخت می شود.

بر اساس ارزیابی های انجام شده در ۲۱ استان کشور، بیش از ۱۶۹ هزار و ۳۷۷ واحد مسکونی شهری و روستایی در سیل های اخیر در کشور آسیب دیده اند که باید دوباره احداث شوند.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

"co-, col-, com-, con-, cor-"

■ **Meaning:** with or together

■ **For example:** What will it take for us to **coexist** in peace?

PHRASAL VERB

Nose out

■ **Meaning:** to find out or discover information, secrets, etc.

■ **For example:** He nosed out their plans.

IDIOM

Crocodile tears

■ **Explanation:** To shed crocodile tears means to shed false tears or show insincere grief

■ **For example:** Caroline pretended to be sad but we all knew her tears were crocodile tears.

Iraqi President: PM ready to resign, early elections to be held

ALMANAR — Iraqi President Barham Salih says the country's embattled Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi is ready to step down if a replacement is found, emphasizing that a snap parliamentary election will be held once a new electoral law is passed.

"The prime minister announced that he would be ready to submit his resignation if parties agreed on an adequate alternative within the context of the constitution and the law to avoid a constitutional gap," Salih said in a televised speech on Thursday evening.

Emphasizing that a new electoral law will be presented to parliament next week, the Iraqi president added, "I am personally meeting and consulting with the various parties and blocs to achieve reforms within the context of the law to maintain the security of Iraq."

"Supporting security forces is the responsibility of all of us. It will be in everyone's interest that demonstrators succeed in expressing their demands freely and peacefully, and that our security forces succeed in their tasks to preserve public security and prevent those who wish to infiltrate and exploit demonstration [from achieving their goals]," the Iraqi president said.

Salih added, "The fraternity between dem-



onstrators and forces of the army and security helped turn these mass demonstrations into great celebrations of Iraqi nationalism, where national flags were hoisted and the national anthem was played in streets and squares."

"Repression is unacceptable. The use of force and violence is also unacceptable. The solution lies in reforms. The solution

hinges upon cooperation among all in order to maintain public security and confront criminals, who want to worsen the situation in Iraq," he said.

"History has taught us that the voice of the people is stronger than any voice, and public will is the last. A bright and dignified future for Iraq is the goal of all of us..."

Given the current circumstances, keeping firearms in the hands of the government is of paramount importance. Weapons must not make their way into the hands of outlaws. There will be no security or contentment without this principle. This helps us maintain security and avoid battles and fighting between armed groups whenever they disagree," Salih pointed out.

"We affirm here that corruption files will be immediately referred to the judiciary for decision in accordance with the laws in force. This issue is sensitive and has a high priority. Major corruption issues must be dealt with utmost transparency and devotion to law and public rights," the Iraqi president said.

"We have already begun a continuous work for a new and convincing election law that addresses the problems of previous laws, and allows for fairer and more inclusive elections in the interest of people... We have also started in presidential circles to sponsor a national dialogue and work to address structural imbalances in the system of governance... The legitimacy of the government comes from people," Salih concluded.

The ongoing demonstrations in Iraq follow a previous bout of anti-government protests in early October.

Iraq's top Shia cleric urges end of bloodshed, warns of civil war

➔ This is only possible if all parties join hands to resolve the current crisis in the country with good faith, he added.

The top cleric once again condemned any assault on the peaceful protesters and any unjustifiable violence, calling for investigation into those who use violence.

Ayatollah Sistani also warned any individuals and groups inside Iraq as well as regional and world countries against attempting to exploit the Iraqi people's protests. ■ **Hashd al-Shaabi says won't interfere in rallies**



Meanwhile, Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units, also known as Hashd al-Sha'abi, announced that it will support the legitimate demands of protesters without interfering in the country's political situation.

In a statement on Thursday, the PMU stressed that it is not going to meddle in the public demonstrations as it is a force tasked with ensuring the security and integrity of Iraq and defending the country against terrorism.

The statement further dismissed rumors circulating on social media against Hashd al-Sha'abi, the latest of which was about the deployment of military vehicles from the house of PMU commander Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis in Baghdad's Jadriyah neighborhood.

Muhandis, it said, has no base or house in Jadriyah and his office is the Hashd al-Sha'abi headquarters in the Green Zone of Baghdad.

The PMU played a decisive role in Iraq's uphill 2014-2017 battle against the Daesh terrorist group. The Iraqi parliament on November 26, 2016 approved a law giving full legal status to Hashd al-Sha'abi fighters.

The ongoing demonstrations in Iraq follow a previous bout of anti-government protests in early October over corruption, unemployment and lack of basic services.

More than 200 have been killed and thousands of others wounded since the protests erupted, with security forces using tear gas and rubber bullets against those taking to the streets.

As part of efforts to meet the anti-corruption demands, the Iraqi Supreme Anti-Corruption Council announced on Friday that it has issued arrest warrants for a minister, a provincial council chief, five lawmakers, two former ministers, and 60 local officials for corruption.

Assad: Liberating northern Syria from Kurds 'ultimate goal'

➔ Both Tehran and Moscow, along with Lebanon's Hezbollah resistance movement have helped Syria with its war against foreign-backed militancy over the recent years.

The Syrian president asserted that Turkey had agreed as part of the Astana peace talks to end its presence in Idlib province. However, he said, the Syrian forces decided to liberate the province.

"The Turks did not abide by this agreement, but we are liberating Idlib," he said.

"In the end, we liberated areas gradually through military operations. The same will apply in the northern region after exhausting all political options," Assad added.

Yemeni forces shoot down U.S.-made ScanEagle spy drone

➔ The administration of US President Donald Trump, which has signed lucrative arms deal with Saudi Arabia, has repeatedly rejected calls to end its ongoing arms exports to the country.



Britain, France and Germany have also been among Saudi Arabia's leading suppliers in the conflict.

Sudan withdraws troops from Yemen. Despite receiving much support from western countries, notably the US, Saudi Arabia has found itself stuck in a quagmire as a result of its failed invasion of Yemen.

Many countries in the so-called Saudi-led coalition have consequently drawn down their participation in the conflict. On Wednesday, senior Sudanese officials speaking to Reuters said that the country had withdrawn "several thousand troops" from the country.

The officials said that only a "few thousand troops" remained in the country, marking a stark contrast compared with the originally 40,000 Sudanese troops deployed in Yemen during the peak of the conflict.

The report comes as the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Riyadh's most influential partner in the war, has withdrawn much of its troops from Yemen starting earlier this year.

On Wednesday, the UAE announced that it had fully withdrawn its troops from the strategic port city of Aden.

North Korea tests missile launchers as denuclearization talks with U.S. stall

PRESS TV — North Korea has conducted a test of what it calls "super-large multiple rocket launchers" as efforts by Washington and Pyongyang to resume denuclearization negotiations hit another impasse.

The test of the rocket launcher system on Thursday afternoon followed similar tests in August and September under the supervision of North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, according to state news agency KCNA.

Apparently, Kim did not watch the test in person as KCNA suggested that he "expressed satisfaction" after the outcome was reported to him immediately after it was conducted.

Kim also congratulated the scientists who had developed the weapon, the report added.

The multiple rocket launcher system's photo was featured on the front page of the state newspaper Rodong Sinmun, while surrounded by yellow flames and smoke.

According to KCNA, the test verified that Pyongyang could launch a surprise attack and "totally destroy" enemy targets by using their "continuous fire system."

The test came only hours after the North launched two "unidentified projectiles" toward the Sea of Japan, according to an earlier report by the South Korean military.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said the projectiles were launched from South Pyongan province on Thursday afternoon.

Pyongyang has also tested a new submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) and fired more projectiles into the Sea of Japan over the past few weeks.



The developments come only four days after warned the US that it was running out of time to address an impasse in the diplomatic process between the two sides over dismantling the North's ballistic missile and nuclear programs.

Pyongyang also walked away from working-level nuclear talks with Washington in Sweden earlier in October, and has since repeatedly called Washington officials to come forward with a new offer by the end of this year.

Kim has already set the end of 2019 as the deadline for achieving progress in the stalled talks.

In June 2018, Kim and US President Donald Trump held their first ever summit in Singapore, where they struck a broadly-worded agreement on working towards denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, the details of which remain to be hammered out.

Hung parliament? Polls edge Conservatives over Labour

PRESS TV — Latest UK public opinion polls have shown that Conservatives still maintain the largest margin of voter support over the next party, Labour, for the upcoming general election — though not enough to win a majority of seats in parliament.

Latest polls conducted by YouGov and Survation revealed that an average of 35% of voters support the Conservative Party, while 24% support Labour. The Liberal Democrats polled at 19% and the Brexit Party at 13%.

The polls were taken between 29-30 October from a sample size of an average 1,350 voters.

The results speculate that after the 12 December general election, no single party will capture a majority of seats in parliament. The last national vote in 2017 ended in a "hung Parliament", making it difficult for the government to pass legislation.

On Tuesday, UK lawmakers unanimously agreed to hold a December general election in a bid to resolve the Brexit paralysis. The motion was subsequently approved by the House of Lords and then the Queen.

The ruling Conservatives hope to improve their situation in an election and gain a clear majority, allowing them to push through their Brexit plans by the EU-imposed 31 January deadline.

The latest polls, however, only work out simple percentages and do not translate to the final vote. Voters will cast their ballots for an MP to represent their local constituency. The leader of the party which wins



a majority of the UK's 650 constituencies becomes Prime Minister.

And this is where the Conservatives may again see themselves failing to gain a majority in parliament.

Leader of the Labour Party, Jeremy Corbyn, is hoping to favor support from the Scottish National Party and Liberal Democrats, who may be able to act as a "kingmaker" when final results come in. A surprisingly strong performance from Mr. Corbyn in the 2017 general election upended predictions and forced a hung parliament.

Last week, the European Union hesitantly granted a Brexit extension to the UK conditional on London not acting to "jeopardize" the bloc's objectives and decision-making process.

France's EU minister, Amélie de Montchalin, said, "Simply giving more time alone leads to getting stuck in a rut.

U.S. targeting Lebanon's economy, development: Nasrallah

TEHRAN — Secretary-General of Lebanon's Hezbollah Hassan Nasrallah lashed out at the U.S. for its corruptive role in hindering Lebanon's path of development.

"The U.S. has always been an obstacle vis a vis Lebanese to make any developments or reformations," Nasrallah said on Friday in a speech made at the memorial ceremony held for the departure of the Islamic researcher Sayyed Jaafar Mortada.

"The American role creates disruption and crises," added the Hezbollah chief, Al-Manar reported.

Stressing the resistance's stance against the hostile measures of the U.S., he said, "The resistance always keeps its promise and is always ready to defend the Lebanese territories."

Regarding the recent unrest in the country, he said, "We

call for dialogue between political parties, parliamentarians, and honest protest leaders."

"Our country needs everyone and everyone must shoulder his responsibility," he stressed.

Noting that "Hezbollah was never in control of any government that passed," he said, "This is only an attempt to hold Hezbollah responsible for the corruption in the country."

"Even when we say that we don't support the resignation of any government, it is for the sake of the country not Hezbollah's," he underlined.

Pointing to the resignation of PM Saad Hariri, Nasrallah said, the resistance did not support his resignation. "It was his choice and he had his own reasons."

"Now the Prime Minister resigned, this means that the whole government fell, so there is no chance to implement

any form of reformations or have an economic hope, we just have to wait."

Nasrallah further said, "Whatever the new government was formed of, its major goals must be to regain the people's trust. This is why this government must have all the trustworthy elements: Seriousness, constant work, setting priorities, clearance and transparency."

"We never asked protestors to leave the streets, we asked them to give change for the government to make reformations," he added.

Elsewhere, he commented on an Israeli drone that was targeted yesterday by the resistance in the Lebanese skies, saying, "This proves that the resistance has a military leadership that works without getting influenced by any internal developments."

Aoun: Arab & foreign countries exert pressures to keep Syrian refugees in Lebanon

ALMANAR — The Lebanese President General Michel Aoun addressed the nation on the third anniversary of taking office, shedding light on the major achievements and obstacles recorded during the first half of his term.

President Aoun stressed that defeating the defeating the terrorist groups in Lebanon's northeastern outskirts and dismantling their sleeper cells was a major achievement that contributed to the country's security and stability.

Approving a new vote law was also another accomplishment which restored the political stability, according to President Aoun who added that passing three budget laws after 12 years of unconstitutional expenditure contributed to the financial and economic balance.

President Aoun highlighted that the

economic crisis was addressed by the caretaker government, adding that the new government must start carrying out the plans devised to cope with the calamity.

President Aoun maintained the members of the new cabinet must be chosen according to the criteria of proficiency, not the political affiliation.

The Lebanese president also confirmed that the civil state based on the proficiency criterion is a main target, promising the protesters in the public squares to keep committed to fighting corruption.

President Aoun said that he had tackled the Syrian refugees file since taking office, adding that certain Arab and foreign states exert pressures to keep them in Lebanon.

Russian has no DNA test data confirming al-Baghdadi's death

SPUTNIK — The Russian Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) does not have any DNA test data that could confirm the elimination of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the leader of the Daesh terrorist group, SVR head Sergey Naryshkin said on Friday.

"We have not got any genetic material that would allow to say with 100 percent confidence [that al-Baghdadi was killed]," Naryshkin told reporters.

US President Donald Trump said on 27 October that al-Baghdadi had been killed in a US operation in Syria's Idlib.

Meanwhile, both the Russian Defense Ministry and Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov have said that Russia has not received any official confirmation of al-Baghdadi's elimination.

However, Daesh has confirmed the death of its leader. Last Sunday, US President

Donald Trump announced that the Daesh leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was killed in a raid carried out in Syria's Idlib province by US Special Forces.

As he revealed some details of the operation during a televised address to the nation, Trump said that al-Baghdadi died after running into a dead-end tunnel and blowing himself up by detonating a suicide vest. "He died like a dog," Trump said.

The US president added that the Daesh leader had been under the Pentagon's surveillance for a long time before the conditions were suitable to kill him. Trump also thanked Russia, Iraq, Syria and Turkey for their assistance during the operation. According to US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, the US air forces flew through non-US controlled airspace to carry out the raid against al-Baghdadi.

Stoke sack manager Jones after dismal start to season

Stoke City parted company with manager Nathan Jones on Friday after a disappointing run of results that has left the club second bottom in the Championship. Welshman Jones, 46, who arrived at Stoke in January, guided the club to only six wins from 38 matches in all competitions at the bet365 Stadium. Saturday's 2-0 loss to Millwall left Stoke four points from getting out of the relegation zone. "I would like to thank John and Peter Coates, firstly for the opportunity to manage this football club and then for the continued support and patience throughout my time here," Jones said in a club statement. "I would also like to thank the supporters for their fantastic support. Finally, I wish the club the very best for the future." Assistant manager Paul Hart and first team coach Joaquin Gomez have also left the second-tier club. Rory Delap, Kevin Russell and Andy Quay will take charge of the first team affairs while Stoke look to make a new managerial appointment "as swiftly as possible". (Source: Mirror)

Klopp hails local hero Alexander-Arnold ahead of 100th appearance

Trent Alexander-Arnold has delighted Liverpool fans with not only his performances but the fact he is a locally-born player said manager Jurgen Klopp on Friday. The 21-year-old right-back is set to make his 100th appearance for the Premier League leaders against Aston Villa on Saturday. Klopp said Alexander-Arnold's rise to stardom had been in part due to his determination to set himself ambitious goals. "He's so young and already so experienced," said Klopp at his eve of match press conference. "It's a wonderful story for different reasons. "I know that in Liverpool everyone was desperate to have a 'scouse' hero making his way into the first team. "When he made his first appearance he said 'great, but it's not about having one game, it's about having 100'. "Now we can talk about that, and there were not a lot of bad games in that 100." Klopp, whose side lead Manchester City by six points going into this weekend's matches, praised Alexander-Arnold's attitude. "I wish for him to stay healthy and fit, and then the future's bright for him and for us," said Klopp. "He's a great role model. He's relaxed about that but feels responsible as well. (Source: Goal)

Verstappen hits back at Hamilton and Vettel

Max Verstappen on Thursday hit back at his critics, including Lewis Hamilton and Sebastian Vettel, saying their post-race comments in Mexico last Sunday proved that he was "in their heads". The Red Bull driver told reporters at a news briefing at the Circuit of the Americas ahead of this weekend United States Grand Prix that Mercedes' Hamilton had been "silly" and "disrespectful" in what he had said. Hamilton, who is set to win his sixth drivers' world championship this weekend, had answered questions about the Dutchman's on-track aggression by saying he treated him differently to other rivals and gave him extra room. The pair had clashed on the opening lap of the Mexican Grand Prix and while Hamilton recovered to win the race, Verstappen went on to collect a puncture in a failed attempt to pass Valtteri Bottas, in the second Mercedes before pitting. He finished sixth after a thrilling drive through the field. Verstappen objected, he said, to Hamilton saying he had been "torpedoed" by him. "Looking at Turns One and Two in Mexico, I don't think that happened," he said. "I think, from my side, it is a bit of a silly comment to make because I think I always race hard, but fair, and I think it is just not correct. "Of course, it's easy to have a dig at someone, but from my side, it's fine. It's always positive when someone talks about you because it means you are in their head." He added: "I think that from my side, it shows already that I'm in their heads and I guess that's a good thing. "I don't need to dig into other people in a press conference because first of all I think it's a bit disrespectful as well -- I prefer to fight on track, which I love to do. (Source: AFP)

Messi returns for Argentina after ban

Lionel Messi was called up by Argentina on Thursday for friendly games against Brazil and Uruguay next month, the country's football association announced on Twitter. Messi has not played for Argentina since he was sent off against Chile in their victorious third-place play-off match in the Copa America on July 7. The striker was then handed a three-month suspension for comments he made after the game, in which he accused CONMEBOL, the governing body of South American football, of corruption. In-form Manchester City forward Sergio Aguero has been recalled after missing out on the last four friendlies, while Manchester United defender Marcos Rojo remains in the squad following his surprise recall after the Copa America. In Messi's absence, Argentina have played four friendlies, drawing against Chile (0-0) and Germany (2-2) while thrashing Mexico 4-0 and Ecuador 6-1. They face Brazil in Saudi Arabia on November 15 and then Uruguay in Israel on November 18. Messi's ban ends on November 3. The five-time Ballon d'Or winner has endured an injury-hit start to the season after hurting his foot in August and then his thigh in September. But his recovery has coincided with a return to form for Barcelona, who have won their last seven consecutive games in all competitions. (Source: Guardian)

Lippi accused of 'slap in the face' as China critics circle

Marcello Lippi was accused Friday of neglect and delivering "a slap in the face" amid grumblings that China's coach is not doing enough to justify one of the highest salaries in football management. Former Everton midfielder Li Tie will temporarily take charge of China's national team at an East Asian championships next month in South Korea instead of the 71-year-old Italian World Cup winner. Thursday's announcement by the Chinese Football Association was greeted with anger by sections of local media, which said that it had nevertheless been long known that Lippi had opted to remain home in Italy for the tournament. "But this doesn't mean that this is not a problem," said a scathing commentary in the influential Oriental Sports Daily. "However, shouldn't training the team be his job? Since he holds the salary of the position of the national football coach, he should do the work that the national football coach should do." The former Juventus and Italy boss Lippi, who quit as China's coach in January only to return in May, reportedly earns 180 million yuan (\$25 million) a year. But suggesting that Lippi has little interest in the long-term development of Chinese football, Oriental Sports Daily added: "Lippi neglected his duties halfway. "No matter whose face this slap lands on, one should follow up with a question -- who gave Lippi the qualification and power to do this?" Lippi is attempting to take China, ranked 69th in the FIFA world rankings, to only their second World Cup. He has won 16 of his 36 matches in charge over two spells but his reign will be judged on whether he can get the world's most populous country to the Qatar 2022 World Cup. One report said that Lippi felt the South Korea trip was bad timing, coming at the end of the Chinese season, but Tencent Sports was unimpressed. After a World Cup qualifier against Syria in mid-November, Lippi will return to Italy and spend Christmas there, Tencent said. "The holiday may last for four months," said Tencent. "Therefore it is no exaggeration for fans to say that Lippi's annual salary of 180 million yuan is too easy. "Coaching the national football team carries huge pressure for any head coach, but it is almost impossible to see this in Lippi." China are second behind Syria in their qualifying group following a 0-0 draw at the Philippines in their previous game. (Source: AFP)



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Tokyo governor gives reluctant consent to marathon venue move



Sapporo was formally approved on Friday as host of the marathon events at next year's Summer Olympics with the reluctant consent of Tokyo's governor, ending a showdown between the Japanese capital and the IOC over where to stage the flagship event. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) stunned many Games organizers last month by announcing that the marathon, one of the most prestigious events at any Olympics and one especially beloved in Japan, would be moved to the northern Japanese city of Sapporo to avoid the worst of Tokyo's summer heat. The announcement enraged Tokyo Governor Yuriko Koike, who said at the beginning of discussions with the IOC on Wednesday that she still wanted the marathon and race walk events to remain in the capital. At the request of IOC delegation leader John Coates, representatives from the IOC, the 2020 organizing committee, the Tokyo Metropolitan Government and national government held talks on Friday aimed at reaching an amicable solution to what has become a very public spat. Koike reiterated at the start of Friday's meeting there was no change in her feelings that the races should stay in Tokyo and that the IOC explanation still "wasn't sufficient." "But on these points to make the Olympics a success we need to build a positive framework going forward," Koike said. "I don't approve but the decision can't be avoided," she said. "It's a decision without agreement." She added that they had agreed Tokyo would not bear extra costs of the venue move but other points still remained to be worked out, such as how much of the money Tokyo has spent up to this point in preparation might be repaid.

Coates said they had agreed at a meeting on Thursday that the decision on where to hold the marathon and race walk events rested with the IOC, adding that there would be no other venue changes in the future. "We will continue as a one-team effort," he said, referring to planning with host city Tokyo. In Wednesday's opening remarks to a three-day IOC coordination visit, Coates had said organizers "owed it to the people of Tokyo" to clarify any plans over the marathon and race walk and vowed not to leave Tokyo without a consensus decision over the events. Tokyo temperatures in July and August, when the city will host the Games, regularly exceed 30 degrees Celsius with high humidity adding to the discomfort. "We thought it would be possible to do something, but our opponent was nature," said Tokyo 2020 organizing committee President Yoshiro Mori, adding that he respected Koike's "difficult decision." The IOC is determined not to repeat the experience of the athletics world championships in Doha, where the heat and humidity forced many athletes to drop out of the race despite the marathon being held at midnight. The IOC has said temperatures in Sapporo, which will also host soccer games, are as much as five to six degrees cooler during the day. Asked at a news conference later on Friday about what he might say to Tokyo children missing out on the "memory of a lifetime," Coates once again cited Doha. "I'm very aware of the special place marathons have in the minds of Japanese. We also didn't want bad memories, we didn't want people to have bad memories of Tokyo," he said. (Source: Reuters)

Social media abuse pushed Khaka to 'boiling point'



Granit Xhaka reached "boiling point" after his wife and daughter were abusively targeted on social media, the Arsenal captain said as he spoke for the first time to explain his angry reaction to the club's supporters booing him. The embattled Swiss international stopped short of issuing a full apology to the fans, however, even after his manager Unai Emery said the 27-year-old's reaction was "wrong" when he was hauled off in the 61st minute in a 2-2 draw with Crystal Palace. The midfielder received ironic cheers as he first made his way off the pitch before they turned into boos from a section of the support at the Emirates Stadium. He didn't help himself when he cupped his ears looking at the crowd, didn't shake Emery's hand, angrily took off his jersey and launched into a foul-mouthed tirade. "The scenes that took place around my substitution have moved me deeply," Xhaka said in a statement posted on Arsenal's twitter feed and website late Thursday. "I love this club and always give 100% on and off the pitch. "My feeling of not being understood by fans and repeated abusive comments at matches and in social media over the last weeks and months have hurt me deeply. "People have said things like, 'We will break your legs', 'Kill your wife' and 'Wish your daughter gets cancer.' That has stirred me up and I reached boiling point when I felt the rejection in the stadium on Sunday. "In this situation, I let myself be carried away and reacted in a way that disrespected the group of fans that support our club, our team and myself, with positive energy. That has not been my intention and I'm sorry if that's what people thought. "My wish is that we get back to a place of mutual respect, remembering why we fell in

love with this game in the first place. Let's move forward positively together." Xhaka -- like most of Arsenal's first-team regulars -- sat out the club's loss on penalties to Liverpool in the Carabao Cup on Wednesday. All eyes will be on Emery's starting lineup when the Gunners host giant-killing Wolves on Saturday in the Premier League. Xhaka has been booed before this season and criticized by pundits including former Manchester United fullback Gary Neville for his poor positional sense in a holding role and clumsy challenges. He does, though, possess a wicked left foot that has produced wonder strikes. He appears to be a popular figure in the Arsenal dressing room, voted permanent captain by his fellow players in September. "As a group, as a leader, we support him all the way," keeper Emiliano Martinez, who started against Liverpool, was quoted as saying by the Telegraph after the Cup defeat. "He's a lovely guy. He's a bit devastated because he has got a good family, a good heart and he loves the club. When someone goes through that, we have to support him and we are together. "We wanted to win the game for him. "It was a shock because we know how much he cares about the club. Everyone has emotions. At that time he wasn't thinking much about that, because we were 2-2 and the fans wanted to win the game. It was a bit nervous in the stadium but I think if he does it again he won't think about that, he will come off quick." Xhaka -- signed from Borussia Moenchengladbach in 2016 during the Arsene Wenger era -- isn't the only one feeling the heat in the red side of North London. (Source: CNN)

Leonard shines against former team in Clippers win

Kawhi Leonard delivered 38 points, Montrezl Harrell chipped in 24 and the Los Angeles Clippers defeated San Antonio 103-97 on Thursday to knock the Spurs off their undefeated perch. Leonard, who did not dress for Wednesday's game at Utah so he could rest, also grabbed 12 rebounds for his first double-double this season. "I have the heart of a champion and I just tried to stay focused," said Leonard, who played seven seasons with the Spurs from 2011 to 2018. Leonard has now scored 30 or more points in three of his first five games with the Clippers, who he signed with as a free agent during the offseason. DeMar DeRozan scored 29 points and Derrick White added 20 for the Spurs, who suffered their first loss of the young season dropping to 3-1. After so much time with the Spurs, Leonard's relationship with the team eventually deteriorated. He was traded in July 2018 to the Toronto Raptors in a deal that sent DeRozan to Texas. Leonard went on to lead the Raptors to their first NBA title last season in a six-game victory against the defending champion Golden State Warriors. But the title wasn't enough



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ing," said Rivers of Leonard who had 25 points in the second half. "Every young player who has a chance to see the work, should understand you don't get better without the work." Los Angeles seized control of the contest with a 9-1 run to take a 64-55 lead with 6:55 remaining in the third quarter. Leonard scored five of his 10 third-quarter points during the rally, including stealing the ball off DeRozan and going in for a dunk. San Antonio got within five at the end of the third quarter before the Clippers scored 11 of the first 13 points in the fourth quarter. San Antonio clawed their way back to make it 97-93 late in the fourth but the Clippers held on for the win. - Best rookie start - Elsewhere, undrafted guard Kendrick Nunn scored a career-high 28 points to power the Miami Heat to a 106-97 win over the Atlanta Hawks. Nunn has exploded on the scene as an NBA rookie and is now the all-time leader for most points through the first five games for an undrafted player in league history with 112 points. Connie Hawkins of the Phoenix Suns scored 105 points in his first five games of the 1969-70 season. (Source: ESPN)

Freestyle team runners-up at U23 World C'ships

S P O R T S TEHRAN — Iran freestyle wrestling team became runners-up at the 2019 U23 World Championships in Budapest, Hungary.

The Iranian team won three gold medals, one silver and two bronzes in the competition. 2018 Cadet World champion and 2019 Junior World silver medalist Amir Hossein ZARE (IRI) followed Nickal's lead, shutting down 2016 U23 European bronze medalist Vitali Goloev from Russia in the finals match at 125 kg, 10-0.

At 86 kg, Kamran Ghasempour won his second-consecutive U23 World Championship with a decisive 9-3 win over Gadzhimirad Magomedsaidov from Azerbaijan.

Mojtaba Goleij, who did not compete at the 2018 U23 World Championships, put up seven points in the second period of the 97 kg title match against 2017 Junior World champion Shamil Musaev from Russia for an 8-2 victory and the gold medal.

Alireza Nosratollah Sarlak beat Mongolian Zanabazar Zandambud 7-4 in the 57kg bronze medal match.

Hossein Lotfali Shahbazi also defeated Azerbaijan's Shamil Zubairov 5-1 at the 92kg bronze medal match.

2017 Cadet World bronze medalist Mohammed Nokhodi lost to 2018 Junior World silver medalist Razambek Zhamalov from Russia at the 74kg final.

Russia won the team title with 145 points, followed by Iran with 139 points and Azerbaijan with 111 points, unitedworldwrestling.org reported.

Throughout the 2019 season, Russia has won the men's freestyle team title in a year-



group, including Cadet, Junior, U23 and Senior.

Team standings

1. Russia – 145
2. Iran – 139

3. Azerbaijan – 111
4. Georgia – 109
5. Mongolia – 70
6. Japan – 65

7. Kazakhstan – 65
8. Turkey – 60
9. Ukraine – 58
10. USA – 5



IPL: Esteghlal stun Tractor in Tabriz

S P O R T S TEHRAN — Esteghlal football team defeated Tractor 4-2 thanks to a hat-trick from Cheick Diabate in Iran Professional League (IPL) on Friday.

In the match held in Tabriz's Yadegar-e Emam Stadium, Mohammad Reza Azadi gave the hosts a lead in the 20th minute but Diabate was on target three times in 40th, 65th and 69th minutes.

Substitute Sasan Ansari pulled a goal back in the 79th minute but Esteghlal midfielder Ali Karimi rubbed salt into the hosts' wounds in the 84th minute.

In Isfahan, Zob Ahan defeated struggling Shahin Bushehr 2-0 courtesy of goals from Milad Fakhreddini (32nd) and Arsalan Motahari (72nd) minutes.

Furthermore, Gol Gohar and Paykan played out a goalless draw in Sirjan.

Sepahan sit top of the table with 19 points, followed by Tractor (17 points).

Shahr Khodro are third with 17 points and one game in hand.

Esteghlal sit seventh four points behind the leaders.

Ronaldo, Llorente penalty incidents to be debated in Italian senate

Two Italian senators have said they will bring forward a debate in the senate to reassure fans of Serie A's "impartiality" following two controversial penalty decisions in games involving Napoli and Juventus.

In Wednesday's early match, with Napoli leading Atalanta 2-1, Fernando Llorente had a strong penalty appeal turned down in the dying moments of the match before La Dea broke down the other end and equalized.

While, later on, Juve were being held 1-1 by Genoa before Cristiano Ronaldo earned what looked like a soft spot-kick before dispatching the penalty himself to earn all three points.

Gianni Pittella, of the center-left party PD, wrote that he and Gaetano Quagliariello, of the centre-right Identity and Action party, alongside other politicians will present the debate in the Senate.

In a lengthy Facebook post, he wrote that in the 85th

minute, referee Piero Giacomelli "failed to award a blatant penalty" in Napoli's match against Atalanta and that "two hours later, during Juventus-Genoa, the home side was awarded a penalty which was much less obvious."

He also questioned why Giacomelli refused to take a look at the VAR monitor on the side of the pitch, as is the custom in Serie A.

(Source: ESPN)

Stage set for Women's Club Championship in Korea Republic



The eagerly-anticipated line-up for the Asian Football Confederation's (AFC) latest club competition – the Women's Club Championship – has been finalized after Korea Republic was confirmed as the host Member Association for the pilot FIFA/AFC tournament, which is scheduled to take place from November 26 to 30, 2019.

Australia's Melbourne Victory, Nippon TV Beleza from Japan, China PR's Jiangsu Suning Ladies Football Club and Incheon Hyundai Steel Red Angels from Korea Republic will go down in the history books as the first four Asian clubs aiming to clinch the first-ever title in a tournament organized for women's clubs in Asia.

AFC President Sheikh Salman bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa said: "Women's football has always been an integral area of development for the AFC and the remarkable success of our teams underlines the incredible strides Asia continues to make in women's football globally."

greater heights.

"On behalf of the AFC, I would like to thank FIFA and the Korea Football Association for sharing our Vision to grow women's football in Asia. Our ambition is to see more teams and more Member Associations build on our strong momentum as we strive to ensure our women's teams and players continue to be world-class."

Current W-League Premiers Melbourne Victory will face Incheon Hyundai Steel Red Angels, who have clinched the WK League title for the last six consecutive seasons, in what is expected to be a classic opener.

Meanwhile, Nippon TV Beleza – one of Asia's most successful club sides with 15 Nadeshiko League Division 1 championships – will face a stern test against Jiangsu Suning Ladies Football Club, who clinched their second Chinese Women's Super League title by an impressive eight-point margin over their closest rivals in August this year.

The four teams will compete in a round-robin format over three match days – November 26, 28 and 30 – with the eventual group winners lifting the crown of the tournament.

(Source: the-afc)

Winning the title is a must for Al Ahed's Akaichi



Since joining Al Ahed FC last July, Ahmed Akaichi has established himself as a favourite among the fans who believe that the Tunisian forward is the man who will help the Lebanese giants win the 2019 AFC Cup title.

After plying his trade in Tunisia, Germany and Saudi Arabia, Akaichi accepted the offer of Al Ahed; a move that showed the intentions of the Lebanese champions to not only strengthen their local dominance but also take it to the next level.

Indeed, Akaichi helped Al Ahed win the Lebanese Super Cup last September after scoring a brace against Al Ansar, before netting a decisive goal against Jordan's Al Jazeera in the second leg of the 2019 AFC Cup West Asia Zonal final to lead Al Ahed to the final of the competition for the first time in their history.

With only 90 minutes away from winning the title, Al Ahed will be looking for more goals from Akaichi when they meet DPR Korea's 4.25 SC in the final in Kuala Lumpur on Monday.

"After playing in different countries, I wanted to have a change," said Akaichi in

an exclusive interview with the-AFC.com.

"I played in Saudi Arabia and had three good seasons and I came to Lebanon because I wanted a new challenge."

"Al Ahed have a great ambition to win the AFC Cup, which also motivated me to join the club," he added.

Speaking of the quick success he has had since joining Al Ahed, the 30-year-old forward said he is determined to lead Al Ahed from the front against 4.25 SC on Monday.

"Al Ahed are a big team and I managed to blend in quickly," he said. "When I joined the team, one of my main targets was winning the AFC Cup which motivated me to be here."

"I managed to score important goals," he added. "However, the most important thing now is to win the final of the AFC Cup."

While Al Ahed will be playing the final of the AFC Cup for the first time, Akaichi boasts a ton of experience after featuring for Tunisia in three Africa Cup of Nations campaigns, emerging top scorer in the 2015 edition.

(Source: the-afc)

Iraq v Iran match in World Cup qualifier in Basra in doubt

Tasnim — The match between Iraq and Iran which was originally scheduled to be held at the Basra Stadium in Basra, south of Iraq, will likely be held in Erbil, north of the Arab country.

The 2022 World Cup qualifier has been scheduled for November 14 but the venue will likely be changed.

At the start of October, street protests erupted in several Iraqi cities over unemployment and poor public services. The demonstrations resumed on Friday after a pause of about two weeks.

The first round of the protests left more than 150 people dead in Iraq, according to the Interior Ministry.

The match between Iraq's Al-Quwa Al-Jawiya and MC Alger of Algeria at the Arab Club Championship in Basra has been canceled for security reasons.

Iran U23 football team to play Indonesia

IRNA — Iran U-23 football team will play two friendly matches with Indonesia as part of preparation for the 2020 AFC U-23 Championship.

The first match is scheduled for November 13 at the Manahan Stadium in Central Java and Hamid Estili's team will meet its Indonesian rival again three days later at the Gelora Bung Karno Stadium in Jakarta.

Iran have been drawn in Group C of the AFC U23 Championship along with Uzbekistan, China and South Korea.

The competition will be held in Thailand from January 8 to 26 and the top three teams of the tournament will qualify for the 2020 Summer Olympics men's football tournament in Japan as the AFC representatives.

Iran water polo hold joint training camp to prepare for Olympics qualifiers

MNA — Iranian men's national water polo team are in Singapore to hold a joint training camp with the Asian team.

Iran water polo are preparing for Asian qualifiers for the 2020 Olympics.

The qualifiers will be held in Kazakhstan's Almaty from February 12 to 16, 2019.



Aleksandar Ciric's men do some fitness training and review tactics in the mornings and hold training matches with Singapore in the afternoon, according to the Swimming Federation of Iran.

Iran won the bronze medal of the 2018 Asian Games in Indonesia with a victory over China.

Iran to send 10 boxers to Asian Youth Boxing Championships

Tasnim — Iran will send 10 boxers to the upcoming ASBC Asian Youth Boxing Championships.

The competition will be held in the capital city of Mongolia in Ulaanbaatar from November 8 to 18.

Mongolia hosted the 2007 edition of the Asian Men's Elite Boxing Championships and the 2012 edition of the ASBC Asian Women's Elite Boxing Championships.

Following seven years of break the continental events will be returning to Mongolia which is one of our boxing powers with several stars in their current elite and youth line-ups.

Iran squad:

- 49kg: Mostafa Rigi
- 52kg: Sobhan Sahraei
- 56kg: Ramin Babaloo
- 60kg: Amir Hossein Dolati
- 64kg: Amir Reza Shekari
- 69kg: Farhad Moradi
- 75kg: Abdolhakim Bigdar
- 81kg: Amin Majnooni
- 91kg: Mohammad Ali Seyed Sadri
- +91kg: Saman Hosseini

The Iranian team will depart for the competition on November 7.

Firoozja stands 28 among top players of world

IRNA — In the latest ranking of the International Chess Federation (FIDE), Alireza Firoozja was ranked 28 among top players in the world.

The new monthly list of FIDE has been released, according to which Alireza Firoozja stood at the rank of 28 with 9 steps rise and Parham Maqsoodlou was ranked 51 with a dramatic rise of 29.

In the standard section Magnus Carlsen the current world champion with 2870 ratings, is at the top of the world chess players. American Fabiano Caruana with 2822 ratings and Chinese Ding Liren with 2801 ratings are placed second and third in the list of top chess players.

In the standard section of the top female chess players in the world, Sara Sadat Khadem ul-Sharie is ranked 14th with 2491 rating among top female chess players in the world.

In this segment, Hou, Yifan continues to lead with 2659. Ju Wenjun came in second with 2586 ratings and Koneru Humpy came in third with 2577 points.

Also in the team ratings, Iran with an average of 2569 is in 20th place among the top 20 teams in the world.

Iran still ranks third in Asia. At the beginning of 2015, our country was ranked 51 in the world and sixth in Asia.

The names of the top Iranian men in the standard section are as follows:

- 1-Alireza FiroozJa with Rating 2720
- 2-Parham MaQsoodloo with Rating 2684
- 3-Mohammadamin Tabatabai with Rating 2630
- 4-Poya Aidini with Rating 2570
- 5-Ehsan Qaemmagami with Rating 2552

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GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

The greatest source of despair is that same wealth that you see in people's hands.

Imam Ali (AS)

WHAT'S IN ART GALLERIES

Painting



An exhibition of paintings by Mahmud Teimurpur is underway at Negar Gallery.

The exhibit named "Experience and Movement" will run until November 6 at the gallery located at 33 Delaram Alley, Roshanai St. in the Qeitarieh neighborhood.



Aran Gallery is playing host to an exhibition of paintings by Nasim Davari.

The exhibit titled "Mantiq at-Tayr" (The Conference of the Birds) runs until November 18 at the gallery located at 5 Lolagar St., Neauphle-le-Chateau St.



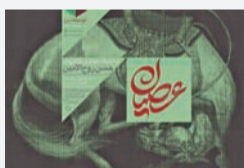
Paintings by Elmira Babai are on display in an exhibition at Shalman Gallery.

The exhibit titled "Shapeless" will be running until November 6 at the gallery located at 27 Kavusi Alley, West Rudbar St., off Mirdamad Blvd.



A collection of paintings by Elnaz Bandegi is currently on view in an exhibition at Tarrahan Azad Gallery.

The exhibit entitled "Touch" will run until November 12 at the gallery located at 5 Salmas Square, off Fatemi St.



Hassan Ruholamin is showcasing his latest paintings in an exhibition at Artibition Gallery.

Entitled "The Rebellion", the exhibit will continue until November 10 at the gallery located at Qandi Alley, Sasanipur St., Golsabi St., off Shariati Ave.



An exhibition of paintings by Sina Yaqubi is currently underway at Dena Gallery.

The exhibit named "Sodom and Gomorrah" runs until November 6 at the gallery, which can be found at 4 Sussan Alley off Qarani St.



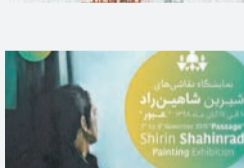
Salless Gallery is hosting an exhibition of paintings by Hushang Motamedian.

The exhibit entitled "Last Supper" will be running until November 6 at the gallery located at 148 Karim Khan Ave.



Paintings by Behnam Valadvand are on display in an exhibition at Farmanfarma Gallery.

The exhibit named "Mr. Painter's Scarecrows Madness of Ascension" will run until November 15 at the gallery located at 2nd Araabi St., North Kheradmand St. in the Karim Khan neighborhood.



A collection of paintings by Shirin Shahinrad is on display in an exhibition at Vista Gallery.

The exhibit named "Passage" runs until November 8 at the gallery that can be found at No. 11, 12th Alley, Mir Emad St.

Sculpture



An exhibition of sculptures by a group of artists, including Bahar Ranjbar, Shirin Babazadeh, Setareh Nadiri, Reza Hedayat, Hani Najm and Elham Daryai, is underway at Saye Gallery.

The exhibit entitled "Cat" will be running until November 13 at the gallery located at 3 Aqakhani Alley, Omidvar St. in the Niavaran neighborhood.

Persian poet Mazaher Mosaffa dies at 87

Mosaffa served as a professor at the University of Tehran and several other major universities in Shiraz and Qom.

He is considered as one of the few most outstanding odes composers in contemporary Persian literature.

"Ten Cries", "Thirty Speech", "Guardians of Speech" and "Storm of Rage" are among his noteworthy credits.

Mosaffa is survived by his wife, Amirbanu Karimi, and his children Kimia, Amir-Esmaeil, Golzar and Ali.

Ali Baqeri finishes second at Weather Photographer of the Year contest

IRANIAN photographer Ali Baqeri finished as Runner-Up 17 and under at the Royal Meteorological Society's Weather Photographer of the Year 2019 in England.

He took the place for his photo "Motorcycle Caught in the Snow" that depicts a man who is pushing a motorcycle on a snowy winter day in Iran, the organizers have announced.

Hugo Begg took first place in the under 17s category for his photo "Spectacular Lightning Show over Trial Bay" taken near South West Rock, Australia.

Gareth Mon Jones from England was selected as the Weather Photographer of the Year for "Above My Expectations". The photo was taken at dawn in Snowdonia, in Wales.

Elena Salvai was picked as first runner-up for the photo "The Power of Lightning", which depicts a very large and impressive bolt striking the sea facing the picturesque village of Riomaggiore in the Cinque Terre UNESCO heritage site in Liguria, Italy.

Brian Bayliss was selected as 2nd runner-up for "Snow Rollers in Wiltshire".

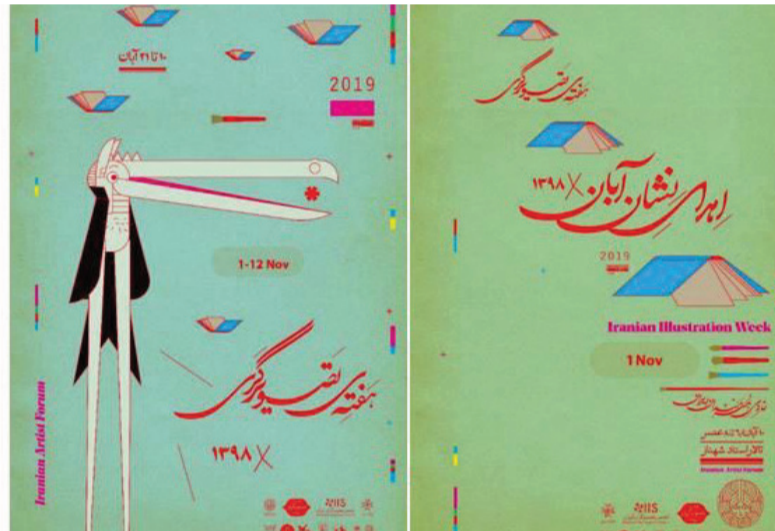
Mohammad Moheimani from Iran was shortlisted for the Weather Photographer of the Year for his aerial photo "Flood".

"Floods in Gorgan, northern Iran, occurred during New Year's Eve and New Year, closing many roads and flooding farms and roads. I took this photo by drone," Moheimani said.



"Motorcycle Caught in the Snow" by Ali Baqeri finished as Runner-Up 17 and under at the Royal Meteorological Society's Weather Photographer of the Year 2019.

IAF celebrates Iranian Illustration Week



A poster for Iranian Illustration Week.

TEHRAN — The Iranian Illustration Week opened at the Iranian Artists Forum in Tehran on Friday to display a collection of illustrations by Iranian artists.

The collection contains 400 works selected by the Iranian Illustrators Society, the forum announced.

"Rise of the Sun", a book on the history of Iranian art and culture written by Mohammad Bahrami, the veteran artist who is mostly famous for his illustrations for the Shahnameh stories, was unveiled at the opening ceremony of the exhibition.

Many masters of graphic design and

visual arts, including Morteza Momayyaz, Aidin Aghdashlu, Mohammad Ehsai, Parviz Kalantari and Ali-Akbar Sadeqi, collaborated with Bahrami at the atelier that he established in Tehran in 1946.

The exhibition has dedicated a section entitled "We Are Illustrators" to displaying works by members of the Iranian Illustrators Society.

In addition, a selection of works by illustrators Karim Nasr, Ali-Akbar Sadeqi and Maryam Mahmudi, who were honored with the Aban Awards for their lifetime achievements last year, are on display.

The exhibition will run until November 12.

Roshd Intl. Film Festival picks films from 26 countries



A scene from "The Sixth String" by Bahram Azimi.

TEHRAN — A lineup of 142 films from Iran and 25 other countries will go on screen in the 49th Roshd International Film Festival this year, the organizers have announced.

"The lineup includes 85 films from Iran and 57 from other countries," the director of the festival, Vahid Golestan, said in a press release published on Friday.

"Last Cruise" by Hristina Belousova from Uzbekistan, "Zari, Zari, Kakol Zari" by Mahin Javaherian and "The Sixth String" by Bahram Azimi, both from Iran, are among the participating animations.

"Friend's Empty Place" by Mohammad-Ali Talebi and "Hafez and Goethe" by Farshad Fereshteh-Hekmat, both from Iran, and "What Is Consciousness?" by Diana Gradinaru from the UK will be screened in the documentary competition.

"Capitan Kinesis" by Carles Jofre from Spain, "Surprise Me" by Simon Muck from Austria and "The Feast of the Goat" by Saied Zamanian from Iran are among the short films selected to compete in the festival.

The festival will be running in Tehran from November 15 to 22 and will then move to other cities throughout the year.

Actor Ebrahim Abadi dies at 85

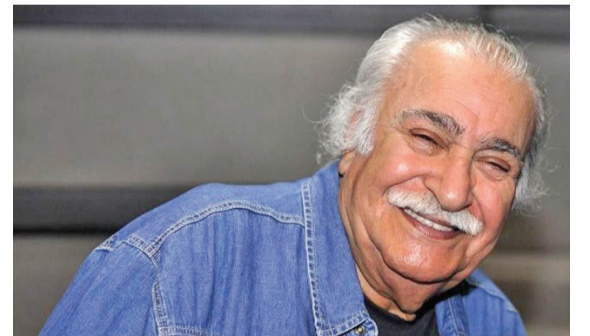
TEHRAN — Veteran stage and screen actor Ebrahim Abadi died at a Tehran hospital on Thursday after going into a coma two weeks ago following a lung biopsy. He was 85, the Persian media announced.

Abadi was born in Tabriz. He studied acting in an art school in Tehran and then continued his education in stage directing at the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague, in the former country of Yugoslavia in 1961.

Abadi played roles in several popular TV series,

including "Mokhtarnameh" by Davud Mirbaqeri, "Pavarchin" by Mehran Modiri and "The Tenth Night" by Hassan Fat'hi.

He also collaborated in a number of movies by prominent Iranian directors as a supporting actor, including "Smell of Camphor, Fragrance of Jasmine" by Bahman Farmanara, "Passing through the Dust" by Puran Derakhshandeh, "Apartment Number 13" by Yadollah Samadi, "Mummy 3" by Mohammadreza Honarmand and "A Sweet Jam" by Marzieh Borumand.



Veteran Iranian actor Ebrahim Abadi in an undated photo.

Iranian cartoonist Davud Hushmand honored at Belgian contest

TEHRAN — Iranian cartoonist Davud Hushmand won second prize at the 4th Biannual Global Mobility Cartoon Contest in Roeselare, Belgium, the organizers announced last week.

Dmitry Timofeichev from Russia received first prize, while Patrick Hey-

mans from Belgium took third place at the contest, which was held on the theme of "Buses in Brussels".

Iranian cartoonists Nahid Maqсуди,

Mahmud Barkhordari, Bahram Arjomandnia and Mahmud Mohammad-Tabrizi were also among the participants in the contest.

Ringo Starr 'emotional' as Beatles come together in new recording

WEST HOLLYWOOD, Calif. (Reuters) — When Ringo Starr decided to record a cover of one of the last songs written by John Lennon, the Beatles drummer knew he wanted former bandmate Paul McCartney to play bass.

Then, his record producer found a way to bring in a bit of the late George Harrison.

The producer, Jack Douglas, inserted strings from "Here Comes the Sun" — one of the few Beatles hits written by Harrison — into the Starr's recording of the song "Grow Old with Me."

"We're all on it now," Starr, in an interview with Reuters, said of the musical reunion. "I had nothing to do with that."

"Grow Old with Me" is a single on Starr's new album called "What's My Name." Lennon had recorded a demo of "Grow Old with Me" for his 1980 release "Double Fantasy," but the song never made it onto that album.



Musician Ringo Starr is interviewed in West Hollywood, California, U.S., October 24, 2019. (Reuters/Mario Anzuoni)

Starr, 79, said Lennon's voice can be heard on the demo saying "this'll be great for you, Ringo."

"It was emotional listening to John's version, cause he'd written other songs for me," Starr said. "So I thought no, I'm going to do this one."

"I love the song, and the emotion of him speaking to me," Starr added. "He's been gone quite awhile, but it's emotional to me. He was one of my greatest friends."

Starr, who also has just released a new photography book called "Another Day in the Life", said he was thrilled that the Beatles' "Abbey Road" album returned to the top of music charts this month amid renewed interest because of its 50th anniversary.

"How far out is that?," he said. "I think it impresses people that it was made 50 years ago, and we did our best and we mixed it the best way we could."